

# Operations conducted since Dec 14, 2024

## 22 Khwarij terrorists killed in various IBOs

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces successfully neutralized 22 Khwarij terrorists, while 18 Khawrij have been injured so far during various Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) conducted since 14 December 2024 in general area Tirah Khyber District.

"Of late, numerous terrorist incidents have occurred in general area Tirah, Khyber District against security forces as well as the innocent civilians, resulting in several casualties," said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release.

In response to these heinous acts, security forces are conducting extensive Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) in the area against the Khwarij.

"The IBOs will continue till peace in the area is restored and khawrij are eliminated, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country," it further said.

**President lauds security forces for killing 22 terrorists in KP**

President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday paid tribute to the security forces for killing 22 Khawarij terrorists in operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The president, in a press statement lauded the security forces for eliminating terrorists during intelligence-based operations in district Khyber.

He said the security forces killed 22 terrorists, and injured 18 others in different actions.

He vowed to continue operations against the terrorists till complete elimination of terrorism.

The successful operations of Pakistan's security forces in combating terrorism are commendable, the president said adding that "Our determination to eliminate terrorist elements and defend the country will remain unwavering".

He also expressed the nation's commitment to the complete eradication of extremism.

**PM pays tribute to security forces for suc-**

**cessful operations against terrorists in Tirah**

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday paid tribute to the security forces for conducting successful intelligence-based operations against Fitna-al-Khawarij in Tirah, District Khyber since December 14, 2024.

The prime minister, in a press statement commended the security forces for killing 22 terrorists in these operations.

The entire nation stands with the security forces in the war against terrorism, PM Shehbaz said.

He also expressed the resolve to completely eradicate all forms of terrorism from the country.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a review meeting regarding promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises sector.

## PM for ensuring early conclusion of FBR's legal cases

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed the relevant authorities to expedite the Federal Board of Revenues' (FBR) legal steps being taken to ensure early conclusion of the under trial cases of tax revenues.

Chairing a review meeting on expediting FBR's legal cases, the prime minister instructed to hire services of the reputed lawyers to represent FBR in the cases of tax revenues.

He said the government was speedily implementing reforms in FBR system.

"By the grace of Allah Almighty, the positive results of reforms in FBR continue," he said. He also directed the forensic audit of cases related to tax matters.

PM Shehbaz committed that the officers who were found to be involved in making cases on weak or false grounds will be given punishment.

On the other hand, he said the officers who had constituted cases on merit with honesty and hard work will be rewarded with special incentives.

The meeting was told that, after the prime minister's instructions, reputable lawyers were brought onto the panel, and as a result, from July to December 2024, 586 cases were resolved in the High Court, and 637 pending cases were resolved in the Supreme Court.

The meeting was also informed that currently, 33,522 cases involving Rs 4.7 trillion were pending in various courts and tribunals across the country.

It was told in the meeting that, as per the prime minister's directions, a litigation management dashboard for higher courts had been developed in the FBR, whereas the preparation of a tax tribunals management system at the Ministry of Law and Justice was in its final stages, which will be launched soon.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Khan Cheema, Attorney General Mansoor Awan, Chairman FBR, and other senior officials.

**PM augments Youth Loan amount up to Rs1.5mln for SMEs, directs special package for women**

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed to increase the youth loan amount from Rs0.5 million to Rs1.5 million under the PM's Youth Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and prepare a special package for women entrepreneurs in small scale business.

The PM chaired a review meeting on the issues of SMEs and reviewed the progress on the government's initiatives for the development and facilitation of SMEs, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

PM Shehbaz Sharif underscored that the government was determined to facilitate SMEs to encourage the country's workforce for opting entrepreneurship.

"Globally, SMEs play a key role in the development of the economy. The first priority of the government is to promote SMEs so that domestic exports increase. The government is trying to empower youth and women entrepreneurs so much that they not only earn self-employment but also create more employment opportunities," the Prime Minister said.

He issued directives to complete a detailed survey of SMEs across the country for providing improved facilities. "In order to harmonize the facilities given to SMEs with international standards, it should be ensured that the models of developed countries are applied," he added.

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## PTI's charter of demands a pack of accusations: Siddiqui

ISLAMABAD (APP): Irfan Siddiqui, the spokesperson for the government's negotiation committee, on Thursday compared the charter of demands presented by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to a charge sheet against the current government, calling it a "pack of accusations" largely based on unfounded allegations.

Accompanied by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah, Siddiqui stated that the government negotiation committee, after consulting with its coalition partners, would issue a formal written response to PTI's demands within seven working days.

The government believes that negotiations should proceed without the pressure of deadlines. However, to maintain a constructive dialogue, "we have agreed a response deadline for January 26 or 27," said Siddiqui. The PTI's reaction to the government's response is yet to be seen, but Siddiqui stressed that the focus should remain on achieving tangible outcomes, rather than adhering strictly to timelines.

Siddiqui further clarified that the government committee, composed of representatives from seven parties, will consult with their respective leaderships before finalizing the response to PTI's demands. He underscored that certain issues, particularly sub judice cases, cannot be discussed during the negotiations due to legal constraints. "As per the Constitution, cases under judicial consideration cannot be part of these discussions," he explained.

One of the key points of contention is PTI's demand for the formation of a commission to investigate the May 9 and November 27 incidents, Siddiqui stated that the government would consider the proposal carefully and evaluate all aspects before making a decision. PTI has proposed 15 terms of reference (TORs) for the creation of two commissions.

Siddiqui indicated that if a commission is formed, the government would also include its own conditions in the TORs.

In a bid to foster a positive atmosphere, Siddiqui indicated that the government does not view recent media statements from PTI as a hindrance, despite their contentious nature. He revealed that a meeting with PTI's founder Chairman had been agreed upon and would take place in the coming days, in a conducive environment.

Responding to questions about PTI's recent narrative, Siddiqui accused the opposition party of spreading falsehoods. He claimed PTI had failed to substantiate their claims regarding fatalities, injuries, and missing persons, particularly related to the Nov 26 incidents.

## 44 Pakistani migrants among 50 die in Spain boat accident

MADRID (INP): At least 50 migrants, including 44 Pakistanis, died when a boat carrying illegal migrants from the African country of Mauritania to Spain was involved in an accident.

The boat carried 86 migrants, of whom 36 were rescued. Among the deceased, 12 were young residents of Gujrat.

The young victims who perished in the Madrid boat accident had embarked on their journey to Europe four months ago.

Migrant rights group Walking Borders reported that the boat was en route from West Africa to Spain.

The boat, which left Mauritania on January 2, was carrying 86 people, 66 of whom were Pakistani. Only 36 migrants were rescued.



GAZA: A Palestinian girl sits by the rubble of buildings destroyed in previous Israeli strikes, ahead of a ceasefire set to take effect on Sunday, in Gaza City.

# Israel strikes in Gaza kill at least 70 after ceasefire accord

DOHA/CAIRO/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israel airstrikes killed at least 70 people in Gaza overnight on Thursday, residents and authorities in the enclave said, hours after a ceasefire and hostage release deal was announced to bring an end to 15 months of war between Israel and Hamas.

The complex ceasefire accord emerged on Wednesday after mediation by Qatar, Egypt and the U.S. to stop the war that has devastated the coastal territory and inflamed the Middle East.

The deal, scheduled to be implemented from Sunday, outlines a six-week initial ceasefire with the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, where tens of thousands have been killed. Hostages taken by militant group Hamas, which controls the enclave, would be freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners detained by Israel.

Israel's acceptance of the deal will not be official until it is approved by the country's security cabinet and government, and a vote was slated for Thursday, an Israeli official said.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Hamas of making last-minute demands and going back on agreements.

"The Israeli cabinet will not convene until the mediators notify Israel that Hamas has accepted all elements of the agreement," a statement from Netanyahu's office said.

It was unclear what impact the latest delay will have on the deal.

Hamas is committed to the ceasefire agreement announced by mediators on Wednesday, senior group official Izzat el-Reshiq said on Thursday.

Hardliners in Netanyahu's government were still hoping to stop the deal, though a majority of ministers were still expected to back it.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said his party would only stay in the government if Israel resumes the war full force until Hamas is defeated. Far-right police minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has also threatened to quit the government if the ceasefire is approved.

Some Palestinians called for the deal to be implemented more quickly.

"We lose homes every

hour. We demand for this joy not to go away, the joy that was drawn on our faces - don't waste it by delaying the implementation of the truce until Sunday," Gazan man Mahmoud Abu Wardeh said.

While people celebrated the pact in Gaza and Israel, Israel's military conducted more attacks, the civil emergency service and residents said.

Mahmoud Basal, the spokesperson for the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service, said in a statement that 71 Palestinians had been killed and at least 200 others wounded.

The Israeli military is looking into the reports, a military spokesperson said.

At a news conference in Doha, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said negotiators are working with Israel and Hamas on steps to implement the agreement.

"This deal will halt the fighting in Gaza, surge much-needed humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians, and reunite the hostages with their families after more than 15 months in captivity," U.S. President Joe Biden said in Washington.

His successor, Donald Trump, takes office on Monday and claimed credit for the breakthrough in Gaza.

Israelis will find it hard to see Palestinian militants who were serving life sentences for their involvement in deadly attacks in their country, set free.

But successive surveys have shown broad support among the public for a deal that would see the hostages released, even at what is seen as a heavy price.

"This has to be the only choice that we take in order to continue surviving as a state and as a nation, knowing that we will do anything to save each other," said Jerusalem resident Chava Treitel.

Israel secured major gains over Iran and its proxies, mainly Hezbollah, as the Gaza conflict spread. In Gaza, Hamas may have been crippled, but without an alternative administration in place, it has been left standing.

If successful, the ceasefire will halt fighting that has razed much of heavily urbanised Gaza, killed over 46,000 people, and displaced most of the tiny enclave's pre-war population of 2.3 million, according to Gaza authorities.

That in turn could defuse tensions across the wider Middle East, where the war has stoked conflict in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq, and raised fears of all-out war between arch regional foes Israel and Iran.

With 98 Israeli hostages remaining in Gaza, phase one of the deal entails the release of 33 of them, including all women, children and men over 50.

The agreement calls for a surge in humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and the U.N. and the International Committee of the Red Cross said they were preparing to scale up their aid operations.

Global reaction to the ceasefire was enthusiastic.

Israeli troops invaded Gaza after Hamas-led gunmen burst into Israeli border-area communities on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 soldiers and civilians and abducting over 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Negotiations on implementing the second phase of the deal will begin by the 16th day of phase one, and this stage was expected to include the release of all remaining hostages, a permanent ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

The third stage is to address the return of all remaining dead bodies and the start of Gaza's reconstruction supervised by Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations.





**KARACHI:** Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah bids farewell to British Deputy High Commissioner Ms. Sarah Mooney at CM House. —APP Photo

## Tarar lauds Turkiye's role in preserving Radio Pakistan's heritage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture, Attaullah Tarar, on Thursday praised Turkiye's significant contribution to preserving and presenting Radio Pakistan's rich history in a remarkable way.

In his address at the inauguration of the newly-constructed "Pakistan-Turkiye Friendship Museum" at the Radio Pakistan Headquarters, Tarar described the establishment of the museum as an important milestone. He emphasized that the museum plays a crucial role in safeguarding a vital part of Pakistan's historical heritage, in which Radio Pakistan has been a key player. "Nations that fail to honor and take pride in their past achievements can never make progress," he said.

Tarar noted that the friendship between Pakistan and Turkiye dates back long before Pakistan's creation. He recalled how the Muslims of the subcontinent expressed solidarity with their Turkish brothers and sisters during the Khilafat Movement, donating jewelry and valuable possessions to support the Turkish people. "The

hearts of the people of Turkiye and Pakistan beat in unison. The people of Pakistan consider Turkiye their second home," he stated. He further highlighted that the long-standing relations between the two countries must be passed down to future generations.

The Minister pointed out that there is still immense potential for expanding cooperation between Pakistan and Turkiye in various other fields. One of the key objectives behind the museum's establishment, Tarar explained, is to educate future generations about the significance of Pakistan-Turkey relations. He also acknowledged the ongoing support of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), which has been involved in several initiatives in Pakistan, with the museum being one of its prominent contributions.

Tarar highlighted the critical role of Radio Pakistan in national development, noting its substantial contributions to promoting education, art, culture, and economic awareness. He also praised Radio Pakistan for its role in providing effective communication dur-

ing natural disasters and for boosting the morale of the nation, especially with its patriotic songs during times of war.

Expressing his confidence in the museum's potential, Tarar said, "I believe the Pakistan-Turkiye Friendship Radio Museum will serve as a lasting symbol of the strong ties between our nations and bring our people even closer together." He also commended the resilience of the Pakistani people, who come together during natural calamities, always ready to assist one another in times of need. Tarar emphasized the importance of further promoting and supporting Radio Pakistan, especially in its efforts to expand its digital presence, and called for steps to ensure the organization's continued growth and success.

Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, praised the deep-rooted and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Turkiye. He expressed Turkiye's pride in contributing to the preservation of Radio Pakistan's historical archives and noted that TIKA has successfully completed over 700 projects in Pakistan over the past 14 years.

## Biometric attendance system reintroduced

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Babar Saleem Swati, has reintroduced the biometric attendance system in the Provincial Assembly Secretariat to ensure the punctuality and attendance of all employees and to enhance transparency.

The biometric attendance system, which had been inactive since the COVID-19 pandemic, has now been restored, and an official notification has been issued in this regard.

According to the notification, this directive has come into effect from 15 January 2025. Employees failing to mark their attendance through the biometric system will face action under the "Efficiency and Discipline Rules 2011." Furthermore, employees must mark their out-attendance immediately after the assembly session ends.

Failure to do so will result in the deduction of session and late-sitting allowances. On this occasion, Speaker Babar Saleem Swati stated that the re-introduction of the biometric system aims to promote discipline and improve the operational efficiency of the Assembly Secretariat.

Transparency and accountability are our top priorities, and all employees are expected to adhere to this system to uphold the institution's integrity. He added that this initiative would help maintain an accurate record of attendance and further enhance the work standards of the Secretariat.

## Shooter killed in encounter

LAHORE (APP): A shooter was killed in an exchange of fire between the Organised Crime Unit City Kotwali and the robbers here on Thursday.

According to police officials, the police team was taking the accused Azam Ali to Gujarpura police station to recover stolen goods and weapons. The accomplices of the accused opened indiscriminate fire on the police party to free their detained fellow shooter. As a result, the accused received serious bullet injuries and was being shifted to a hospital, but he died on-the-way.

# Pakistan should be soul of every student: CM Maryam

FAISALABAD (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Thursday said that Pakistan should be the soul of every student and they must take legitimate interest in it to put it on road to progress and prosperity.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of "Honhaar Scholarship scheme" in Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF) here, she said the Punjab government was committed to facilitate the talented and deserving students for their higher education as they were precious national asset and bright future of the country.

She said that "Honhaar" scholarships would be distributed purely on merit to help the deserving students in materializing their dream of higher education.

She expressed gratitude for the love and support from the youth and encouraged them to avail the opportunities for their brighter future.

She said that "Honhaar" scholarship scheme was launched for 30,000 students. However, its scope would be expanded to facilitate 50,000 students next year in addition to extending its benefits to second-year and third-year students, she added.

She highlighted the importance of Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence and said that laptops would be distributed soon among the students who would score 65 % or above marks. This step would help in equipping them with modern tools to thrive in a competitive world and first shipment of laptops had arrived, she added.

She also highlighted the importance of quality education and said that the children from underprivileged backgrounds should have the same opportunities to study at prestigious institutions like LUMS and NUST as the students from rich families were enjoying.

She said that the state must act as a "mother" and all available resources would be utilized for the youth to remove barriers from their education.

She also underlined other programs for youth empowerment and said that recently a scheme was launched to offer interest-free loans up to Rs.30 million and free land for the business startups.

She advised the students to concentrate on their study and pay respect to their parents as it was the key of progress and prosperity.

Earlier, she also distributed scholarship cheques among the students. As many as 4690 students would get scholarships worth Rs.201.2 million under this scheme in Faisalabad Division.

PML-N central leaders including Senator Talal Chaudhry, former state minister Chaudhry Abid Sher Ali, Provincial Minister for Education Rana Sikandar Hayat and others were also present on the occasion.

## Govt okays permamnent funding of KMU-PHRL

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approved permanent budget funding for the Khyber Medical University Public Health Reference Laboratory (KMU-PHRL), a major breakthrough in the field of public health. Established in 2015 through collaboration among the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department, the National Institute of Health Islamabad, the World Health Organization (WHO), and Khyber Medical University, PHRL has played a pivotal role in enhancing disease diagnosis and surveillance systems in the province.

Expressing gratitude for the funding approval, KMU Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq thanked Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Advisor for Health and Finance, the Chief Secretary, Secretary Health, and Director General of Health Services for their support.

"We are immensely grateful to the Chief Minister and his cabinet for turning this vision into reality. This is a revolutionary step in public health," he remarked. He further stated, "COVID-19 was likely not the last global pandemic. We must remain prepared for future potential outbreaks."

Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq acknowledged the dedication of PHRL staff, who have worked for the past five months without salaries. He expressed hope that the newly approved funding would boost their morale and enable them to continue serving with professional dedication. He highlighted the critical role of public

health laboratories in disease diagnosis and prevention, emphasizing, "Public health laboratories are the foundation of healthcare systems, providing vital services for early disease detection and containment."

He stressed the significance of PHRL in identifying infectious diseases, including COVID-19, dengue, and emerging illnesses, underscoring its importance in evidence-based public health interventions and emergency preparedness. The funding approval signifies a new chapter for KMU and PHRL, supporting their mission to safeguard public health and strengthen the healthcare infrastructure in the province.

It is worth mentioning that since its establishment, PHRL has successfully completed over 1.9 million COVID-19 PCR tests. The laboratory now leads efforts in diagnosing other critical diseases, including Mpox, Congo fever, dengue, and cholera. Its contributions are crucial in preventing the spread of infectious diseases and controlling outbreaks. The newly approved funding will secure the employment of trained staff and bolster long-term disease surveillance and emergency preparedness, aiding Pakistan in fulfilling its commitments under the International Health Regulations (IHR). This funding approval represents a transformative step toward a stronger and more resilient public health system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Rs 1.824m released for salaries of afternoon school teachers

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government on Thursday released the funds of Rs1.824 million for salaries of afternoon school teachers.

The Punjab School Education department sources told APP that due to some objectional issues, the salaries of these teachers were being delayed for the last eight months.

The teachers of afternoon schools in Lahore have been deprived of salaries for the last 8 months. It is worth mentioning here that after

removing the objections, the District Education Authority Lahore has released funds of Rs.1.824 million for the salaries. According to the Schools Education department, two quarterly installments have been released to teachers from April to October. They said that the third quarterly installment will also be released soon.

In another significant move to enhance the educational infrastructure in the province, the School Education Department of Punjab will shortly hire

12,500 school teaching interns.

The sources further informed that the decision, approved by the cabinet, aims to address the teachers shortage in the region and improve the quality of education.

It is worth mentioning here that the government of Punjab has sanctioned the hiring of 12,500 teaching interns as a temporary solution to the lack of sufficient teaching staff in government schools across the province.

Each intern will be compensated with a salary of 45,000 PKR per month, reflecting the government's commitment to not only enhancing educational standards but also providing respectable employment opportunities to educated youth.

## Mayor orders action against illegal constructions

KARACHI (PPI): Mayor Karachi, Barrister Murtaza Wahab, has stated that all possible measures will be taken to bring the city's activities under the framework of the law, and no one will be allowed to engage in illegal activities.

According to a KMC statement issued today, efforts will continue at all levels to implement the relevant municipal rules and regulations to improve Karachi. The Mayor instructed the Director of Enforcement and Implementation, Shafiq Shah, to take action across all areas impartially and without any pressure, particularly against illegal constructions.

He emphasized that no action should be taken against constructions that are

in accordance with the approved maps by the SBCA (Sindh Building Control Authority) and where all fees have been paid.

On Thursday, the department took action by halting illegal constructions in Gulshan-e-Iqbal and confiscating construction materials being used for the work. Actions against illegal activities will continue across every district of Karachi. The Mayor said that strict instructions had been given to the Department of Enforcement and Implementation to ensure the implementation of municipal rules and regulations and to take immediate action against anyone found violating these rules.

The Mayor of Karachi

further stated that such steps are essential for improving the city and providing more municipal facilities to the citizens, and therefore, there can be no compromise on these matters. He emphasized that encroachments damage the city's beauty and encourage the land-grabbing mafia.

He urged the public to refrain from creating encroachments, to construct buildings according to the approved plans, and to ensure compliance with the authorized number of floors to avoid any damage. He concluded by stating that this city belongs to all of us, and it is our collective responsibility to make it beautiful and in accordance with the rules and regulations.

## Minister discusses religious tourism in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora met Director General Walled City Authority Kamran Lashari at his camp office on Thursday and discussed promotion of religious tourism and other related matters.

They discussed the steps taken by the Punjab government to promote religious tourism and ways to further enhance these efforts.

Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora stated that in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, several initiatives are being implemented to promote religious tourism across the

province. He further mentioned that Gurdwaras hold historical significance in Pakistan, and the flow of Sikh pilgrims continues throughout the year.

Additionally, temples and churches are being utilized to promote interfaith harmony. Ramesh Singh Arora also informed Kamran Lashari that very soon, Minority Cards will be issued in Punjab, which will help provide religious minorities with a prominent social position. This scheme will benefit Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and other religious minorities in the province. He praised the efforts of the

Walled City Authority, acknowledging its significant role in preserving the city's historical heritage and promoting tourism.

On this occasion, Kamran Lashari emphasized the need for more attention to be given to the promotion of tourism in Pakistan. He highlighted the importance of adopting a tourism model across the country, particularly the need to enhance the appeal of Gurudwara rooms to enrich the experiences of visitors. Kamran Lashari emphasized that the restoration of historical sites aims to revive their original allure, further boosting the tourism industry.



## PAF BASE, PESHAWAR PUBLIC AUCTION

1. The auction of Salvage / Scrap stores is going to be held on **04 February, 2025** at 1000 Hrs at PAF Base, Peshawar on "As is, where is" basis. The Salvage / Scrap stores includes auction of Retired Aircrafts converted into Scrap Aluminum. Demilitarization of retired Aircrafts (cutting into small pieces and de-shaped) by the firms/bidders at their own expenses, inside the PAF premises is mandatory, prior to lifting after conduct of Public Auction.

2. **Visit of lots** : Will be allowed at 0830 Hrs

3. **Terms & Conditions:**

(a) The lots will be presented for auction on "As is, where is" basis, without any guarantee or warranty. PAF Base Peshawar will never accept any levy for any fault or defect, after the auction.

(b) The bidder will appear in auction on the basis of his own visit.

(c) After the visit, the bidder will be responsible for any fault or defect in the lots

(d) PAF Base Peshawar will never be responsible for any dues, levy or tax etc for successful bids.

(e) Authorities have the rights to accept or reject "partially or fully" any bid, on technical grounds.

(f) PAF Base Peshawar will never be responsible for any advance payment, levy, tax etc for successful bids

(g) 25% of total amount is to be deposited at the end of the bid and remaining amount, i.e. 75% to be deposited within 06 working days. In case of Non-payment of dues within due dates, 25% already paid amount will be forfeited.

(h) Tax will be charged according to current Government Rules.

(j) The successful bidder will be responsible for clearance of lots from the vicinity of PAF Base Peshawar, within 11 working days; otherwise, will be levied in accordance with law.

(k) Decision about all issues regarding auction will be final and acceptable to all the concerned and unchallengeable, at any forum.

(m) The auction will be conducted through Govt Auctioneer "Shahzeb Gull & Co (0349- 9701996 & 0325-5730919)". For additional query or information, please contact on Tel Ext (091-9503873).

**Note:** Mobile phone, camera and arms strictly prohibited.

**OFFICER IN-CHARGE  
LOGISTICS SQUADRON  
PAF BASE, PESHAWAR**



## MEDICAL TEACHING INSTITUTION HAYATABAD MEDICAL COMPLEX - PESHAWAR

### VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

### DEAN MTI-HMC/KGMC

### AND AFFILIATE / CONSTITUENT INSTITUTES

Applications are invited for the post of Dean MTI-HMC/KGMC and affiliate / constituent institutes with the following criteria:

<b>Qualification</b>	A medical academic of national or international repute with either a Ph.D degree or a medical qualification such as MBBS or equivalent plus higher diploma such as FCPS, FRCP, FRCS or a US Board certification or equivalent.
<b>Gender</b>	Male/Female
<b>Term</b>	Five (05) Years
<b>Experience</b>	Candidate must possess at least seven (07) years of administrative experience with recognized leadership qualities on a position as chairman/head of a department, unit, program, or institution; proven track record of teaching through appointments and a commitment to medical education and/or research with recognized documentary evidence such as degree/ diploma.

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS:-

- Applications accompanied with complete bio-data and academic / experience / domicile certificates along with 02 recent photographs, **Bank Draft / Payment Order** and CNIC photocopy duly attested, must reach the **Office of the Secretary, Board of Governors, MTI-HMC** within 15 working days of the first date of publication of this advertisement on a prescribed form.
- Application Forms are available on HMC website i.e.; <http://www.hmcpk.gov.pk> and **Bank draft / Payment Order of Rs. 2,000/-** in favor of **Hospital Director MTI-HMC** or through direct deposit in **Bank of Khyber, HMC Branch, Receipt account, Branch Code 0185, A/C Number# PLS 00060-00-2**.
- The applications duly completed with supported attested documents should reach personally or through registered couriers service to undersigned on or before due date of closing.
- Their services will be governed, under the **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical & Teaching Institutions reform Act 2015 (as amended) and MIT Regulations 2022 (As amended)**.
- In case of in-service or retired civil/government servants relevant government rules and regulations shall also apply.
- All applications must be routed through proper channel, including NOCs from competent supervising authorities. In case of selection the civil servant has to resign from his/her government job.
- An application after the closing time and date, notified after advertisement, shall stand rejected.
- Scrutiny Committee shall be competent to reject applications which are incomplete. However, the aggrieved candidates can appeal to the competent authority of HMC (BOG) for review. The decision of the competent authority shall be final.
- Any candidate may be disqualified or excluded from interview if he/she were (a) Convicted by the court of law, (b) Dismissed from public service, (c) Knowingly furnished any false information, (d) Suppresses any information which may lead to his/her disqualification, (e) Attempts to obtain support for his/her (candidature by improper means), (f) Submits forged certificates, (g) Tempers with the entries in his/her age and academic certificates, (h) Misbehaves in the interview.
- Original documents should be produced at the time of interview.
- No TA/DA is allowed for interview.
- The competent authority (BOG) reserves the right to cancel the advertisement and selection process altogether and re-advertise the post.

**(SAHIBZADA KAMRAN ULLAH)**  
SECRETARY BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
MIT-HAYATABAD MEDICAL COMPLEX, PESHAWAR

**INF(P) 183/25**





PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati arriving at Peshawar High Court premises for hearing of case.

## Benefits be provided to small landowners: Barkwal

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture Major Retired Sajjad Barkwal has said that measures should be taken to provide maximum benefits to small landowners. Farmers' contribution should be minimum in partnership projects. In the southern districts, provide awareness to the farmers about better use of water and modern methods of irrigation so that they can increase their production. He expressed these views during a meeting of the International Water Management Institute in Peshawar regarding ongoing projects in the province. Secretary Agriculture Attaur Rehman, Additional

Secretary Nik Muhammad, Advisor Project Engineer Muhammad Naeem, Senior Regional Researcher Kifayat Zaman and other relevant officials participated in the meeting. In the meeting, a detailed briefing was given regarding the ongoing projects and future plans of the International Water Management Institute in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Provincial Minister for Agriculture Major Retd Sajjad Barkwal was informed that IMWI conducted multi-stakeholder workshops on water resources assessment of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, drought early warning system and water management information system and introductory hands-on on

water accounting, resource assessment training workshops. soil moisture sensors have been deployed to manage irrigation demand which are being installed in Charsadda and Mansehra.

Provincial Minister Major Retired Sajjad Barkwal further said that the provincial government will fully support the donors. provincial government is committed to working with other agencies to make barren lands cultivable. So that the economy and finances of the farmers can improve and the province can be self-sufficient in food grains. He appreciated the services of IWMI for the province and expressed determination to further strengthen the partnership.

## Two Public Prosecutors reshuffled

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's government has issued orders for the transfer and posting of two Public Prosecutors serving in BPS-19 at Prosecution Department, on Thursday.

According to a notification issued by the Additional Chief Secretary Home, Senior Public Prosecutor Peshawar Amjad Ali has been transferred and posted as District Public Prosecutor Kohat. Conversely, Ibad ur Rehman, the previous District Public Prosecutor Kohat, has been transferred and posted as Senior Public Prosecutor Peshawar. The notification, issued by the Additional Chief Secretary Home, directs both officers to take charge of their new positions immediately.

## Sajida defends LLM thesis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A scholar of Law Sajida resident of Dir Lower has successfully defended her Master of Laws (LLM) Thesis from the prestigious International Islamic University Islamabad, titled "The Impact of Colonial Legacy on Women's Inheritance Rights: A Critical Review under Shariah and Pakistani Legal System."

The study explores how the colonial legacy has influenced the Pakistani legal system, resulting in the marginalization of women's rights. Sajida's research critically analyzes the societal norms, customs, and traditional practices that hinder the implementation of women's inheritance rights in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the study investigates the role of the current legal framework and social structures in perpetuating the denial of women's inheritance rights. Sajida's research offers a comprehensive review of the development of women's inheritance rights in Pakistan, from the colonial era to the present day.

The study focuses on the challenges faced in implementing women's inheritance rights under the current laws and suggests potential solutions to address these issues. By exploring the complex interplay between colonial legacy, societal norms, and legal frameworks, Sajida's research contributes significantly to the discourse on women's rights in Pakistan.

After successfully defending her thesis, Sajida also passed the exams for the Hifez (memorization of the Holy Quran's last chapter), translation, and interpretation of the last chapter of the Holy Quran.

# PTI to continue negotiation irrespective of Al-Qadir trust verdict: Shibli Faraz

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Senator Shibli Faraz said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will continue negotiations with government regardless of the verdict in the Al-Qadir Trust case against Imran Khan, on Thursday. This he said while speaking to media personnel during his appearance in the Peshawar High Court, Shibli Faraz expressed concern over the political instability in Pakistan, which he believes is detrimental to the country's progress.

Shibli Faraz emphasized the need for impartial investigations into the incidents of 9th May 2023 and 26th November 2024 to determine responsibility and prevent blame-shifting. Regarding the current political situation, Shibli Faraz noted that there have been more arrests in

Pakistan's history than ever before. He himself is appearing in court today in connection with a case.

Moreover, he described the cases against him as politically motivated and baseless, predicting that the courts will soon dismiss them. He criticized the Election Commission of Pakistan for conducting the worst elections in 2024. He attributed Pakistan's problems to the lack of transparent elections, which he believes is the root cause of the country's issues.

Shibli Faraz expressed concern about the future of young people in Pakistan, stating that the political uncertainty has made it difficult for them to envision their futures. He criticized the government for hiding behind the events of May 9 and failing to govern effectively. He reiterated that negotiations will continue regardless of the

verdict in the Al-Qadir Trust case.

He emphasized the importance of equality before the law, stating that the law should not be used to benefit or harm individuals. He advocated for the retirement of officials based on their retirement dates.

In response to a question about the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), Shibli Faraz stated that if they had wanted to make demands, they would have done so earlier, but now it is unnecessary.

Another PTI leaders, Shandana Gulzar noted that anyone who wants to save their life is leaving Pakistan. She claimed that Khawaja Asif accused PTI leaders of not being serious about negotiations, saying that as long as they are entangled in court cases, they will not have time for negotiations.

Chief Justice Peshawar

High Court also commented today (on Thursday) on the situation, suggesting that an assembly session be held in court since everyone is already present there, Shandana Gulzar claimed. She added that they have terrorism cases pending, but those who are firing bullets are not being charged with terrorism.

PTI lawmaker stated that everyone is standing with Imran Khan because he is the only person who has stood with Pakistan. She questioned Maryam Nawaz's claim of having been in a death cell, asking what a death cell is.

Shibli Faraz concluded by saying that the government has borrowed Rs. 1.2 trillion in interest-bearing loans and is accusing Imran Khan of wrongdoing. PTI leaders reiterated their commitment to negotiating on points that are essential for Pakistan's well-being.

## To ensure transparency in all recruitment tests ETEA tests transitioned from paper-based to computer-based: Meena Khan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi has said that to ensure transparency in all recruitment tests conducted through ETEA and to eliminate human interference, all tests have been transitioned from paper-based to Computer-Based Testing (CBT). He said that all types of tests, including physical and written exams, are now broadcast live on ETEA's social media page and so far 14 tests have been conducted, all of which were broadcast live.

He added that a comprehensive mechanism has been notified for facilitation of the candidates and general public to address public complaints and concerns, which will be resolved through this system.

The Provincial Minister was addressing a press conference regarding the performance of ETEA at the Information Cell in the Civil Secretariat, Peshawar, on Thursday. He was accompanied by Secretary Higher Education Kamran Ahmed Afridi and ETEA Executive Director Adil Saeed.

The Minister said that the CBT system has ensured 100% transparency while in order to maintain utmost security of the examination material during transportation, High-Tech Digital Lockers have been designed.

He further added that with the computer-based testing system, the chances of paper material leaks have been eradicated, and candidates will no longer have to wait for results.

Moreover, the Minister said that this system has also put an end to re-totaling and re-checking. He maintained that these measures have greatly

increased public trust in ETEA tests. The Provincial Minister also mentioned that ETEA has started introduction of online khuli kachehris, and under the supervision of the Executive Director, three khuli kachehris have already been held.

He informed that strict action has been taken against impersonation and a large number of impersonators that of 242 apprehended on the spot at various stages of the tests and at lateral scrutiny of the video records, saying that all impersonators were handed over to the police for initiating legal action while the beneficiaries have been banned from all kinds of ETEA tests for 2 years.

Mr Meena Khan said that ETEA's office has been converted to a 70kV solar power system, which cost 10.03 million rupees. "This solar system will

save ETEA around 3 lakh rupees per month and 36 lakh rupees annually" he informed and said that ETEA has also generated a revenue of 56 million rupees.

Talking about future course of action, the Provincial Minister mentioned that steps are being taken to implement an Artificial Intelligence-based paper generation system, which will completely end up all kinds of human intervention and enable the testing agency to prepare create papers in real time. He further added that, based on the transparency of ETEA's tests, they are offering their services to other provinces for conducting transparent recruitment tests.

He said that a fund will be established under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to offer scholarships to talented students.

## Deliberately obstructing access to information Strict action to be taken against public bodies

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The KP Information Commission (KPIC) comprising of the Chief Information Commissioner, Farah Hamid Khan, Information Commissioners Arshad Ahmed and Muhammad Irshad took serious notice of non-compliance of the Commission orders. Show cause notices and warning letters to be issued to the defaulting Public Bodies including Higher Education Regulatory Authority and AIG Legal (Police Department) in hearings of the complainants.

Mr. Muhammad Ayaz resident of District Peshawar filed a complaint (Complaint no 6442) under RTI Act 2013 to the Commission against the WSSP Peshawar wherein he had sought information regarding the appointment details of Tube Well Operators from the Public Information officer/Manager, WSSP.

The Commission directed the PIO WSSP to proactively disclose all the 12 categories of information of the WSSP Peshawar as mandated in the Section 5 of the KP RTI Act 2013 on the official website of the WSSP besides this, Manager HR WSSP will be summoned in the subject case for providing timely information to the complainant and enhance public trust in the government institutions.

While adjudicating another complaint no 11613 of Faheem Azam, who had filed a complaint with the Commission against Soil & Water Conservation Department Mardan. Wherein he had requested for provision of all the developmental works since January 2017 till date. The department denied the information by stating that they

don't have developmental funds except staff salaries. The PIO/Director Soil and Conservation Department Mardan was directed to provide parawise reply to the requester within a week time positively with proper intimation to the Commission.

The Commission took serious notice of absence of AIG Legal and deputing a Sub Inspector in complaints no 11650 and 11654. The Commission ordered that the AIG Legal should be present in the upcoming proceedings along with the relevant record on 16-01-2025.

Deciding a complaint no 11675, filed by Mr. Muhammad Iqbal who had sought information about the leasing documents, technical evaluation of Hamala Rest House Nathia Gali owned by the Culture and Tourism Authority. The PIO/Deputy Director MIS,

Mahad Husnain informed the Commission that information is uploaded on the Culture and Tourism Authority website, while the missing data shall be updated with in a week time with proper intimation to the KPIC.

Deciding the complaint no 11441, filed by Noor-Ul-Basar, the Commission will write to the Secretary Local Council Board (LCB) to take disciplinary action against the Accounts Section of the LCB over noncooperation with the PIO /Admin Officer LCB in provision of data so as to meet the objective of transparency in the province.

It is pertinent to mention that The Commission is strongly committed to enable the citizens to have access to information of public importance and helping in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

decantly besides property cost.

Ultimately, the solution to our province pressing issues lies in a collective effort by all stakeholders to control population explosion.

By doing so, the country can pave the way for sustainable economic growth, ensure food security, enhanced living standards, and a brighter future for its citizens.

As the country especially KP stands at this crossroads, the urgency for action against population explosion has never been more critical than today. The experts underscored the need for awareness among masses imperative to provide a brighter future to upcoming generations.

## Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali appointed as Pro-VC UET Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali has been appointed as the Pro-Vice Chancellor of University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar for two years with effect from 15th January, 2025 according to the notification issued by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Higher Education, Archives and library Department vide No.



SO (U-I) HE/2-4/22/UETP/Pro VC dated: 15th January, 2025. He also took charge as acting vice-chancellor of the university on Thursday.

Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali completed his PhD in 2004 from UET Peshawar. He became professor in the year 2007 while meritorious professor in 2022.

He has also remained as Head of Civil Engineering. Having Ph.D in Earthquake Engineering, Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali established the first-ever Earthquake Engineering Center of Pakistan which later on had transformed into the National Center of Earthquake Engineering.

## CTO addresses public via FM Radio, social media

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Haroon Rasheed Khan highlighted the vital role of City Traffic Police Peshawar's FM Radio 88.6 in bridging the gap between the public and traffic authorities. Speaking live on FM Radio 88.6, YouTube, and Facebook, he emphasized the importance of raising awareness among citizens about clear roads and traffic systems to ensure timely arrival at their destinations and smooth travel facilities.

The CTO stated that FM Radio 88.6, along with the department's active social media platforms, has significantly improved travel convenience and traffic management. Regular updates provided every 15 minutes via these channels enable citizens to plan their journeys on clear roads, minimizing disruptions.

This initiative has garnered widespread appreciation and positive results, marking a significant achievement for City



Traffic Police Peshawar. Haroon Rasheed Khan also shed light on ongoing operations against encroachments, which have enhanced traffic flow.

He instructed relevant officials to eliminate encroachments from sidewalks to facilitate pedestrians. He stressed the importance of using helmets and seat belts while driving and adhering to zebra crossings to ensure the safe crossing of pedestrians.

In response to a question, the CTO reaffirmed the department's commitment to taking indiscriminate action against traffic

law violators. He noted that such measures have encouraged citizens to comply with traffic regulations. The growing adherence to traffic laws reflects the success of awareness campaigns initiated by the City Traffic Police.

Various organizations and institutions have acknowledged these efforts, often requesting traffic officials to provide sessions on traffic rules. In his message to the public, Haroon Rasheed Khan urged citizens to strictly follow traffic laws and cooperate with traffic personnel to reduce accidents and ensure smoother travel experiences for all.

## Experts emphasis mass awareness to tackle challenge of population explosion

PESHAWAR (APP): As the Pakistan's population surged to a staggering 241 million mark early this year, the pressures on its socio-economic fabric have become increasingly evident in all provinces, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 2.5 million housing units needed for the underprivileged and poor segments of the society.

This demographic boom, which had escalated from just 33 million population in 1950, is now positioned the country as the fifth most populous in the world, trailing only after China, India, USA, and Indonesia.

This population explosion brought socioeconomic services including education, agriculture,

housing and hospitals under mounting pressure in Pakistan especially in KP, his was stated by Professor Dr Muhammad Naeemur Rehman Khattak, former Chairman of Economics Department at University of Peshawar during an interview with APP.

He said the findings of the 6th Population and Housing Census 2017 are alarming and needs attention of the authorities concerned to tackle the population explosion which are eating the country's resources like a termite.

The national census recorded a growth rate of 2.4% since 1998, highlighting an urgent need for comprehensive strategies at national and

provincial level to address the burgeoning health, education and housing problems in KP.

He said that about 10 million housing units were required across the country including 2.5 million in KP, a number that could double by 2030 if the current population growth persists.

He claimed that the demand for new housing units was growing at a rate of 600,000 per year that would bring agriculture land pressure.

He said the rising migration trend to urban areas has further complicated the issue despite the fact that around 63.6% of the population were still residing in rural areas. Inspite of a noticeable increase in urban dwellers

from 32.52% in 1998 to 36.4% in 2017.

He said this shift has placed an additional strain on urban infrastructure and civic services especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In KP alone, he said the population has crossed 30 million million mark, with an annual growth rate of 2.89%, which should be a matter of great concern.

The increasing influx of individuals from less-developed regions is exacerbating housing shortages in urban centers like Peshawar, said khtair Wali Khan, PMLN KP spokesman.

He said that PTI Government has failed to construct 5 million houses in the country despit its

announcement by PTI founder who remained in power for four long years in the centre, Punjab and KP. The PMLN leader said that PTI leadership concentrated on agitation politics to get relief for their jailed leader but failed.

He argued that controlling population growth was vital for addressing wider socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and corruption.

Wali emphasized that a failure to implement effective family planning and population welfare programs in KP would negatively impact education and health delivery, agricultural productivity, and overall economic growth.

The rapid increase in population is a barrier in way of autorkey in food in the wake of climate change induced weather patterns, he maintained.

"Without addressing the monster issue of overpopulation, we cannot hope to tackle unemployment, illiteracy or poverty, he said, adding the current landscape of shortage of housing and hospitals in KP have vividly illustrated these challenges.

Aside from a few housing projects like Hayatabad Township and Regi Model Town, he said there was a little progress in public housing initiatives in KP, resulting in skyrocketing property prices and rent in major cities of the province

affecting common man.

Residents like Waris Khan, who have spent substantial economic resources on hiring of rented house for nearly two decades, feel the weight of these challenges daily. "I have paid about Rstwo million on hiring of a house for family on rent with no end in sight till today," he lamented.

Experts suggested that KP must learn from successful housing projects in countries like China, launching small residential developments in urban areas to provide affordable housing to poor coupled with robust family planning initiatives, which could help reduce the current population growth rate significantly.





## In brief

### Ex-cop shot dead in Karak F.P. Report

KARAK: A former police officer and his companion were shot dead by unidentified individuals in District Karak, police informed on Thursday. According to details, in Banda Daud Shah Tehsil of District Karak, unidentified individuals opened fire on car, resulting in the deaths of former police inspector Gul Shadi Khan and his companion Dilawar Khan. Police reported that the shooting occurred near the hospital bridge within the jurisdiction of Banda police station. DSP Banda Daud Shah, Javed Khan, stated that motive behind the shooting is being investigated, and efforts to locate the suspects are underway. The deceased belonged to Bahadur Khel area.

### Protest announced F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The All Government Employees Grand Alliance (Agega) on Thursday announced that thousands of government workers from various departments would participate in the proposed protest sit-in at Peshawar on Jan. 22. The announcement was made during a meeting held at Timergara with the Agega district chairman Akhunzada Ubaidullah in the chair. Representatives of various teachers' organizations, clerks and class IV employees' association attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, the Agega chairman Ubaidullah, general secretary Muslim Khan, provincial president of Young Teachers Association Atta ur Rehman, All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Subject Specialists Association president Yousaf Khan and APCA president Sehat Jan alleged the government was planning to deprive its employees of their pension on the IMF dictation. They said that there would be no compromise on pension reforms as pension was the only source of living for senior citizens after their retirement. The speakers said that thousands of government employees would participate in the Agega proposed protest sit-in at Peshawar on Jan. 22.

**PULSE to provide Khewat MUZAFFARGARH (APP):** The Punjab Land Revenue Authority (PLRA) has started working on a major upgrade under Punjab Urban Land System Enhancement (PULSE) project in Muzaffargarh that would mark the end of 'combine Khewat' and enable individuals to have their separate 'Khewat' numbers and maps of their respective urban immovable properties. Deputy commissioner Qurat-ul-Ain Memon, who chaired a meeting here Thursday, said the full upgrade under PULSE project would remove lacunae in the system and ensure revenue record correction. Assistant Director PLRA Muzaffargarh Shakeel Ahmad said that work on the PULSE project began on Thursday in the district and its full enforcement would mean every individual would have his/her own 'Khewat' number of urban property by 2028. The DC said that the system upgrade would make official work easy and bring relief to people. ADCR Dr Abida Fareed, AC Muzaffargarh Irfan Hanjra besides other officials were present. PULSE project is being executed by Board of Revenue with the technical and financial support of World Bank for establishment of a unified central database of all types of urban properties (societies / authorities / development agencies), rights and charges.

# Anti-polio campaign DC directs to ensure access to every child below 5 years

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram has strictly directed the polio teams to ensure access to every child below the age of 5 years and no child should be deprived of the Polio Drops.

He gave these directions while presiding over a meeting on the upcoming 5-Day Anti-Polio Campaign starting from February 3 on Thursday.

The meeting beside others, was also attended

by the DPO Kohat Dr. Zahidullah, ADC (G) Hamid Iqbal, DHO Kohat, authorities concerned of the District Administration, Pak Army, Education, Health and other departments and institutions.

The meeting reviewed in detail various aspects to making the upcoming anti-polio campaign a success and several important decisions were taken in this regard.

The meeting was told that during the upcoming campaign 213673 chil-

dren will be vaccinated and 1086 teams have been formed for this purpose.

Deputy Commissioner appealed to the people of Kohat to administer polio vaccine to their children to save them from permanent disability and cooperate with the polio teams so that Kohat can be made a polio-free district.

He said that everyone will have to play his role for the complete eradication of fetal polio virus adding that it is possible with our joint efforts only.

## Students of Millennium School Charsadda visit NA



## F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Students of Millennium School Charsadda visited the National Assembly, where Speaker of the National Assembly, Ayaz Sadiq, warmly welcomed them. The students presented a bouquet of flowers to the Speaker. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, addressing the students from the floor of the National Assembly, welcomed them on their arrival and informed them about the significance of the visit and the parliamentary

process. He stated that such visits provide students with an excellent opportunity to gain a better understanding of democracy and politics.

He also highlighted the growing importance and role of women in the country's economy, construction, and development. The students were given a detailed tour of the National Assembly and briefed about its historical significance. On this occasion, Members of the National Assembly and former Federal Ministers Farooq Sattar, Zartaj Gul, and other impor-

tant personalities also deemed the visit an important experience for the students. They praised the school management's proactive and dynamic role in organizing such visits, which provide students with valuable insights for their future.

The Director of Peshawar Millennium School Charsadda, Khawaja Shiraz Nasir, and Principal Nasrat Nazir expressed their gratitude to Speaker Ayaz Sadiq for providing the students with full protocol during the visit and for his guidance.

## Multi-parties moot demands release of funds

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Political leaders and social activists from the Lower dir district have demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to release funds for all ongoing development projects for its successful completion. The demand was made during an all parties' conference arranged by the Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl Timergara chapter on local issues at a local hotel in Timergara here on Thursday.

District leaders of different political parties, lawyers, traders' leaders, representatives of social organization and area elders attended the event.

The APC was addressed by the JUI-F district chief Siraj ud Din, tehsil chief Maulana Shamsul Arifeen, former provincial minister Muzafar Syed, PML-N district president Malik Farooq Iqbal, JI district secretary information

Shuiab Ahmad, district bar former president Sher Hayat, PPP's Nawabzada Irfan, Anjuman Tajiran Timergara president Haji Anwarud Din, human rights' activist Akbar Khan, Dir Qaumi Pasoon president Malik Shah Nasim, ANP's Malik Rashid Khan and others.

The speakers criticized the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for its failure to release funds for the already approved development projects for Timergara and other parts of the district. They said the city's roads were ruined under the Timergara beautification projects, work on which had been stopped due to lack of funds. The speakers said that work on several other projects including the Balambat family park and Talash bypass road had also been stopped.

The APC agreed that an action committee formed by all opposition parties would soon meet the KP

chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur in order to inform him regarding the government apathy toward the people of Lower Dir.

The speakers said that eight CNG stations had been established in the district while gas consumers had no gas in their houses. They also raised the issue of prolonged and unscheduled power outage and said that most of the business community suffered due to electricity load shedding. Some of the speakers demanded proper inquiry in sehat insaf card programme and Timergara beautification project.

The speakers said that Timergara tehsil council had been deprived of its funds as its chairman belonged to the JUI-F. They threatened to bring people on the roads if the KP government failed to release adequate funds for the ongoing development projects in the Lower Dir district.

## Orakzai Youth Convention Speakers emphasize youth empowerment to tackle challenges

## Syed Adnan

HANGU: A Youth Convention was held in the Orakzai Headquarters Jirga Hall, Hangu, bringing together a large gathering of students, political leaders, and civil society members to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by the younger generation.

Organized by the Hangu Youth Organization, the event focused on equipping the youth with modern education, technical skills, and a sense of national unity to prepare them for future challenges.

Prominent speakers at the convention included Deputy Commissioner Hangu Gohar Zaman Wazir, Deputy Commissioner orakzai Irfan ud din former MPA Haji Atiq-ur-Rehman, ex-

provincial advisor Ghazan Jamal, Chairman of the Youth Organization Syed Adnan, and senior journalist Tariq Mehmood Mughal. They were joined by additional Deputy Commissioner Masood Jan, MNA Yousaf Khan's elder brother Alam Shah, and Youth Officer Faisal Khan. Students from various government and private institutions in Hangu and Orakzai districts actively participated in the event.

The convention featured speeches by students who expressed their views on national progress and the role of youth in shaping the future. Deputy Commissioner Gohar Zaman Wazir commended the event organizers for creating a platform that united the youth and pro-

moted the message of national solidarity. He emphasized the need to guide the younger generation in the right direction, helping them channel their creativity and potential toward constructive purposes.

Former MPA Haji Atiq-ur-Rehman highlighted the challenges posed by social media, urging young people to focus on education and technical training instead of distractions.

Ex-journalist advisor Ghazan Jamal stressed the importance of collective efforts for national progress, encouraging the youth to dedicate themselves to acquiring knowledge and skills. Senior journalist Tariq Mehmood Mughal called for consistent hard work, advising students to avoid shortcuts and understand

the realities of the world.

Certificates were awarded to students who had completed safety courses, with distribution carried out by Deputy Commissioners Gohar Zaman Wazir and Irfan-ud-Din, alongside ADC Masood Jan and other officials. The speakers also praised the sacrifices of Pakistan's Armed Forces, recognizing their efforts in ensuring the security and stability of the nation.

The convention concluded with a call for unity, technical advancement, and positive engagement among the youth, emphasizing their role as the future leaders of Pakistan. The event served as a reminder of the collective responsibility to guide the younger generation toward a prosperous and unified future.



DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry inspecting the site for Board of Secondary Education.

## Citizen claims DC Tank dismissed SMBR ruling; led to public humiliation

TANK (APP): A shocking incident unfolded at the Deputy Commissioner (DC) office in Tank when an ordinary citizen was reportedly treated rudely by DC Tanvir Khattak while attempting to address a legitimate grievance under the Chief Minister's (CM) Awami Agenda.

According to the citizen, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal, he visited the DC office on Tuesday during the open-door hours as part of a follow-up to directives issued by the Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) in a July 2024 judgment.

The MBR had instructed the compliance of specific actions, which the citizen claims are being deliberately delayed by the DC's office, allegedly due to the influence of a corrupt Kanungo (land revenue officer) Israr Shah.

The citizen alleges that despite the MBR's clear directives, Deputy Commissioner Tanvir Khattak dismissed the validity of the MBR's authority, claiming that he did not regard it as a court.

During the exchange of words, the DC reportedly ordered his escort sepoy to expel the citizen from the office saying as "I am DC not sitting here only for to obey MBR."

The interaction, which took place between 12:30 pm and 1:00 pm, was witnessed by some other PTI stalwarts including Rehmat Kundi, a well-known social and political activist in Tank.

"I went to the DC office to ensure the compliance of the MBR's judgment, but I was insulted and thrown out," said the citizen. "The DC's behavior was not only rude but also unprofessional, and it seems like he's protecting a corrupt Kanungo involved in forgery of land revenue records."

The citizen further alleged that both the DC and inquiry officer Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Allah Noor Sherani have been bribed by the Kanungo, as evidenced by their continued inaction and apparent favoritism toward the officer.

## Anti-riot police force conducts mock exercise

## F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: The anti-riot police force conducted an exercise at the police lines in Karak district on Thursday.

A police official said that Kohat Regional Police Officer Abbas Majeed Marwat had directed the district police authorities to hold the mock exercise to check preparedness of cops.

During the drill, the policemen exhibited their skills to deal with emergency situations, violent protest demonstrations and disperse illegal gatherings and assembly of people.

"The main objective of conducting the exercise was to enhance professional capabilities of the cops and to check their preparedness for an effective response in emergency situations", he maintained.

The official said that the anti-riot squad also demonstrated their capacities and the skills to counter stone-pelting and other obstacles and combat harsh and law and order situations.

"To disperse violent protesters by using modern technological equipment and gadgets along with baton charge and tear gas was also part of the drill", he added.

Karak District Police Officer Shahbaz Elahi inspected the mock exercise and gave tips to the police personnel to handle violent protests and harsh situations.

"The police should be fully prepared at all times to counter challenges and protect people's lives and properties", he added.

The district police chief said that the mock drills were helpful to boost the morale of policemen and prepare them to respond to difficult situations effectively.

## Protest against non-payment of salaries, pensions held

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: The employees of Tehsil Municipal Committee Mardan on Thursday held protest demonstration against non-payment of their salaries and pensions on time as what they alleged that it was causing to create financial burden and difficulties for the poor employees of TMA.

The protesting TMA employees were led by provincial general secretary of TMA Employees Association Salman Hoti who was also flanked by district president Munir Khan, other office-bearers and large number of the affected employees.

The protesting employees walked from TMA Mardan office and held protest demonstration in front of press club building

after passing through various bazaars.

Addressing on the occasion, the leaders of protesters alleged they were not being paid their salaries and pensions on time which was causing to financial woes them and their family members.

They blamed that the employees were being threatened by officers to give up the demand of accountability into anomalies in TMA, otherwise, they would be transferred to hard places.

The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has failed to stop corruption into the Tehsil Municipal Administration Mardan and other TMAs of the province, they said, adding that the provincial government had become silent spectator and was not taking the matter as seriously which was indicating that there was something wrong.

They also alleged and claimed that most of the TMAs of KPK had become financially weak or bankrupt.

On one hand, the leaders said that vehicles was stood in parking area TMA for months but on the other hand the petrol bills of those vehicles had reached to Rs.1.4 million. They demanded that transparent investigation should be conducted into financial irregularities and corruption in tehsil municipal administration (TMA) Mardan.

They pointed out that government knew that officials were enjoying liberty to get funds and spend the same according to their well.

## PPP delegation meets Kundi

## F.P. Report

KARAK: A delegation of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) from District Karak, led by District President Khurshid Alam, met with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faissal Karim Kundi, to discuss political and organizational matters of the district. The delegation included Divisional Senior Vice President Jahanzeb Khattak, District General Secretary Tariq Bazidkhal, District Secretary Information Hasrat Zaman, District Senior Vice President Najeeb Dad, PK-97 President Eid Rehman, PK-98 President Haji Dar Nawab Khan, District Deputy General Secretary Muhammad Imran, and members Shakirullah and Ifikhar Alam. During the meeting, a detailed review of the current political situation and organizational issues in Karak was conducted. The delegation highlighted the pressing gas and electricity crises faced by the district. The team also discussed the allocation and utilization of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund in the area. Another key issue raised was the rising health concerns in Karak, including cancer, skin diseases, heart attacks, and kidney ailments, reportedly linked to uranium drilling in the region.



FAISALABAD: A worker busy in roasting grams for customers at his workplace.





# Detained South Korea’s Yoon refuses questioning

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea's arrested President Yoon Suk Yeol did not attend a second day of questioning by investigators on Thursday, further stonewalling a criminal probe into whether he committed insurrection with his bid to impose martial law.

Yoon on Wednesday became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested and was held at the Seoul Detention Centre after refusing to cooperate.

He remained in the centre on Thursday, with his lawyer citing his health as a factor for his absence from the questioning. The investigators did not elaborate on why they did not compel him to attend.

Authorities have 48 hours to question the suspended president, after which they must release him or seek a warrant to detain him for up to 20 days. That countdown has been paused, however, as his lawyers have asked a court to review the legality of the arrest.

Yoon's refusal to cooperate with investigators

comes as the Constitutional Court held a second hearing in his impeachment trial to determine whether to remove him permanently or reinstate his presidential powers.

South Korea is grappling with its worst political crisis in decades, sparked by Yoon's brief attempt to impose martial law on Dec. 3 that was voted down by parliament.

In opening arguments at the Constitutional Court, an opposition Democratic Party lawmaker condemned Yoon for "the Dec. 3 insurrection" and said Yoon and a small number of supporters had sought to stoke chaos by refusing to accept his arrest warrant.

"This impeachment trial decides whether or not to bring someone like this back to the position of commander-in-chief in control of the military," said Jung Chung-rae, the lawmaker who heads parliament's Legislation and Judiciary Committee.

In response, one of Yoon's defence team said his impeachment was not



intended to defend the constitution but for the opposition "to use the majority power of parliament to usurp the position of the president".

The DP used its majority in parliament to vote to impeach Yoon, although some 12 lawmakers from his own party also voted in favour.

Yoon's legal team has denied he masterminded

an insurrection, a crime in South Korea punishable by life imprisonment or even technically by the death penalty.

The last executions in South Korea were in 1997, for criminal offences such as murder.

Opinion polls conducted by Realmeter on Dec. 4, the day after Yoon's martial law declaration, showed 73.6% supported

Yoon's impeachment. Its latest survey from Jan. 9-10 showed support for Yoon's ruling party rose to 40.8%, catching up with the DP which posted 42.2%.

Yoon's lawyer Cho Dae-hyun said the suspended president's decision to declare martial law had been made in good faith based on his view that the country was

in a state of emergency.

Another of Yoon's lawyers, Bae Jin-han, said: "Some say 'you get impeached if you breathe' nowadays."

Yoon's arrest ended a weeks-long standoff with authorities after police swooped before dawn on his fortified hillside villa in Seoul, to the dismay of supporters at the site.

Yoon said he turned

himself in for questioning to prevent what he called the risk of "unsavoury bloodshed", though he continued to protest that it was an illegal investigation and invalid arrest warrant.

PROTESTERS SUPPORT Yoon has so far refused to talk to investigators who had prepared a questionnaire of more than 200 pages, an official from the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) leading the criminal inquiry said.

His questioning had been due to resume at 2 p.m. (0500 GMT) on Thursday, but the CIO said that they had been informed by Yoon's side that he would not attend.

Yonhap cited Yoon Kab-keun, one of Yoon's lawyers, as saying that his health was a factor and saying further questioning was pointless, without elaborating. A small crowd of protesters supporting Yoon gathered and sat on a road outside the CIO office, calling the president's arrest illegitimate.

His lawyers have said

the arrest warrant is illegal because it was issued by a court in the wrong jurisdiction and the team set up to investigate him had no legal mandate to do so.

Yoon's legal team on Thursday filed a complaint over the warrant with the prosecutors' office against the CIO chief and some police officials.

The political crisis has reverberated across Asia's fourth-largest economy and piled pressure on the won currency.

South Korea's central bank governor said on Thursday that the most important factor determining the health of the economy in coming months was whether the political chaos stabilised.

"That is why a normalisation of the political process is way more important than lowering interest rates a month earlier or later," said Rhee Chang-yong, speaking after the Bank of Korea unexpectedly held policy interest rates steady at 3.00% on Thursday, defying analyst expectations of a cut in rates.

## The migrants on the frontline of Trump’s mass deportation plan

FLORIDA (Reuters): Blanca Figueroa and Severiano Martinez have known from the start of their eight-year marriage that she was at risk of deportation because she entered the United States illegally.

Now - with President-elect Donald Trump expected to issue a flurry of executive orders aimed at speeding the deportation process on the day he takes office on Jan. 20 - that risk has become an overwhelming source of anxiety and discussion in their central Florida home.

Figueroa, who is from Guatemala, and Martinez, who is a U.S. citizen, live with their seven-year-old son who was born in the U.S., and a teenage son from an earlier relationship who has a green card. Figueroa says she is the family's main breadwinner and Martinez's caregiver after he was injured at his job on a horse ranch.

"He worries a lot that if they deport me that he would not be able to manage the house and the boys," she told Reuters.

About a third of the 1.4 million people expected to be prime targets for deportation - those like Figueroa with "final orders of removal" - live in the Florida and Texas enforcement areas, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement data obtained by Reuters.

The two states have enacted their own laws cracking down on immigrants in the country illegally. At least another third of migrants living under final orders are in California and other "sanctuary" states that limit cooperation with federal immigration enforcement.

Reuters spoke with half a dozen immigrants living in Florida and Texas with removal orders as well as immigration advocates and church leaders, who described rising anxiety and a scramble to meet with lawyers and make contingency plans for children and other dependents in case they are deported. They described their fear of being picked up by police indiscriminately or for driving without a license.

John Budensiek, sheriff in Martin County, Florida - an hour's drive north from Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club - said that many offenders who pass through his jails could be "low-hanging fruit."

Budensiek, a Republican, said the sheriff's office has "had a really rough time" getting ICE officers to pick up immigration violators from their jails during President Joe Biden's presidency.

"I believe that the Trump administration will be pretty aggressive with grabbing them up," he said.

An ICE spokesperson said the agency considers individual circumstances when determining whether to detain someone.

Figueroa, 36, crossed the U.S.-Mexico border illegally in 2016 and was ordered deported after she missed an immigration court hear-

ing that November. She met Martinez, 64, later that year, when they worked on the same ranch. "He was, and still is, my angel here," she said.

Despite marrying a U.S. citizen, Figueroa has been unable to legalize her status. She missed the window to appeal her deportation order, and a judge denied her motion to reopen the case, court records show.

None of the options Figueroa and Martinez have discussed in case of her deportation - him staying in Florida with the kids; moving as a family to Mexico - seem remotely workable to them as they depend on Figueroa's income and on Martinez's health insurance.

A longtime Republican voter, Martinez stayed home last year because of the rhetoric around immigration. "They try to blame all the people who come to America but the country is built on immigrants," he said. Even so, he hopes the bombast around mass deportations remains just that. "We have to have faith," Figueroa said.

"BIGGEST FEAR"

Tom Homan, who will be border czar in Donald Trump's incoming administration, has said immigrants with final deportation orders have already had a chance to argue their case in front of a judge.

"At the end of that due process, when they get ordered removed, those orders have to be executed or what the hell are we doing?" he told Reuters in October. "If those final orders don't mean anything, then shut down immigration court."

Immigration advocates counter that many people under final deportation orders are long-term residents, law-abiding, contributing economically and have U.S.-citizen children or spouses.

"The majority of undocumented people in this country have been here for over a decade," said Representative Maxwell Frost, a Democrat whose district includes half of Orlando and surrounding areas. "These are our neighbors. These are people who are working."

Frost said he plans to meet with Orlando-area mayors, law enforcement, judges and school leaders to encourage them to limit cooperation with the deportation effort.

"We're not going to let them do this stuff in the shadows," Frost said.

Trump's plan to priori-

tize deportations of people with final orders of removal is a dramatic shift from Biden's focus on serious criminals and national security threats.

The Biden administration directed ICE officers to consider certain factors before making an arrest, including whether the person was a long-term resident or primary caregiver.

"Those are the kinds of factors that would be relevant to a law enforcement officer in making a public safety determination," said Tom Jawetz, a former U.S. Department of Homeland Security official who helped draft the Biden guidance.

Trump's new guidance would prioritize criminals but allow anyone without legal status to be picked up, giving more discretion to ICE officers, Reuters reported in November.

Such a shift could put people like Adriana, a Cuban woman with a 2-year-old U.S. citizen son, at greater risk of deportation. She spoke on condition her last name not be used for fear of being targeted for deportation.

Adriana received an expedited deportation order when she crossed the U.S.-Mexico border in 2021, although her husband was given the chance to make his political asylum case in immigration court. His next hearing is in 2027.

Because she could not be immediately deported to Cuba, she has to check in regularly with immigration officials in South Florida, where she now lives. "I don't know what's going to happen, I can't sleep, I can't eat," she said. "What if I'm separated from my baby?"

DEPORT TO OTHER COUNTRIES

For Jorge Lopez-Giron, 47, a gay man from Honduras who has been living in the U.S. without legal status since 2000, the anticipated headline shift under the Trump administration means he could be at an even greater risk of deportation because of a misdemeanor domestic violence conviction.

Lopez-Giron, who works as a rideshare and food delivery driver in Austin, spent three months in ICE detention after he was convicted in 2009 following a bar fight with his then-boyfriend, he said. He was ineligible for asylum because he had spent years in the U.S. without applying.

The Austin-based advocacy group American

Gateways helped pause his removal order based on his fear of anti-LGBTQ discrimination in Honduras. The order could be reinstated if he commits another crime, if conditions in Honduras change, or if a third country agrees to take him, said Edna Yang, an attorney with the group.

Lopez-Giron feels a measure of security with his removal case paused, but also knows people with criminal records will be a focus of the Trump administration.

"I'm afraid," Lopez-Giron said. "What if a police officer arrests me because of the color of my skin or because I don't speak English well?"

Other migrants - from countries like Cuba and Venezuela that have frosty relations with the U.S. and accept few deportees - were low priorities for deportation under Biden.

Homan, Trump's choice of border czar, told Reuters he will work to increase deportations to those nations or recruit other countries to accept them.

Alain, a Cuban who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border illegally in 2021, now lives in Houston with his wife Erika, a Honduran who also lacks legal status, and their four children. Their two youngest are U.S. citizens.

Alain, 32, first left his family farm in Cuba's Matanzas Province in 2019 after he was harassed and detained by police over the business and his opposition to the communist government, he said.

He applied for asylum from Mexico during the first Trump administration and was denied. He then crossed the border illegally. At that time, Cuba was not accepting U.S. deportation flights. Alain was released with an order of supervision and ordered to check in with ICE once a year.

He has been working with American Gateways to contest his deportation order and recently purchased a big-rig truck and trailer to start his own trucking business.

Deportation flights to Cuba resumed in 2023 and the Biden administration has also been deporting some Cubans caught crossing illegally to Mexico.

Alain worries how Erika would support their children if he was deported.

"I had plans to buy a house next year, but I'm afraid," he said. "It's a risk to buy a house because if I'm deported, I'll lose everything."



MAGDEBURG: Flowers, toys and candles left by mourners lie outside Johanniskirche church prior to a commemoration of the victims of the recent Christmas market terror attack in Germany. On December 20, 2024 Taleb Al Abdulmohsen drove a car into the crowded Magdeburg Christmas market, killing six people.

## French parliament head warns against backing no-confidence vote

PARIS (Reuters): The head of France's lower house of parliament on Thursday warned of major risks if a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Francois Bayrou's government succeeded, as it would hit areas such as the budget.

Politicians from the far-left France Unbowed (LFI), Green and Communist parties have put forward a no-confidence motion against

Bayrou's minority government. The political instability in France, which had four prime ministers last year, has rattled markets.

Bayrou is likely to survive the vote for now, but the loss of support from the centre-left Socialist Party, especially after concessions on education and pension reform, would be a major blow.

"We have the budget, that is priority number

one," parliament head Yael Braun-Pivet told TF1 TV.

"Today, we must all come together and get over our differences, to get the country moving forward and to be able to respond to matters of great importance," she added.

Socialist leader Olivier Faure has said Bayrou's pledge to re-open talks on pension reform was not enough, saying the party would back the no-confi-

dence vote absent a clear response to their demands.

Braun-Pivet said that if the no-confidence motion went through, France would also be unable to push through legislation on farming and a special law on Mayotte, France's overseas territory that was battered by a cyclone last month.

The no-confidence vote will be debated later on Thursday afternoon.

## Pope Francis hurts his right arm after falling for the second time

ROME (AP): Pope Francis fell Thursday and hurt his right arm, the Vatican said, just weeks after another apparent fall resulted in a bad bruise on his chin.

Francis didn't break his arm, but a sling was put on as a precaution, the Vatican spokesman said in a statement.

On Dec. 7, the pope whacked his chin on his nightstand in an apparent fall that resulted in a bad bruise.

The 88-year-old pope, who has battled health problems including long bouts of bronchitis, often has to use a wheelchair because of bad knees. He uses a walker or cane when moving around his apartment in the Santa Marta hotel.

The Vatican said that Thursday's fall also occurred at Santa Marta, and the pope was later seen in audiences with his right arm in a sling.

"This morning, due to a

fall at Santa Marta House, Pope Francis suffered a contusion to his right forearm, without fracture. The arm was immobilized as a precautionary measure," the statement said.

Speculation about Francis' health is a constant in Vatican circles, especially after Pope Benedict XVI broke 600 years of tradition and resigned from the papacy in 2013. Benedict's aides have attributed the decision to a nighttime fall

that he suffered during a 2012 trip to Mexico, after which he determined he couldn't keep up with the globe-trotting demands of the papacy.

Francis has said, however, that he has no plans to resign anytime soon, even if Benedict "opened the door" to the possibility. In his autobiography "Hope" released this week, Francis said that he hadn't considered resigning even when he had major intestinal surgery.

## Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan out of danger after being stabbed

MUMBAI (BBC): Popular Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan has undergone surgery and is out of danger after he was stabbed by an intruder in his home overnight, his team has said.

The attack took place early on Thursday morning in an upscale neighbourhood in the Indian city of Mumbai, where Khan lives with his family.

City police told BBC Marathi that the actor was injured after a scuffle broke out between him and an unidentified man who entered his house sometime after midnight.

Police have formed teams to investigate the matter.

"Khan has come out of surgery and is out of danger. He is currently in recovery

and the doctors are monitoring his progress," Khan's team said in a statement.

Speaking to reporters after the surgery, Dr Nitin Dange of Lilavati Hospital, where Khan is admitted, said that the actor "sustained a major injury to the thoracic spinal cord due to a lodged knife in the spine".

"A surgery was performed to remove the knife and repair leaking spinal fluid. Two other deep wounds on his left hand and one other on his neck were repaired by the plastic surgery team," he said.

Khan is married to Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan and the couple have two children. The family have not made any public statements yet but

Khan's team said they were safe.

The exact details of the assault are not clear yet. Police have said that "an unknown person" had entered the actor's home.

"After that, an argument broke out between Khan and the intruder," Mumbai's Deputy Commissioner of Police Dixit Gedam told BBC Marathi.

Khan's team said it was a case of "attempted burglary" but did not share more details.

"We request the media and fans to be patient. It is a police matter," they said.

Khan, who made his Bollywood debut in 1993, primarily works in Hindi cinema and is known for his quick wit and comic timing.

Among his popular

movies are romantic comedies such as Dil Chahta Hai and Kal Ho Naa Ho and recent action dramas such as Tanhaji and Devara: Part 1.

His role as an antagonist in Omkar, a 2006 critically acclaimed adaptation of Shakespeare's Othello, was widely appreciated.

Khan comes from a family of erstwhile Nawabs who ruled Pataudi, a small princely state on the outskirts of Delhi, and is married into a family of film stars.

His father Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi was a cricketer who captained the Indian team in the 1960s. His mother Sharmila Tagore is a veteran actress who has featured in prominent Hindi and Bengali films from the age of 14.





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## Relief at a Gaza ceasefire must be accompanied by action

Given the almost unimaginable suffering that has taken place in Gaza for a year and a half, the main reaction to last night's news of a truce between Israel and Hamas should be one of solemn relief. For the first time since a seven-day truce in November 2023, Gazan civilians can hopefully look forward to the prospect of at least 42 days without Israeli bombardments. The families of Israeli hostages waiting anxiously for their loved ones since the Hamas attacks of October 7 can also feel some hope.

Such relief must be accompanied by swift action, particularly when it comes to getting food, medicine, clothing and fuel to homeless, malnourished and ill people in the ravaged Palestinian territory. As speculation mounted this week that a ceasefire was imminent, the UN on Tuesday said it was preparing to expand humanitarian assistance to Gaza. This readiness to take advantage of the pause in the fighting was encouraging but much else remains uncertain.

Will Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian factions respect the truce? The only precedent in this round of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the November 2023 ceasefire that created an opening for desperately needed humanitarian aid to enter southern Gaza and allowed for the exchange of dozens of Hamas-held hostages for Israeli-held Palestinian prisoners and detainees. However, that truce, although largely successful, was marred by claim and counter-claim that it had been broken.

In the medium term, the focus should be on ensuring that all phases of the deal are met and making this truce a permanent one. Ending the war for good requires a clear plan for urgently needed governance in Gaza, a full Israeli withdrawal and reviving a political settlement process based on two states for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. In short, as the guns fall silent, a level of political and diplomatic momentum must be built that cannot be reversed.

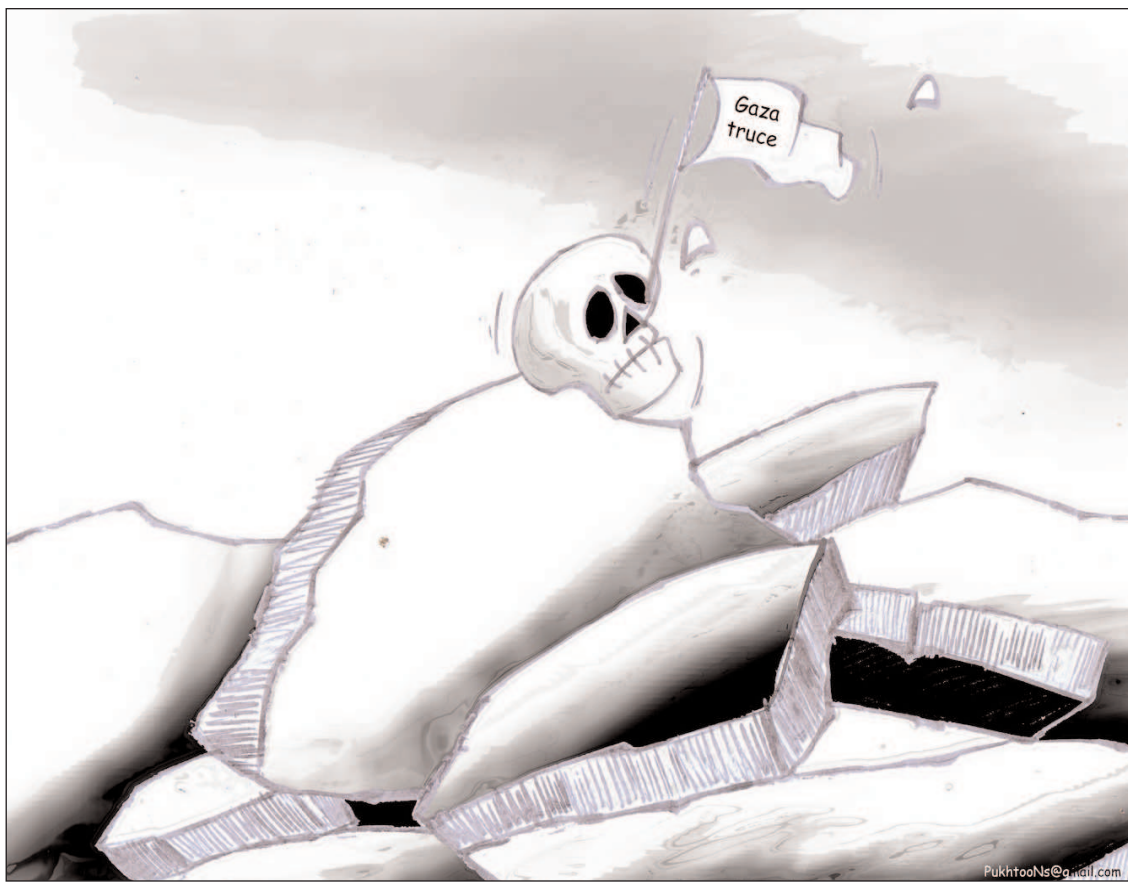
As the truce is due to begin on Sunday, it is also important to reflect on all that Palestinian society has lost. Last Friday, The Lancet medical journal said that its estimate of deaths caused by traumatic injury in Gaza during the first nine months of the war was about 40 per cent higher than that recorded by the Hamas-run health ministry. While the British publication estimates that more than 64,000 Gazans lost their lives, this does not take account of a generation of children scarred by trauma or those who have suffered life-changing injuries. Thousands of people remain missing or in Israeli detention and Gaza has almost no functioning institutions or infrastructure. A truce is only a first step in righting some of these wrongs.

The relief felt by many today will be rightly tempered by caution. Some in Israel, whose forces have still been bombing Gaza and whose security cabinet will vote on whether to accept or reject the truce later today, are unhappy that the illusory goal of "total victory" in Gaza remains unfulfilled. Israel's settler-right appear to be particularly angry that their plans of re-occupation will be frustrated by this planned de-escalation. There are other flashpoints - such as the West Bank - where hardliners could try to undermine the fragile ceasefire.

In this new situation, Washington retains a pivotal role. As US president-elect Donald Trump prepares to return to the White House on Monday, many will recall his threat to Hamas that "all hell will break loose" if the remaining Israeli hostages are not released. However, any Gazan could truthfully say that hell broke loose in their homes, their streets and their communities 15 months ago. Despite the many caveats, with a new approach this ceasefire may finally be the first step on the way out of this hell for all in Palestine and Israel.

### Important Notice

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## Saudi Arabia at the forefront of region's sustainable uplift

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has positioned itself as a leader in sustainable development within the Middle East, making significant strides in renewable energy investments as part of its Vision 2030 initiative. This strategic shift is critical because it aims to diversify the Kingdom's economy, traditionally reliant on oil, by embracing clean energy solutions. The implications of Saudi Arabia's commitment to renewable energy extend beyond its borders, offering a model for neighboring countries and contributing to regional stability and global sustainability.

A central component of Vision 2030 — Saudi Arabia's ambitious blueprint for economic diversification and development — is the transformation of the energy sector, with a target to source at least 50 percent of the Kingdom's power from renewable energy by 2030, expanding its capacity to 130 gigawatts. This goal underscores Saudi Arabia's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and promoting sustainable growth.

The Kingdom is undertaking several large-scale renewable energy projects in an effort to achieve its Vision 2030 objectives. The Sudair Solar PV Project, located in Sudair Industrial City, is set to become one of the world's largest solar power plants, with a capacity of 1.5 GW. The project involves an investment of \$924 million and is expected to supply power to some 185,000 households upon completion.

Additionally, the NEOM Green Hydrogen Project, situated in the futuristic city of NEOM, is set to become the world's largest utility-scale, commercially based hydrogen facility powered entirely by renewable energy.

The \$8.4 billion project will integrate 3.9 GW of renewable power from solar, wind and storage. When it becomes operational, which is expected to be in 2026, the facility aims to produce 600 tonnes per day of clean hydrogen.

Another key project, the Al Shuaibah solar plant, will contribute significantly to Saudi Arabia's renewable energy capacity, aligning with the Kingdom's goal of achieving 130 GW of renewable capacity by 2030.

Last September, a consortium led by Saudi Aramco's power unit, along with ACWA Power and Badeel, signed deals worth \$3.28 billion to supply solar power to Saudi Arabia's state-owned Saudi Power Procurement Company. These agreements are part of the Kingdom's efforts to diversify its energy sources away from liquid fuels.

This kind of proactive approach demonstrates Saudi Arabia's readiness to lead the renewable energy revolution in the region.

Countries in the Middle East, a region rich in fos-

sil fuel resources, have long relied on oil and gas as the backbone of their economies.

These resources have met their domestic energy needs and sustained economic growth through exports, positioning the region as a pivotal player in the global energy market. However, this dependency has made the region vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices, geopolitical tensions and the finite nature of fossil fuel reserves.

The growing urgency of the climate crisis, alongside global efforts to

exports, the Kingdom is shielding its economy from the unpredictable nature of global oil markets.

This diversification ensures a more stable economic future, as it fosters growth in emerging sectors such as solar and wind energy, hydrogen production and related industries. These sectors not only provide opportunities for economic expansion, they also create new avenues for employment, particularly for younger generations.

Moreover, the integration of renewable energy technology

water scarcity and desertification, making it imperative for the region to contribute to global mitigation efforts. Additionally, by diversifying its energy portfolio, Saudi Arabia enhances its energy security, reducing reliance on a single resource and mitigating the risks associated with geopolitical conflicts, which often surround fossil fuel markets.

This strategic move not only strengthens the Kingdom's national security, it also positions it as a leader in addressing global environmental and energy challenges. Saudi Arabia's proactive approach ought to also set an example for other Middle Eastern countries to follow. Neighboring nations can draw valuable lessons from the Kingdom's strategies. Establishing clear and supportive policies is crucial for attracting investments in renewable energy. Vision 2030 provides a comprehensive roadmap that other countries can emulate.

Collaborations between government entities and private companies have been instrumental in advancing Saudi Arabia's renewable projects. Such partnerships can mobilize resources and expertise effectively.

Allocating funds toward advanced technologies and infrastructure development is essential as well. Saudi Arabia's investments in solar and hydrogen projects demonstrate the benefits of embracing innovative solutions.

The Kingdom's commitment to renewable energy is a forward-looking strategy that addresses both national and global challenges. By investing in sustainable energy, the Kingdom is not only securing its economic future but also contributing to global environmental goals.

The Middle East, with its vast potential for solar and wind energy, stands to gain significantly from embracing renewable energy.

In fact, collective regional efforts can lead to enhanced regional stability, as shared investments in renewable energy can foster cooperation and reduce tensions arising from resource competition.

In other words, the Middle East can position itself as a leader in the global shift toward sustainable energy, influencing international policies and markets.

Diversifying energy sources can lead to sustainable economic development, creating jobs and promoting technological innovation.

In conclusion, Saudi Arabia's leadership in renewable energy investments marks a transformative period for the Middle East. The Kingdom's initiatives under Vision 2030 not only pave the way for its sustainable future, but also serve as a catalyst for regional and global progress toward environmental sustainability and economic resilience.

## Trump versus the Gulf of Mexico

Belén Fernández

This month during a rambling news conference at his Mar-a-Lago estate, United States President-elect Donald Trump announced his latest vision for revising the map of the world: "We're going to be changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, which has a beautiful ring."

He went on to reiterate approvingly: "That covers a lot of territory, the Gulf of America. What a beautiful name."

The Gulf of Mexico, which runs along much of Mexico's eastern coastline and abuts five southern US states, is a key international hub for shipping, fishing, oil drilling and other commercial activity. The body of water was christened as such more than four centuries ago before either the US or Mexico existed.

Of course, a unilateral renaming of the gulf by the US president would not require endorsement by Mexico or any other country. Additional cartographic

wasted no time heeding Trump's call to arms. Just two days after the Mar-a-Lago news conference in Florida, she introduced a bill that would rename the Gulf of Mexico in accordance with the president-elect's wishes.

As per the political website The Hill, the bill "would direct the chair of the Board on Geographic Names under the secretary of the Interior to rename all federal documents and maps within 180 days of being signed into law". Greene added her own convincing sales pitch: "It's our gulf. The rightful name is the Gulf of America, and it's what the entire world should refer to it as."

As it turns out, this is not the first time that US politicians have suggested renaming the Gulf of Mexico. An Associated Press article recalls an episode in 2012 when a member of the legislature of the state of Mississippi put forth a bill to assign the name "Gulf of America" to

**Never one to pass up an opportunity for repetitive hypocrisy, Trump appended the following warning to his Gulf of Mexico announcement at Mar-a-Lago: "And Mexico has to stop allowing millions of people to pour into our country." Anyway, the rebranding of the gulf will most certainly put the Mexicans in their place. In the very least, the "Gulf of America" project is less invasive than previous ideas that have sprung from Trump's brain, such as the firing of missiles at Mexico to combat the drug cartels – organisations that happen to owe their very existence to the simultaneous US demand for and criminalisation of drugs. The hullabaloo over the renaming also provides a convenient distraction from, you know, actual problems – which is what Trump's signature bombastic xenophobia is meant to do in the first place.**

adjustments recently floated by the incoming leader include seizing the Panama Canal, wresting away control of Greenland and annexing Canada.

Apart from the "beautiful ring" Trump has detected in the Gulf of Mexico's impending new name, the proposed move is consistent with his track record of overzealous antagonism of Mexico, a country he has said is disproportionately composed of "rapists" and other criminals. And speaking of "beautiful", Trump repeatedly demanded during his first term as president that Mexico foot the bill for the "big, beautiful wall" he envisioned erecting on the US-Mexico frontier.

Indeed, Trump viciously blames the United States's southern neighbour for the northbound flow of "illegal" migrants and drugs – as though US demand for illicit substances and the bipartisan US habit of destroying other people's countries have nothing to do with fuelling drug trafficking and migration. Nor, surely, does the US economic reliance on undocumented and exploitable labour play any sort of role in the equation.

Never one to pass up an opportunity for repetitive hypocrisy, Trump appended the following warning to his Gulf of Mexico announcement at Mar-a-Lago: "And Mexico has to stop allowing millions of people to pour into our country." Anyway, the rebranding of the gulf will most certainly put the Mexicans in their place.

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The hullabaloo over the renaming also provides a convenient distraction from, you know, actual problems – which is what Trump's signature bombastic xenophobia is meant to do in the first place.

Far-right US Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, for one,

portions of the body of water touching Mississippi beaches – "a move the bill author later referred to as a 'joke'".

Meanwhile, quite a bit further back on the regional timeline, the Gulf of Mexico played host to another egregious example of imperial hubris that transpired in 1914 on the watch of Democratic US President Woodrow Wilson. The website of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum has memorialised that year's "Incident at Tampico", named for the port city in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas on the Gulf of Mexico where "American warships were sitting just off the coast to protect American oil interests."

The previous year, a coup against Mexican President Francisco I Madero had taken place with assistance from the then-US ambassador to Mexico, producing the reign of General Victoriano Huerta. By 1914, the new US ambassador to Mexico was backing the opposition to Huerta, whose forces had the audacity to detain nine US sailors while the fleet of American warships continued to sit innocently off the coast.

In the version of the incident provided by the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum, "the commander of US forces in the area demanded a 21-gun salute and an apology from Huerta after the sailors were quickly released". The Mexican government rejected these demands, "and President Wilson used the events as a reason to request permission from Congress for an armed invasion of Mexico".

And voila: "Events soon led to the occupation of [the port city of] Veracruz by US forces."

In other words, there are plenty of reasons folks might be opposed to renaming the Gulf of Mexico.

And while Trump's insistence on behaving like a caricature of himself makes it easier to cast him as some sort of aberration in US foreign policy, at the end of the day, it's imperialism plain and simple – and that is one thing you just can't rename.



# Making the most of the AI revolution

Philippe Aghion, Simon Bunel and Xavier Jaravel

Some prominent economists argue that the revolution in artificial intelligence — particularly the rapid development of generative AI — will have only moderate effects on productivity growth but unambiguously negative effects on employment, owing to the automation of many tasks and jobs. We disagree on both counts.

When it comes to productivity growth, AI’s impact can operate through two distinct channels: automating tasks in the production of goods and services and automating tasks in the production of new ideas. When Erik Brynjolfsson and his co-authors recently examined the impact of generative AI on customer service agents at a US software firm, they found that productivity among workers with access to an AI assistant increased by almost 14 percent in the first month of use, then stabilized at a level approximately 25 percent higher after three months. Another study found similarly strong productivity gains among a diverse group of knowledge workers, with lower-productivity workers experiencing the strongest initial effects, thus reducing inequality within firms.

Moving from the micro to the macro level, in a 2024 paper, we (Aghion and Bunel) considered two alternatives for estimating the impact of AI on potential growth over the next decade. The first approach exploits the parallel between the AI revolution and past technological rev-

olutions, while the second follows Daron Acemoglu’s task-based framework, which we consider in light of the available data from existing empirical studies.

Based on the first approach, we estimate that the AI revolution should increase aggregate productivity growth by 0.8 to 1.3 percentage points per year over the next decade. Similarly, using Acemoglu’s task-based formula, but with our own reading of the recent empirical literature, we estimate that AI should increase

potential to automate the production of ideas. On the other hand, our estimates do not account for potential obstacles to growth, notably the lack of competition in various segments of the AI value chain, which are already controlled by the digital revolution’s superstar firms.

What about AI’s implications for overall employment? In a new study of French firm-level data collected between 2018 and 2020, we show that AI adoption is positively associated with an increase in

appears to be stronger than AI’s potential displacement effects (whereby AI takes over tasks associated with certain types of jobs and workers, thus reducing labor demand). We find that the impact of AI on labor demand is positive even for occupations that are often classified as vulnerable to automation, such as accounting, telemarketing and secretarial work. To be sure, while certain uses of AI (such as for digital security) lead to positive employment growth, other uses (administrative

Slowing down the pace of AI adoption would likely be self-defeating for domestic employment, because many firms will be competing internationally with AI adopters.

While our interpretation of the data shows that AI could drive both growth and employment, realizing this potential will require suitable policy reforms. For example, competition policy must ensure that the superstar firms that dominate the upper segments of the value chain do not stifle entry by new innovators. Our own study finds that AI adopters are predominantly much larger and more productive than nonadopters, suggesting that those already on top are positioned to be the biggest winners of the AI revolution.

To avoid increased market concentration and entrenched market power, we must encourage AI adoption by smaller firms, which can be achieved through a combination of competition policy and suitable industrial policy that improves access to data and computing power. To enhance the employment potential of AI and minimize its negative effects on workers, broad-based access to high-quality education, together with training programs and active labor market policies, will be crucial.

The next technological revolution is already underway. The future of entire countries and economies will hinge on their willingness and ability to adapt to it.

# Has the Lebanese system passed the test?

Nadim Shehadi

seen as the best possible result at the last minute. An academic and a diplomat, Salam previously headed the UN Security Council and presided over the International Court of Justice during the high-profile Gaza genocide case.

Just the day before, it seemed like a choice between two other candidates. All things considered, for such a small country, it could be viewed as a better choice than American voters had a couple of months earlier. We went to bed thinking that caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati was not only leading but was also the inevitable international choice. He represented sta-

also a failure. It is all too easy to blame one man and to think that, by deposing him, the system has rid itself of all its ills. He drew attention to the fact that the events in Lebanon were accompanied by disturbances in Egypt, Iran and Syria, with repercussions that had to be taken into account when answering questions about Lebanon’s existence, character and the chances of its survival and its role in the world.

For Naccache, the significance of the 1952 uprising, regardless of how successful or unsuccessful it was, is that it was the first attempt since independence to mobilize the country for a single cause. The danger there was that this was done outside parliament and out-

***In 1952, Georges Naccache, the owner of the newspaper L’Orient and a sharp political commentator, diagnosed the problem. People had gone on to the streets to protest what was perceived as a corrupt establishment. They managed to force a president to resign and bring about the election of a popular outsider.***

***Naccache wrote that it is all very well for the Lebanese to congratulate themselves when the country comes out of a crisis, but he warned that if the solution did not come from within the system, this was also a failure. It is all too easy to blame one man and to think that, by deposing him, the system has rid itself of all its ills. He drew attention to the fact that the events in Lebanon were accompanied by disturbances in Egypt, Iran and Syria, with repercussions that had to be taken into account when answering questions about Lebanon’s existence, character and the chances of its survival and its role in the world. For Naccache, the significance of the 1952 uprising, regardless of how successful or unsuccessful it was, is that it was the first attempt since independence to mobilize the country for a single cause.***

bility and continuity and had made successful transitions before.

But who wants continuity? There were protests and an intensive social media campaign. We were flooded with emails, WhatsApp messages and social media posts calling for the nomination of Salam as an alternative. The next day, unpredictably, a crescendo of declarations from MPs started naming Salam, one block after the other and from the most unexpected parties. It was too much excitement for one day and, considering what had just happened in Syria, it was enough excitement for a generation.

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side the normal democratic process. He warned that, if Lebanese institutions were not reformed to contain future events of that sort, they would be done away with on the next occasion. Today, reforming the system to prevent another breakdown is the main task that lies ahead for the new president and prime minister.

While it is true that the system has broken down many times in the country’s history, it did so under the weight of regional factors such as Nasserism, the Palestine Liberation Organization or Syrian and Iranian control, which affected the whole area. Now that these have eased, we will see how it quickly bounces back, even if it needs a little help.

The country is technically still at war with Israel, there are hundreds of thousands of people displaced, entire villages destroyed and forming a government looks impossible. Lebanon is not only recovering from a war, but also from 54 years of the Assad regime as its neighbor.

But with all the challenges ahead, after these last few days in Lebanon, everything feels possible. A friend texted me while I was writing this piece: “My God, we look like a real country.”

# Saudi Arabia’s ‘Age of Optimism’ is contagious

Hassan bin Youssef Yassin

Everyone has that one friend, the eternal optimist to whom good things always seem to happen. We also have that pessimistic friend who appears always to collect bad luck. Optimism, hope and trust are simple forces for good. Eight years ago, Saudi Arabia chose to carry a torch of optimism and hope, and the result has exceeded our brightest expectations.

King Salman and his dynamic Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman chose to trust in a new age of optimism for Saudi Arabia, defining ambitious projects and objectives and, most importantly, giving our country all the chances to succeed by letting the light shine in. The factor that changed everything, spreading optimism to the entire country, was giving women the opportunity to express their full potential and become equal participants in our society and workforce.

No longer hidden behind a figurative veil, Saudi Arabia’s women brought such skill and enthusiasm to the new roles they filled that they lit a new torch of excitement in the skies of Saudi Arabia. We all look up with pride at our sky and the only clouds we see bear tears of happiness. This excitement and enthusiasm are palpable throughout the country, spreading a mood of hope and optimism across Saudi Arabia. Our neighbors in the Arab world have also started to feel it, giving them a new assurance that, if we put our minds and hearts to it, we can transform the world we live in.

As humans, we have become accustomed to defining history in ages,

from the Prehistoric age to the Stone Age, from the Renaissance to the industrial age. I would like to name this new age in Saudi Arabia’s history the “Age of Optimism,” with a capital “O.” Saudis have joined together in a spirit of cooperation, assembling our strengths to build something greater. There is a new spirit of openness, opening new avenues and

***As humans, we have become accustomed to defining history in ages, from the Prehistoric age to the Stone Age, from the Renaissance to the industrial age. I would like to name this new age in Saudi Arabia’s history the “Age of Optimism,” with a capital “O.” Saudis have joined together in a spirit of cooperation, assembling our strengths to build something greater. There is a new spirit of openness, opening new avenues and channels to experiment, putting our best minds to the job and selecting the best course. When something does not produce the intended result or we make a mistake, we do not hesitate to correct our course. This is revealing of a new sense of confidence that is bringing the tune of progress to our country and further into the Arab world.***

channels to experiment, putting our best minds to the job and selecting the best course. When something does not produce the intended result or we make a mistake, we do not hesitate to correct our course. This is revealing of a new sense of confidence that is bringing the tune of progress to our country and further into the Arab world.

As we have encouraged an environment of enthusiasm in our own country, we have also made efforts to mend fences with neighbors and to end disputes

throughout the Arab world. Our confidence and optimism have shone through in our leadership role in the Arab world, instilling a new sense of stability and optimism in Arabs wherever they may be. We can take pride in having established this environment of hope, most proudly expressed in Syria, as the Syrian people last month finally shook off a violent and misguided regime that had been holding them captive for so long. We are proving to our entire region that there are alternatives of hope and stability. Lebanon is the latest country to allow itself to feel hopeful about its future again, electing a new president last week after two years of stasis, bringing an all-too-rare moment of optimism to the Lebanese people.

I would like to see this refreshing mood of optimism also catch on in Sudan and in Yemen, bringing an end to the hopeless

bickering, conflicts and dysfunction in parts of the Arab world. The country that could most benefit from a sense of hopeful optimism in our immediate neighborhood would be Israel. Surely ordinary Israelis understand that they will never achieve peace through guns and the wreaking of destruction. Hope and optimism lie on a path of empathy and mag-

It is essential that we come together in this challenging age and it is essential that we embrace the optimism that has given us so much in Saudi Arabia. Our reckless behavior toward the environment has already pushed us over the red line of a 1.5 degrees Celsius rise in average temperatures in 2024, resulting in one environmental disaster after another, with devastating fires today burning across Los Angeles. We can no longer ignore the need to act more responsibly and to live more sustainably.

To be sure, we must learn to cooperate, to be more reasonable, to accommodate others and to stop turning a blind eye to the consequences of our actions and our way of life. By trying on optimism as Saudi Arabia has, we can all realize that these objectives are within our reach, by making small changes to the way we live, wasting less and meeting Mother Nature halfway.

Let us start this year by assimilating the lessons we have learned in the Middle East and across the world. Saudi Arabia’s optimism has become infectious across our Arab neighbors; it is time for it to spread further, bringing hope, peace and stability to the world in 2025.

and an otherwise hopeful and capable country all but destroyed. We need to put an end to such senseless conflicts and focus on building a future that provides hope and opportunities to all. The tremendous wave of optimism brought about as Saudi women became full participants in the future of their country must be replicated for all people in all places.

Let us start this year by assimilating the lessons we have learned in the Middle East and across the world. Saudi Arabia’s optimism has become infectious across our Arab neighbors; it is time for it to spread further, bringing hope, peace and stability to the world in 2025.

Andrew Mitrovica

pleasure, in that. There is relief in Israel, too.

The families of the surviving captives will soon be reunited with the brothers and sisters, daughters and sons, mothers and fathers, they have longed to embrace again.

They will, no doubt, require care and attention to heal the wounds to their minds, souls and bodies.

That will be another, most welcomed, dividend of peace.

The next word is “gratitude.”

Those of us who, day after dreadful day, have watched – bereft and helpless as a ruthless apartheid state has gone methodically about reducing Gaza to dust and memory – owe our

deepest gratitude to the brave, determined helpers who have done their best to ease the pain and suffering of besieged Palestinians.

We owe our everlasting gratitude to the countless anonymous people, in countless places throughout Gaza and the West Bank, who, at grave risk and at the expense of so many young, promising lives, put the welfare of their Palestinian brothers and sisters ahead of their own.

We must be grateful for their selflessness and courage. They did their duty. They walked into the danger. They did not retreat. They stood firm. They held their ground. They rebuffed the purveyors of death and destruction who tried to erase their

pride and dignity.

They reminded the world that humanity will prevail despite the occupier’s efforts to crush it.

The third word is “acknowledge”.

The world must acknowledge the steadfast resistance of Palestinians. The occupier’s aim was to break the will and spirit of Palestinians. That has been the occupier’s intent for the past 75 years.

Once again, the occupier has failed.

Palestinians are indefatigable. They are, like their brethren in Ireland and South Africa, immovable.

They refuse to be routed from their land because they are wedded to it by faith and history. Their roots are too deep and indestructible.

Palestinians will decide

their fate – not the marauding armies headed by racists and war criminals who cling to the antiquated notion that might is right.

It will take a little more time and patience, but the sovereignty and salvation that Palestinians have earned in blood and heartache is, I am convinced, approaching not far over the horizon.

The final word is “shame”.

There are politicians and governments who will forever wear the shame of permitting Israel to commit genocide against the people of Palestine.

These politicians and governments will deny it. The evidence of their crimes is plain. We can see it in the images of the apocalyptic landscape of Gaza. We will record every name of the more than 46,000

Palestinian victims of their complicity.

That will be their decrepit legacy.

Rather than stop the mass murder of innocents, they enabled it. Rather than prevent starvation and disease from claiming the lives of babies and children, they encouraged it. Rather than turn off the spigot of arms, they delivered them. Rather than shout “enough”, they spurred the killing to go on and on.

We will remember. We will not let them forget.

That is our responsibility: to make sure that they never escape the shame that will follow each and every one of them like a long, disfiguring shadow in the late-day sun.

Shame on them. Shame on them all.

# Four words that bear significance to the happy news of a Gaza ceasefire

I have wrestled with what to say in this urgent moment, long yearned for and that often appeared beyond reach during these last 15 hideous months.

One of the questions that I grappled with was this: What could I possibly share with readers that would even remotely capture the meaning and profundity of an apparent agreement to stop the wholesale massacre of Palestinians?

I had not suffered. My home is intact. My family and I are alive and well. We are warm, together and safe.

So, the other pressing dilemma I confronted was: Is it my place to write at all? This space should be reserved, I thought, for Palestinians to reflect on the horrors they have endured and what is to come.

Their voices will, of

course, be heard here and elsewhere in the days and weeks ahead. My voice, in this context, is insignificant and, under these grievous circumstances, borders on being irrelevant.

Still, if you and, in particular, Palestinians will oblige me, this is what I have to say.

I think that there are four words that each, in their own way, bear some significance to Wednesday’s happy news that the guns are poised to go silent.

The first and perhaps most fitting word is “relief”.

There will be ample time and opportunity for the “experts” to draw up their predictable scorecards of the “winners” and “losers” and the broader short- and long-term strategic implications of Wednesday’s deal.

There will, as well, be ample time and opportunity for more “experts” to consider the political consequences of Wednesday’s deal in the Middle East, Europe and Washington, DC.

My preoccupation, and I suspect the preoccupation of most Palestinians and their loved ones in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, is that peace has arrived finally.

How long it will last is a question best posed tomorrow. Today, let us all revel in the relief that is a dividend of peace.

Palestinian boys and girls are dancing with relief. After months of grief, loss and sadness, joy has returned. Smiles have returned. Hope has returned.

Let us enjoy a satisfying measure of relief, if not





# 100-Index of PSX stays bearish, loses 658 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Thursday, losing 658.96 points, a negative change of 0.58 percent, closing at 113,836.74 points as compared to 114,495.71 points on the last trading day.

A total of 469,440,511 shares were traded during the day as compared to 659,431,269 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs24.981 billion against Rs39.640 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 464 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 137 of them recorded gains and

268 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 59 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 103,704,415 shares at Rs1.86 per share, Cnergyico PK with 37,108,232 shares at Rs6.88 per share and Dewan Motors with 19,331,666 shares at Rs45.74 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs135.00 per share closing at Rs21,600.00 whereas runner-up was Supernet Technologies Limited with Rs37.00 rise in its share price to close at Rs996.26.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs116.75 per share price, closing at Rs2,733.38, whereas the runner-up was Bata Pakistan Limited with Rs37.82 rise in its per share price to Rs1,931.61.

Rupee sheds 09 paise against dollar:

Pakistani rupee on Thursday depreciated by 09 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.85 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.76.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs279.50 and Rs281,

respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 11 paise to close at Rs287.13 against the last day's closing of Rs287.24, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.78, whereas a decline of 34 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs340.74 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs341.08.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 and 06 paise to close at Rs75.91 and Rs74.32, respectively.



RIYADH: Minister of Petroleum & Water Resources Dr. Musadik Malik and MD & CEO PPL alongwith management of participating companies and visitors at Pakistan Pavilion in Future Minerals Forum 2025.

## Future Minerals Forum in Riyadh: Pakistan's mining sector lauded by Musadik Malik

### F.P. Report

RIYADH: The Future Minerals Forum (FMF) entered its second day, attracting over 20,000 registered visitors, including ministers, mining professionals, service providers, investors, and academics. The event continues to be a key gathering for stakeholders in the global mining industry.

The Pakistan Pavilion stood out as a highlight of the forum, drawing substantial attention from attendees. One visitor remarked, "If awards were given for best-designed pavilion, the Pakistan Pavilion would surely win."

Dr. Musadik Malik, Minister of Petroleum and Water Resources for Pakistan, visited the pavilion to review its exhibits. He praised Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) for its efforts in organizing the pavilion, alongside the support from other participating companies.

Earlier in the day, Minister Malik participated in a panel discussion focused on fostering international collaboration to meet global mineral demand. His speech highlighted pragmatic approaches for enhancing cooperation between public and private sectors, emphasizing Pakistan's commitment to

bolstering its mining sector. Investors from countries such as Turkey, China, and Chile expressed interest in Pakistan's growing mining opportunities, seeking insights into potential investments.

The Pakistan delegation hosted a 90-minute session on January 16, from 9:30 to 11:00 AM. Speakers, including Minister Dr. Musadik Malik, Managing Director of Pakistan Petroleum Limited Mr. Imran Abbasy, and Project Director for Reko Diq, presented Pakistan's mining investment climate and the government's strategic vision for the sector's growth.

## Skills stressed to promote handicraft industry

FAISALABAD (APP): The President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Rehan Naseem Bharara said on Thursday skills must be imparted to women for promotion of domestic handicraft industry in Pakistan.

Addressing an exhibition of handicrafts in the Government Vocational Training Institute for Women, D-Ground Peoples Colony.

### COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Ms Dua Mehreen Civil Judge VI Kohat, Suit no.174/1 Date of hearing:18-01-2025. Titled:- Muhammad Iqbal(etc) Vs Gul Taj(etc), Notice against:-(8)Safdar Khan Son of Muhabbat Khan(Late) Son of Jalal Khan(Late) (11) Rashid Muhammad Son of Hameeda (Late) R/o Kaghazai District Kohat Presently R/o (now in Abroad U.A.E) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants in which date of hearing 18-01-2025 is fixedfor your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 18-01-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 13-12-2024 (Court of C.J VI Kohat)

### COURT NOTICE

In the court of Ms Dua Mehreen Civil Judge VI Kohat, Suit no.175/1 Date of hearing:04-02-2025. Titled:- Muhammad Tariq Vs Manzoor Islam(etc), Notice against:- (29)Mst Sameena Rana Daughter of Abdul Qadeer (30)Khurshid Ahmad Son of Sanab Gul R/o Gumbat District Kohat Presently R/o (now in Abroad CANADA) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants in which date of hearing 04-02-2025 is fixedfor your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 04-02-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 13-01-2025 (Court of C.J VI Kohat)

### COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Jauhar Al Safi Civil Judge I / Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No 80/1. Institution 14/3/ 2024. Date of hearing, 6/2/2025.Sheren Khan VS Behroz Khan.Notice to No. 2. Muslim. 4.Bakht Sher Khan.5.SherZaman. 7. Saifullah sons of Zardullah Khan. 10. Mst Mufti Hawa.11.Mst Gul Hab Sewa. 12.Mst Sheren Zeba d/o Dowlat Khan. 13.Nurul Islam s/o Gul Azar Khan. 14. Mst Zamroa w/o Gul Azar Khan. 15. Amer Salam s/o Gul Azar Khan. 16.Mst Bakht Saeeda.17.Mst Gul Farnia ds/o Gul Azar Khan. 18.Naseb Rizwan s/o Mujahid resident of Bero Chaghorzai Buner. 6/1.Meghalhu w/o Bakht Rawan. 6/2.Kamil Khan. 6/3.Sajad. 6/4. Bashir. 6/5.Muhamad Shaifq sons of Bakht Rawan. 8/1. Dawlat Khan. 8/2.Gul Sahb. 8/3.Gulzar. 8/4.Sher Gul sons. 8/5. Mst Gul Hab Sewa. 9/1.Mst Bakhtaj Bibi widow Gul Farosh Khan. 9/2. Mujahid. 9/3.Nurul Islam. 9/4.Muhamad Israr sons.9/5.Mst Nor Saeeda. 9/6.Mst Safia Bibi resident of Bero tehseel Chaghorzai district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 am dated 6/2/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

## Pakistan shows resilience, progress in WEF's global risk report

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Global Risks Report 2025, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) highlighted satisfactory outlook for Pakistan as part of its annual global risk assessment.

The report, based on insights from over 900 experts worldwide, and 11,000 experts as part of the Executive Opinion Survey globally. Mishaal Pakistan carried the extensive Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) from February to June 2024 in Pakistan, capturing the voice of the Business Leaders in the country.

The Global Risk Report presents an in-depth analysis of the geopolitical, economic, environmental, societal, and technological challenges expected to shape the global and regional landscape in the coming years. Pakistan, like many other developing economies, faces an increasingly complex risk environment that demands strategic resilience and pol-

lights both our challenges and opportunities," said Amir Jahangir, CEO Mishaal Pakistan, the country partner institute of the World Economic Forum said.

"As we navigate economic shifts, climate adaptation, and technological advancements, Pakistan has the potential to emerge stronger by fostering innovation, strengthening governance, and enhancing regional collaboration," he added. He said, Pakistan's ability to turn risks into opportunities will define its future, and with the right policies and collective determination, it can position itself as a key player in the evolving global landscape."

The report also underscores the growing political and social polarization in Pakistan, warning that governance challenges and civic freedoms could deteriorate further.

Meanwhile, geoeconomic confrontations and global trade disruptions pose additional threats, particularly

regarding Pakistan's dependence on strategic imports such as energy and essential commodities.

As the nation continues to expand its digital footprint, it must also address the rising risks of misinformation, cyber warfare, and data security breaches, which could destabilize public trust and national security.

On a global scale, the Global Risks Report 2025 presents a bleak outlook, highlighting escalating geopolitical conflicts, worsening economic instability, and deepening environmental crises.

State-based armed conflict has emerged as the global risk for 2025, fueled by ongoing wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, and Africa. Additionally, misinformation and disinformation have been identified as the most significant threat over the next two years, severely undermining democracy, public trust, and institutional credibility.

## Xiaomi announces release of Redmi Note 14 Series

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: Xiaomi announced the highly anticipated release of the Redmi Note 14 Series. This latest line-up includes three devices that take Redmi Note to the next level: Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G, Redmi Note 14 Pro, and Redmi Note 14. With a high-resolution AI camera system, all-star durability, and impressive experience, Redmi Note 14 Series comes with all-round upgrades to bring flagship-level features to a wider audience. The camera system at the heart of Redmi Note 14 Series is crafted for flagship photography. Leading the way, the Pro variants feature a powerful 200MP pro-grade AI camera system with optical image stabilization (OIS), enabling users to capture incredible detail.

Redmi Note 14 is not afraid of dust and splashes thanks to its IP54 certification. The Corning® Gorilla® Glass 5 on the front offers better protection against scratches through everyday wear and tear. At just 8.16mm thin, and 196.5g light, Redmi Note 14's seamless, rounded design feels amazingly

comfortable in hands and pockets. With the powerful MediaTek Helio G99-Ultra chipset, Redmi Note 14 offers an exceptionally smooth and efficient daily experience. Redmi Note 14 also features massive 5500mAh (typ) and 33W fast charging capabilities, ensuring rapid charging and reliable use.

Redmi Note 14 Pro is designed to be modernized, vibrant and optimally comfortable. Its symmetrical camera deco highlights a flag-ship-like look and feel. MediaTek Helio G100-Ultra offers an exceptionally smooth daily experience, with significantly enhanced scrolling of web pages and app animations. Redmi Note 14 Pro also features massive 5500mAh (typ) and 45W fast charging capabilities, ensuring rapid charging and reliable use. Redmi Note 14 Pro is dust and water resistant all thanks to the flagship-level IP64 certification. The Corning® Gorilla® Glass Victus® 2 on the front offers better protection against scratches through everyday wear and tear.

The Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G takes productivity and creativity to new heights



with advanced AI features across search, voice, text, Cat image, and video. These capabilities streamline everyday tasks, boost convenience, and empower users to work more efficiently, a IP68 certification. As a result of eye-care technology, prolonged use is more comfortable. The display minimizes blue light exposure with TÜV Rheinland Low Blue Light (Hardware Solution), Flicker Free, and Circadian Friendly certifications across all devices. This results in a more pleasant experience during late-night work or extended streaming sessions. The experience remains just as enjoyable when stepping outside, with the display on

Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G featuring a peak brightness of 3000 nits, significantly higher than the previous generation.

With Redmi Note 14 Series, Xiaomi delivers a remarkable blend of powerful performance, stunning photography, and robust durability, all designed to meet the needs of modern life. From the high-resolution camera systems with advanced AI tools, to the rugged dust and water-resistant design, powerful performance and long-lasting battery, Redmi Note 14 Series sets a new standard in its category by bringing premium features to a wider audience, offering exceptional value in every aspect.

## CAA urged to evolve strategies for future needs of air industry

FAISALABAD (APP): Former President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) and Group Leader Mian Javed Iqbal said on Thursday the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) must carve out short and long-term strategies simultaneously by preparing blueprints for the optimum expansion of existing airport in addition to taking steps for the construction of a dedicated new civilian airport to cater to the future needs of air industry.

He was talking to a delegation of CAA that visited FCCI under the leadership of Madam Tasneem Akhtar Jameel Airport Manager. The delegation was comprised of Engineer Muham-

mad Shahzad Asghar Additional Director Strategic Planning P&D, Osama Khan Additional Director Architecture P&D and Engineer Mirza Muhammad Aleem Senior Joint Director E/M FIAP.

Mian Javed Iqbal underlined the need for a new airport in view of exponential growth of industrial, economic and social activities in this region and said that the proposed site of airport must be properly linked through rail and road network to facilitate local and foreign travelers in addition to ensuring easy access to the export consignments.

He urged the officers of CAA to finalize the positive technical report and share it

with FCCI so that this issue could be taken up at the highest level. This proposed project should cater to the future needs of at least next 50 years, he added.

Rehan Naseem Bharara, President FCCI appreciated the efforts of the CAA for the expansion of the current airport and said that we must collaborate and prepare a transparent and workable strategy to exploit the full potential of the Faisalabad International Airport (FIAP).

He said that CAA should also take measures to start more domestic and international flights from this airport to capitalize its passenger and cargo potential.

Airport Manager Madam Tasneem Akhtar Jameel said that currently only 40% capacity of this airport was utilized and we could accommodate more flights round the clock by using its remaining 60% unutilized capacity as this airport also has facility for night landing.

The CAA team highlighted the technicalities of the different issues and said that authority was focusing on Faisalabad to resolve its air related issues.

Senior Vice President FCCI Qaisar Shams Guha, Vice President Shahid Mumtaz Bajwa and important personalities from the air industry were also present during this meeting.





## In brief

**Pakistan team reaches Johor for U19 W C campaign**  
JOHOR (INP): A 15-member Pakistan Women's U19 squad and the team management reached Johor from Kuala Lumpur after a six hour-long journey on Thursday. Pakistan team will rest today and train tomorrow for their opening match against United States of America (USA) on Saturday, 18 January. The mega-event for 16 U19 teams is set to begin from 18 January. Pakistan arrived in Malaysia on Saturday and have featured in two warm-up matches against Nigeria and Australia. Pakistan's skipper Komal Khan said, "We have prepared well for the World Cup and all the players are excited to perform in the event."

### Clippers thrash Nets by 59 points

Los Angeles Clippers thrashed the Brooklyn Nets 126-67 to set a new record for their largest margin of victory. The 59-point win is the 10th largest in NBA history and surpasses the Clippers' previous highest margin of 50 in a 138-88 success against the Oklahoma City Thunder in 2022. Kawhi Leonard scored a season-high 23 points and James Harden added 21 as the Nets slumped to their heaviest defeat in the NBA. Their previous biggest defeat was by 52 points, a 139-87 reverse against the Houston Rockets in 1978. The Clippers led by 64 points during the fourth quarter despite coach Tyrone Lue emptying his bench late in the third. Leonard, who was playing for just the fourth time this season, shot eight of 11 from the field in 24 minutes. The Clippers' next game is against the Portland Trail Blazers on Friday.

### Stoic Borthwick aims for Six Nations sweep

LONDON (Agencies): After last year's Six Nations ended with strong performances in victory against Ireland and in narrow defeat against France, not even the most pessimistic of England supporters would have expected the side to win just two of their next seven matches – both against Japan. But for whatever reason – bad luck, composure, mentality, game-management, all of the above – that's where England find themselves in 2025; short on wins, and the pressure on. With the grassroots of the English game openly rebelling against the Rugby Football Union executive, the spotlight will focus on the senior men's side over the coming months. England start this Six Nations how they finished it last time: Ireland followed by France. There is no hiding place. And while it feels as if Twickenham is under siege from all sides – a Special General Meeting is planned for March, while the union has again defended itself after criticism from MPs this week – head coach Steve Borthwick was in stoic mood when he announced his Six Nations squad. Borthwick insists he has not been distracted from the job in hand, and has had no edicts from his embattled bosses regarding either win targets or financial belt-tightening. "At this point before the start of the tournament why would we not be going into every game aiming to win every game?" Borthwick told BBC Sport. "It's what every England supporter would expect of me and the players and it's what we expect of ourselves. "Ever since I have come into this role two years ago I have had nothing but support from the RFU about what we want to do.



MULTAN: West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite and his Pakistan counterpart Shan Masood pose with the Test series trophy at the Multan Cricket Stadium.

## Samar Khan scales South America's highest peak

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistani adventurer Samar Khan successfully scaled Mount Aconcagua – the highest peak in South America, standing at 6,961 metres (22,837 feet). Khan, taking to Instagram, said she started her climb with an amazing team of nine strong women at 4:15am and reached the summit of the highest peak in South America at 2pm. "The climb was full of challenges, with one of the biggest being the extreme cold and harsh winds of the Andes," Khan said. "However, with Allah's grace and your prayers, I success-



fully completed the climb." Mount Aconcagua, located in Argentina's Andes mountain range, is the tallest mountain outside Asia and one of the Seven Summits. According to experts, Aconcagua is one of the most accessible of the

Seven Summits and serves as both a challenging experience for mountaineers and a stepping stone to higher peaks. Khan, known for her dual passion for cycling and mountaineering, is the latest Pakistani to conquer this formidable peak. Other notable climbers from Pakistan include Abdul Joshi, Saad Munawar, Asad Ali Memon, Abdul Jabbar Bhatti, Samina Baig, and Mirza Ali Baig. She has now returned to Mendoza following her achievement and plans to land in Islamabad on January 19.

## Huraira to debut for Pakistan in first Test against West Indies

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan have announced their playing XI for the opening Test against the West Indies, with an exciting debut for young batter Muhammad Huraira. The right-handed batter has earned his maiden national call-up on the back of consistent performances in the domestic circuit. In 44 first-class matches, Huraira has accumulated 3,427 runs at an impressive average of 48.95. The 22-year-old has eight FC hundreds, including a triple-century and two double-tens. He will replace the in-form opener

Saim Ayub who was ruled out of cricket for at least three months due to an ankle injury sustained during the second Test match against South Africa earlier this month. Huraira will likely open the innings with Shan Masood and Babar Azam, and Kamran Ghulam coming in at one-down and two-down, respectively. Vice-captain Saud Shakeel, wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan and all-rounder Salman Ali Agha will form Pakistan's middle order. Pakistan are heavily relying on its spin department, consisting of

Nauman Ali Abrar Ahmed, and Sajid Khan for the first home Test in 2025. The only pacer in the squad is Khurram Shehzad who took six wickets in two Tests against South Africa. The two-match Test series begins on Friday in Multan, with both teams eyeing to improve their World Test Championship records. Pakistan playing XI: Shan Masood (c), Muhammad Huraira, Babar Azam, Kamran Ghulam, Saud Shakeel, Mohammad Rizwan, Salman Ali Agha, Sajid Khan, Noman Ali, Abrar Ahmed, Khurram Shahzad.

### Paolini sprints into third round

MELBOURNE (AFP): Fourth seed Jasmine Paolini shook off some early nerves to sail into the third round of the Australian Open on Thursday with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Mexico's Renata Zarazua. Paolini followed Jannik Sinner on to Melbourne Park's centre court and served notice she could match her fellow Italian's success there last year when he won his maiden Grand Slam title.

The energetic world number four was playing on Rod Laver Arena for the first time and dropped her serve in the opening game. "I don't know why, but maybe I was nervous, you know, first time playing here and it's an amazing court," Paolini said. The brief lapse kicked her into gear and from then on it was one-way traffic to set up a last-32 meeting with Ukraine's Elina Svitolina.

Paolini began using her quick footwork to provide a solid base for her precision groundstrokes. She rattled off four games in a row to lead 4-1 before world number 74 Zarazua was finally able to hold her own serve.

But after an easy hold, another break gave Paolini the set in 34 minutes. Zarazua, who is playing in only her second Australian Open, struggled to live with Paolini's speed and power.

## Two-Day Taekwondo Competition concludes in Peshawar



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The two-day Taekwondo competition at Hayatabad Sports Complex Peshawar concluded successfully. The event featured male and female athletes competing in various categories under 10, under 12 and under 16 age groups.

The tournament was organized under the supervision of the Peshawar Taekwondo Association with the support of the Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and was led by Regional Sports Officer Kashif

Farhan. In different matches and events Hisham, Ayan Ghasan, Muharrara and Samar zeb won gold medals. Ayan Khan, Umar, Gulalai, Areeba and Talha secured silver medals while Izzatullah, Fayaz, Nazia, Al Rana and Haris earned bronze medals.

The Chief Guest of the event was Chief Commissioner FBR Peshawar Farooq Jamil accompanied by Kashif Farhan, Ilyas Afridi, Abid Afridi, Nazia Ali, Javed Khan and a large

number of parents and spectators.

Speaking to the media Regional Sports Officer Kashif Farhan stated that the Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the public agenda of Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and the leadership of Sports Minister Syed Fakhar Jahan is organizing various sports activities for youth across the province, from club-level to national-level events.

Addressing the players Chief Guest Farooq Jamil emphasized that sports activities play a vital role in improving children's physical fitness which helps them excel in various aspects of life.

He noted that the province has abundant talent as evident from the remarkable performances of its athletes in the Quaid-e-Azam Games.

At the end of the event he distributed medals among the players and congratulated the organizers for successfully hosting the competition.

## Murphy into Masters semis despite maximum miss



LONDON (Agencies): Shaun Murphy missed out on a maximum 147 break as he secured a place in the semi-finals of the Masters with a superb 6-2 victory over Neil Robertson at Alexandra Palace.

Leading 5-2, Murphy knocked in 15 reds and 15 blacks to reach 120 with only the colours remaining but ended up snookering himself behind the blue and the chance was lost.

It would have been a magical conclusion to a near faultless display from the 42-year-old Englishman, who compiled breaks of 90, 67 and 66 to establish a 4-1 advantage.

While two-time winner Robertson made a superb century break in the next, a run of 82 carried Murphy further clear before he

sealed his win. "That was somewhere near my best. I am delighted," Murphy told BBC Sport. "I couldn't breathe [going for the 147]. I was very nervous. One of my targets for the season was to make a max in a Triple Crown event and it was a good chance. "It was exciting and would have been a good present because today is my mum's birthday." Murphy will now play either Mark Allen or Mark Selby in the last four on Saturday.

Murphy impresses in high-quality contest. Murphy, whose sole triumph in the tournament came a decade ago when he defeated Robertson in the final, set the tone for a high-quality contest with break of 90 in the opening

frame. When the Australian replied with break of 79 in the next, it briefly appeared as though a classic nip-and-tuck contest was in store.

However, that did not materialise with Murphy pinching the pivotal fifth frame by a point on the black and barely missing a pot once among the balls. When he did, a black off it's spot in the sixth frame, he was heavily punished as his opponent constructed a 108 break to get back within two frames.

Robertson, was unable though to mount the sort of recovery that enabled him to come from 5-1 down against John Higgins in the first round and was seen willing Murphy on at the end as he went agonisingly close to a ninth 147 in his career.

"I could not believe it. It was a real shame for everyone watching. I was gutted for Shaun," added Robertson. "I played great and when two players are playing really well it is the smallest or margins that can be the difference. You have to take your hat off to Shaun for how well he played."

## Arsenal back in Premier League title race

LONDON (Agencies): Mikel Arteta warned Liverpool that "sensational" Arsenal are back in the Premier League title race after beating Tottenham 2-1 in the north London derby on Wednesday.

Desperately needing a win to close the gap on leaders Liverpool, Arteta's side staged a stirring fight-back after Son Heung-min's early opener for Tottenham.

Dominic Solanke's own goal hauled Arsenal level before Leandro Trossard's strike put them ahead late in the first half at the raucous Emirates Stadium.

Second-placed Arsenal's first win in four games in all competitions moved them within four points of Liverpool. Although Arne Slot's team have a game in hand and remain title favourites, Arteta is convinced Arsenal have what it takes to track down the Anfield club.

Asked if Arsenal are title contenders, Arteta said: "Yeah we are. There is so much to play for. We can see how difficult it is for every team."

It was a cathartic victory for Arsenal, who had been knocked out of the FA Cup third round by 10-man Manchester United on penalties on Sunday, just days after losing 2-0 at home to Newcastle in the League Cup semi-final first leg.

A draw at Brighton in the league prior to those disappointments had left injury-hit Arsenal looking like outsiders in their hunt for a first title since 2004.

But Arteta, whose side face another test against Aston Villa on Saturday, was relieved to see his players show the hunger they will need to overhaul Liverpool in the second half of the season.

"We were sensational. It was a big test after two games and not getting rewarded," he said.

"We were incredibly good in the last game against United and we ended up losing somehow.

"It's how you respond to a situation. These boys want more. They want to be tested and questioned, then they want to go on the pitch. We have big exam-

ples of that today, playing 72 hours after 120 minutes on Sunday.

"To play the biggest game of the season for our people, it was a test of attitude, what we are made of, the courage we have. From minute one, we fully deserved to win the game."

– 'Unlucky we didn't score 10' –

Pressed on whether the north London derby success had restored confidence in Arteta and his team, the Spaniard added: "We can't control that. We lost in the most incredible way against Manchester United.

"My confidence comes from seeing the players and how they perform every day. If my confidence comes and goes with each result then we should not be doing this."

Showing the confidence that Arteta prizes so highly, Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice insisted they should have dispatched Tottenham by a far greater margin.

"You can tell that tonight meant more than

anything. From the first minute, the first half was pure domination," he said.

"We showed the intent, the pressure, the desire, you could tell it was a derby. I think we were probably unlucky that we didn't score 10. That is the feeling."

England midfielder Rice was in boisterous mood after playing through injury to anchor Arsenal's midfield.

Hitting back at his critics, Rice said: "As I've got older I don't get the recognition I deserve.

"I was bought for a big fee and I play for Arsenal. Not a lot of people like Arsenal. I keep my head down and I know my qualities."

Like Arteta, the former West Ham star is confident Liverpool can be reeled in, as long as Arsenal take advantage of any further slips from their rivals.

"Every time Liverpool have drawn we have not capitalised on it and that's been a kick in the teeth," he said. "To close the gap is important, a big night for us."

## Teenager Tien stuns Medvedev in late five-set thriller

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Fifth seed Daniil Medvedev is out of the Australian Open after losing a five-set thriller to teenager Learner Tien in the biggest upset of the tournament so far.

Medvedev, a three-time finalist in Melbourne, saved match point in the third set and forced a decider, but ultimately fell to a 6-3 7-6 (7-4) 6-7 (8-10) 1-6 7-6 (10-7) defeat by the 19-year-old qualifier.

American Tien, ranked 121st in the world, celebrated in front of a largely empty Margaret Court Arena after wrapping up the win at 02:54 local time in Melbourne. "I was definitely hoping it wasn't going to a fifth-set breaker but either way I'm just really happy to get the win," Tien said after four hours and 49 minutes on court.

"I know I made it a lot harder than what it could have been but, you know, whatever."

Before this week's tournament Tien had never won a Grand Slam match, losing in the first round in all three of his US



Open appearances.

Medvedev, who lost to Jannik Sinner in last year's final, seemed like the clear favourite to win the match after steamrolling his way through the fourth set in 27 minutes, with Tien looking fatigued.

But, after a brief rain delay, the left-handed Californian dug deep to break back in the decider and force a 10-point tie-break.

"Losing the third [set] was tough after playing for that long.

I had a match point so that was a little disappointing to see a fourth [set]," Tien said. "In the fourth set I just had to pee so bad, so I was trying to finish it up fairly quick."

"I also wanted to start the fifth [set] serving first so I scrapped out that game at 0-5 and it all worked out."

He is the third teenager this week, after Joao Fonseca and Jakub Mensik, to have beaten a top-10 player.

Fonseca stole the headlines with his first-round win over ninth seed Andrey Rublev, but it is Tien, who finished runner-up to the Brazilian in December's Next Gen ATP Finals, that has gone further of the two in Melbourne.

Tien will face France's Corentin Moutet, ranked 69th, in the third round.

**Sinner fights back to continue title defence**

Jannik Sinner recovered from a slow start against world number 173 Tristan Schoolkate to keep his title defence on track.

Sinner, who claimed his first major title in Melbourne last year, had not dropped a set since October's Shanghai Masters.

But Australian Schoolkate thrilled a partisan crowd on Rod Laver Arena when he struck at 5-4 to win the opener and end Sinner's 29-set winning streak.

However, the wildcard could not keep pace with the top seed as Sinner sped through the gears to grab a 4-6 6-4 6-1 6-3 victory and a place in the third round.

The 23-year-old is the youngest player to win nine successive men's singles matches at the Australian Open since Novak Djokovic between 2008 and 2009.

Asked how this year felt different to his title-winning run, Sinner said: "It's a different feeling but so many beautiful moments, on and off the court, have happened to me here. It's different but I take it as a chance to do it again."

"It's still a very, very long way to go. We go day by day. Seeing my level today we know that I can improve."

Sinner is competing at the Australian Open for the first time since he failed two doping tests in March.

His doping case will be heard at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas) in April after the World Anti-Doping Agency appealed against the decision to clear him.

Elsewhere on Thursday, there were upsets for Frances Tiafoe and Hubert Hurkacz.

Tiafoe, the American 17th seed, fell to a 6-7 (3-7) 6-4 3-6 6-4 6-1 defeat by Hungary's Fabian Marozsan, ranked 59th, while world number 51 Miomir Kecmanovic moved past 18th seed Hurkacz with a 6-4 6-4 6-2 victory.

Meanwhile, Fonseca's impressive Grand Slam debut came to an end as the teenage sensation lost in five sets to Italy's Lorenzo Sonego.

The 18-year-old, who Carlos Alcaraz said would be on a "list of the best players in the world", lost 6-7 (6-8) 6-3 6-1 3-6 6-3 to world number 55 Sonego.

Australian home favourite Alex de Minaur claimed a straight-set win over American qualifier Tristan Boyer, while fourth seed Taylor Fritz needed just 82 minutes to beat Chilean qualifier Cristian Garin, dropping just three games during an impressive showing.

Danish 13th seed Holger Rune battled past Italy's Matteo Berrettini with a 7-6 (7-3) 2-6 6-3 7-6 (8-6) victory.





## In brief

### Speeding car kills pedestrian in Rawalpindi

ISLAMABAD (APP): A pedestrian was struck and killed by a speeding car near Kacheri road Rawalpindi early on Thursday morning, police sources said. According to details, Police sources said that the driver of the car fled the scene immediately after the accident, leaving the victim lying on the road, private news channel reported. The police shifted the body to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital for autopsy. The identity of the victim could not be ascertained immediately. The Civil Line police have launched an investigation into the incident and are searching for the car and its driver.

### Police arrest drug dealer

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police in an operation arrested a drug dealer and recovered over 12 kg charras, said a police spokesman on Thursday. He informed that acting on a tip-off, Pirwadhai police conducted an operation and arrested a drug dealer namely Asif alias Fauji on recovery of more than 12.5 kg hashish. The accused is record holder in drug cases and also convicted in an ANF case. The accused's wife namely Naseem alias Kalu, daughter, two sons, two sons-in-law, two brothers-in-law, sister-in-law and other family members are also record holders and challaned in several drug cases. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Muhammad Haseeb Raja appreciated Pirwadhai police performance and directed the police officers to accelerate operation against the criminals. He said that Police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani are regularly conducting raids against drug peddlers. The arrested accused would be challaned with solid evidence, he added.

### Police hold 23 law breakers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police during actions against law breakers on Thursday arrested 23 accused from across the district. According to a police spokesman, four suspects were held on the recovery of liquor. The Pirwadhai Police recovered 15 litres of liquor each from accused Zakirullah and Gul Bahadur, while the Sadiqabad Police nabbed accused Daniyal with 10 litres of liquor. The City Police nabbed accused Sameer Shahzad with 10 bottles of liquor. Similarly, six accused were arrested for possessing hashish. The Ratta Amral Police recovered 1.5 kg hashish from accused Abdul Razzaq, and 1.4 kg hashish each from Noman and Hamza, while the Taxila Police nabbed accused Gul Ali with 1.6 kg hashish. The Saddar Wah Police recovered 10.6 kg hashish from accused Fayyaz and 800 grams hashish from Sardar Gul. Likewise, four accused were arrested for having illegal weapons and ammunition. The accused identified as Majidullah and Abu Bakar Siddique were nabbed by the Naseerabad and Taxila Police respectively, and Saqib Nazir and Mubeen Ahmed by the Airport Police, all with a 30 bore pistol each. Meanwhile, three proclaimed offenders wanted in various cases were arrested. The Morgah Police held two criminals Osama and Shakeel involved in a theft case. The accused had been on the run for the last year. Similarly, the Airport Police held the accused arrested Sohail, who was wanted in a cheque dishonour case registered in the year 2017.

# Naqvi meets Member Canadian Parliament Taleeb Noormahamed & Mahmoud Eboo



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Representative of the Agha Khan Development Network Mahmoud Eboo. —APP Photo

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Member Canadian Parliament Taleeb Noormahmed and Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) in Canada Mahmoud Eboo in Islamabad. Pakistan-Canada relations and issues of mutual interest were discussed during the meeting. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that Pakistan highly values its relations with Canada and is keen to further enhance bilateral relations in various fields.

Canadian MP Taleeb Noormahmed conveyed a message from his Canadian counterpart to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that the Aga Khan Foundation is working on several prominent projects for socio-economic development in Pakistan, adding that we are trying to further expand the scope of these projects through mutual cooperation. During the meeting, the resettlement of Afghan refugees in Canada and other countries was also

discussed. The Canadian Parliament Member highlighted that the Canadian High Commission has increased its staff and resources to expedite the resettlement process, expressing gratitude for the provision of visas to the additional staff. He also apprised that in this regard, the scrutiny of applications has also been expedited. The meeting was attended by Federal Secretary Interior Muhammad Khurram Agha and President of the Aga Khan Council for Pakistan, Nazir Muhammad Mevawalla.

## NADRA mobile App to replace Pak-ID website

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi announced on Thursday, a significant overhaul of NADRA's services, including the launch of a new mobile app and the establishment of three regional offices in Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Gwadar, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The Pak-ID website will be officially discontinued starting January 17, with all services transitioning to the improved mobile app.

The decision comes as a response to challenges faced by citizens, particularly overseas Pakistanis, who struggled with the website's interface, including issues with scanning and uploading fingerprints

and documents. The closure of the website is also aimed at combating fraudulent activities. "Scammers were exploiting fake websites to assist in creating forged identity documents and misusing citizens' personal information," said Minister Naqvi.

To enhance user convenience, NADRA has revamped its mobile app to include all services previously available on the website. Citizens can now apply for ID cards, NICOP, POC, B-Forms, and FRCs from their homes.

In addition to digital advancements, three new regional offices will become operational by March 31. These offices

aim to improve service delivery in remote areas, streamline communication between citizens and NADRA officials, and ensure faster resolution of complaints.

Minister Naqvi also revealed that NADRA is on track to establish offices in all tehsils across Pakistan by the same deadline. "Only 19 tehsils remain without NADRA offices, and work is progressing rapidly to ensure these are operational by March 31," he added. The move underscores the government's commitment to enhancing accessibility and combating fraud, providing a seamless and secure experience for citizens nationwide.

### ANF foils drug smuggling bid; recovers 1818 grams heroin

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in an operation foiled a drug smuggling bid and recovered 1818 grams heroin, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday.

He informed that in an operation at Jinnah International Airport Karachi, a Sri Lankan national was arrested on recovering of 1818 grams heroin.

The accused, who was going to Thailand through a foreign flight, had tactfully concealed the drugs in his travel bag.

A case has been registered against the accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigation has been initiated.

ANF is actively working against drug smuggling at the national and international levels, he said adding, ANF is taking all possible steps to prevent drug smuggling from Pakistan to other countries.

### IRSA releases 28,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 28,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,700 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1477.41 feet and was 78.41 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 14,800 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1135.00 feet, which was 85.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,100 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 22,200, 15,200, 2,000 and 4,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 13,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

## Motorway police warn of hazardous fog conditions on roads

ISLAMABAD (APP): As a thick blanket of fog continued to envelop various parts of the country, severely reducing visibility on roads and highways, the Motorway Police on Thursday issued a warning to motorists, advising them to exercise extreme caution while travelling through fog-affected areas.

With dense fog enveloping various parts of the country, particularly in the morning, the Motorway

spokesperson talking to a private news channel urged drivers to use alternative

routes, such as the Grand Trunk (GT) Road to avoid hazardous conditions on the motorway.

Drivers were also cautioned to reduce their speed and switch on their fog lights to ensure safe travel.

He warned that reduced visibility due to fog could lead to accidents, and urged motorists to take necessary precautions to avoid any untoward incidents.

He advised motorists to follow the instructions of Motorway police personnel deployed at various points along the motorway to ensure

smooth and safe travel.

In addition to urging motorists to exercise caution while driving, he also appealed to the general public to avoid unnecessary travel and stay indoors until the fog clears. This precautionary measure is aimed at minimizing the risk of accidents and ensuring public safety, he added.

By staying off the roads, individuals can significantly reduce their exposure to hazardous driving conditions, thereby protecting themselves and their loved ones from potential harm.

## Ayaz expresses dismay over delay in construction of 104 family suites

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Thursday expressed his dissatisfaction with the prolonged delay in the construction of the 104 family suites at the Parliament Lodges.

The project, which has been ongoing for more than a decade, is critical for accommodating members of the National Assembly.

During a meeting with representatives from the Capital Development Authority (CDA), the Speaker emphasized the need for expediting the

funding process and resolving any administrative and financial bottlenecks.

He stressed that timely completion of such public projects is essential for safeguarding the national exchequer. Ayaz Sadiq pointed out that 35 members of the National Assembly currently lack proper accommodation and urged the CDA to expedite the approval of the project's budget by the concerned government agencies.

He expressed his pleasure over the lack of professionalism demonstrated by the CDA in handling

the project and underscored that delays have resulted in escalating costs, which place an unnecessary burden on the national budget.

The CDA representatives informed the meeting that the project was initially started in 2010 with an estimated cost of Rs 2.6 billion. However, due to the prolonged delays, the cost has now escalated to Rs 8.6 billion. The CDA also briefed the Speaker on the current status of the project. The speaker reiterated the importance of addressing both administrative.

## Around 382,118 job seekers registered with OEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Around 382,118 job seekers registered with Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, he added.

He said that 144,600 emigrants dispatched so far while 95,692 overseas returned after completing their jobs contract from the different countries.

The source revealed that 25,106 Korean Language trained candidates, 118 Japanese language trained candidates and 200 IELTS trained nurses were also registered with OEC.

Pakistan, the sixth most populous country of the world, possesses highly skilled, skilled/semi-skilled and unskilled workforce which can cater world's demand in different skill categories. It was the responsibility

of OEC to promote overseas employment, facilitate overseas employers in selection of work force and provide competent, reliable and cost-effective human resource from Pakistan for international labour market.

Overseas employment reduces unemployment in the country and it is an important source of foreign earnings/remittance which plays a major role in socio-economic development of the country, he added.

OEC, since its inception has facilitated more than 142,000 professionals in securing overseas employment in different countries.

OEC is committed to explore new avenues for exporting manpower and confident to extend our best services.

## Romina calls for national climate risk management strategy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam emphasized the urgent need for robust climate risk management strategies at national, provincial, and district levels to enhance preparedness for natural disasters and reduce their economic, social, and environmental impacts.

Speaking at the "Humanitarian Futures," event organized by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on Thursday, she emphasized the vital necessity of protecting vulnerable communities and maintaining the sustainability of lives and livelihoods amid climate-related challenges. The event was attended by government officials, representatives of local and international humanitarian agencies, academics, climate scientists, and meteorological organizations.

Alam outlined the escalating severity of climate impacts that Pakistan is experiencing, citing vulnerabilities to extreme weather events such as devastating floods, heatwaves, droughts, desertification, and erratic rainfall patterns. "These challenges have lead to significant eco-

nomie, social, and environmental repercussions, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations," Romina stated. She added that despite Pakistan's ongoing struggles with these severe conditions, the government is making every effort within its capacity to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

"Following a similar catastrophe in 2010, Pakistan faced one of the worst flood disasters in its history in 2022 forcing displacement of millions people, destroyed crops, and damaged critical infrastructure," said Romina Khurshid Alam. "These disasters have underscored the pressing need for flood resilience and disaster risk reduction measures to protect specially marginalized communities and critical infrastructure."

She also highlighted the significant initiatives launched at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan to combat climate change including the global shield, climate justice, climate-smart agriculture projects, renewable energy solutions, Pakistan's green recovery plan, nature-based solutions, and various climate finance initiatives. Romina highlighted increasing

dependence on glaciers and rivers for its water supply, emphasizing that the country is facing acute water shortages that exacerbate the challenges for agriculture, a crucial sector of the national economy. "Our agriculture is significantly threatened by water scarcity, and we need invest in long-term solutions to tackle these challenges," she stated.

She stressed the importance of advocating for climate finance requirements, calling for improved access to international climate funds. These funds could be utilized to support projects focussed on enhancing resilience against climate change, including disaster preparedness and mitigation for environmental sustainability. "It is essential to enable access to climate financing to implement projects that strengthen our resilience to climate change impacts," she remarked.

The Coordinator to the PM also spoke about the importance of incorporating disaster risk financing into the global loss and damage agenda. She stated that this approach signifies a proactive measure to manage the rising costs linked to the climate change.



ISLAMABAD: Senior officers of C.D.A briefing Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on construction of family suites at Parliament House. —APP Photo



Taliban ban their members

KABUL (Amu TV): Under a directive from Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada, public employees are now prohibited from holding two official positions simultaneously. The order, originally issued on May 22, 2023, has been republished in the Taliban's official gazette to reinforce public awareness on the matter. It applies to all government employees under Taliban rule, including high-ranking officials, who must resign from one of their roles if they currently hold dual positions.

16 Afghan citizens released

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation under the Taliban announced on Thursday, that 16 Afghan migrants who had been imprisoned in neighbor country due to lacking legal residency documents have been released. The ministry stated in a statement that these individuals have returned to Afghanistan following their release. According to the statement, these migrants spent between two to six days in neighbor country prisons.

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

IEA welcomes Israel-Hamas ceasefire accord

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) on Thursday welcomed the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, and said the accord was the result of "the historic struggle and sacrifices of the Palestinian people."

The IEA's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement it is grateful for the efforts of the mediator countries, especially the governments of Qatar and Egypt.

The complex ceasefire accord between Israel and Hamas, which controls Gaza, emerged on Wednesday after months of mediation by Qatar, Egypt and the US and 15 months of bloodshed that devastated the coastal territory and inflamed the Middle East.

The deal outlines a six-week initial ceasefire with the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, where tens of thousands have been killed.

Hostages taken by Hamas would be freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

According to a statement issued by the IEA, the "cease-fire agreement is the result of the historic struggle and sacrifices of the Palestinian people's legendary tolerance and brave resistance in the Gaza Strip. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan congratulates the leadership of Islamic resistance and the patient people of Palestine for this great achievement."

The IEA stated that it is now necessary that all phases of the agreement are fully implemented so that the cease-fire is permanent and humanitarian aid reaches the people of Gaza urgently.

"Considering the results of the previous agreements, the parties involved and the international community should ensure that the Israeli regime fulfills its commitments responsibly," the IEA stated.

"Permanent peace and tranquility in the Middle East can only be achieved through a legitimate solution to the Palestinian issue and the independence of the Palestinian people," the Islamic Emirate added.

In conclusion the IEA said it will continue to support an independent Palestinian state and the Palestinian people.

Wednesday's ceasefire agreement calls for a surge in humanitarian assistance to Gaza. Both the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross said they were preparing to scale up their aid operations.

"A ceasefire is the start - not the end. We have food lined up at the borders to Gaza - and need to be able to bring it in at scale," said Cindy McCain, World Food Program executive director, on X.

Global reaction to the ceasefire was enthusiastic. Leaders and officials of Egypt, Turkey, Britain, the United Nations, the European Union, Jordan, Germany and the United Arab Emirates, among others, celebrated the news.

At a news conference in Doha, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said the ceasefire would take effect on Sunday. Negotiators are working with Israel and Hamas on steps to implement the agreement, he said.

"This deal will halt the fighting in Gaza, surge much-needed humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians, and reunite the hostages with their families after more than 15 months in captivity," US President Joe Biden said in Washington.

However, Israel's acceptance of the deal will not be official until it is approved by the country's security cabinet and government, with votes slated for Thursday, an Israeli official said.

The accord was expected to win approval despite opposition from some hardliners in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government.

While people celebrated the pact in Gaza and Israel, Israel's military escalated attacks after the announcement, the civil emergency service and residents said.

Heavy Israeli bombardment, especially in Gaza City, killed 32 people late on Wednesday, medics said. The strikes continued early on Thursday and destroyed houses in Rafah in southern Gaza, Nuseirat in central Gaza and in northern Gaza, residents said.

Israel's military made no immediate comment and there were no reports of Hamas attacks on Israel after the ceasefire announcement.

Qatar-Afghanistan joint labour body meeting held



DOHA (Ariana News): A Qatar-Afghanistan Joint Labour Committee meeting was held in the Qatari capital of Doha, where the two sides discussed various issues including developments in the labor sector, local media reported.

Qatar's Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour Sheikhha of Qatar Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani and Head of Labour Deployment Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Afghanistan, Mohammad Ameen Anees, co-chaired the meeting, Gulf Times newspaper reported.

The committee discussed the latest developments in the labour sector between the two countries, alongside other relevant matters outlined in the agenda, according to the newspaper.

This comes after the Islamic Emirate Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs held a meeting last week to discuss plans around the deployment of Afghan workers to foreign countries.

The meeting, chaired by Minister Abdul Manan Omari, was attended by senior IEA officials, including Amir Khan Muttaqi, the foreign minister.

According to a statement issued by the ministry on Saturday, the discussion focused on facilitating the process of sending Afghan workers abroad and creating better conditions for laborers within Afghanistan.

Sending Afghan workers to Qatar and other Gulf nations was a pledge of the previous government but was never implemented.

The IEA now seeks to revive and expand these plans amid a worsening unemployment crisis.

Afghanistan exports 9,800 tons of dried fruits to China

KANDAHAR (TOLOnews): The Kandahar Chamber of Commerce and Investment has announced the export of 9,800 tons of dried fruits from southern Afghanistan to China since the solar year 1402.

This quantity of dried fruits, valued at \$5.825 million, has been exported from the southern region.

Abdul Baqi Bina, Deputy Head of the Kandahar Chamber of Commerce, stated: "Unfortunately, for various reasons, our exports, which were 8,400 tons last year, have decreased to 1,400 tons this year. The use of sulfur is one of the main reasons for this decline."

Saleh Mohammad Alokozai, a businessman from Kandahar, said about the exports: "We are ready to cooperate in the field of packaging, but the use of sulfur by farmers continues. The Ministry of Agriculture must resolve this issue; otherwise, the farmers themselves will suffer losses."

According to officials from the chamber, the excessive use of sulfur during the drying process of dried fruits has caused a decline in raisin exports this year.

On the other hand, the Kandahar Directorate of Agriculture and Irrigation has reported efforts to enhance farmers' capacity to naturally dry their fruits.

Emal Hakimi, an agricultural specialist at the Kandahar Directorate of Agriculture and Irrigation, said: "Some farmers use sulfur to change the color of their products, which has led to some of our commercial products being rejected abroad this year. We will take steps to prevent this issue."

A Chinese businessman residing in Kandahar told TOLOnews that traditional methods of processing dried fruits should be replaced with modern technology.

Mohammad Omar Omari, a Chinese businessman in Kandahar, stated: "Food safety is a very serious issue in China. Food, fruits, and any goods imported to China are thoroughly inspected at customs and related departments. Here in Afghanistan, fruits are processed traditionally. I have discussed this issue with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to ensure this process is done using machines."

Most raisins are exported from Kandahar and Zabul provinces to China, and the reduction in tariffs on Afghan goods has made Afghan traders more optimistic about increasing trade with this country.

Taliban promise incentives to returning investors to boost domestic economy

KABUL (Amu TV): Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban's deputy prime minister, announced on Thursday that special incentives will be offered to returning Afghan investors as part of an effort to encourage economic growth and attract capital back to the country.

Speaking at a conference in Kabul titled "National Call for Domestic Investment," Taliban officials claimed that conditions for investment within Afghanistan are now "fully prepared" and urged Afghan businessmen to invest in various sectors of the economy.

Baradar detailed a series of incentives for industrialists and returning investors, including a five-year exemption from all taxes except employee payroll taxes for those establishing new industries.

"According to the procedures prepared for industrialists and returning investors, they will be exempt from all taxes for five years, except for payroll taxes," Baradar said.

He also announced that imported machinery and tools for industrial use would be exempt from customs duties, and that foreign employees and engineers hired by returning investors would be eligible for two-year visas.

"We will cooperate with you in any way necessary to support your efforts," Baradar added.

Baradar appealed to Afghan industrialists and investors abroad to bring their capital back to Afghanistan, emphasizing their role in the country's progress.

"I call on all Afghan industrialists and investors outside the country to transfer their investments to Afghanistan to contribute to the nation's development," he said.

The announcement comes as Afghanistan's private sector continues to voice concerns over challenges such as high taxation. While the Taliban's new measures aim to address these issues, it remains to be seen whether they will be sufficient to restore confidence among investors amid the country's ongoing economic and political instability.

Women-led organizations advocate for rights in Afghanistan

KABUL (Amu TV): A detailed report, "Leadership in Adversity: Women-Led Organizations' Strategies for Effective Advocacy in Afghanistan," examines how women-led organizations have adapted their strategies to advocate for women's rights under oppressive conditions following the Taliban's return to power.

Authored by the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF) in collaboration with the Women's Voice and Leadership in Humanitarian Settings (WHS) project, the report highlights efforts by Women-led organizations both inside Afghanistan and in the diaspora to sustain advocacy, amplify women's voices, and secure resources amidst severe restrictions.

The report notes significant progress in women's rights prior to August 2021, driven by increased recognition of women's roles in decision-making and the emergence of women-led organizations advocating for gender equality.

This progress was bolstered by international initiatives, which enhanced the capacities of Afghan women leaders to champion their causes.

However, the Taliban's return to power reversed these gains, introducing "harsh limitations on women and their participation in public life, creating a hostile environment full of threats and violence," the report states.

According to the report, the Taliban's restrictive environment has forced women-led organizations to shift from public advocacy to community-level initiatives. The report explains that many Women-led organizations have incorporated their advocacy into humanitarian projects, often including livelihood or income generation components to address women's immediate needs while maintaining their efforts discreetly.

Despite decreased international support, women-led organizations have leveraged their resilience to continue operating. They have adopted global advocacy strategies to amplify Afghan women's voices and secure resources. The report highlights that "women-led organizations found new platforms for communication and outreach" using tools like Zoom, X (formerly Twitter), and Microsoft Teams to sustain their efforts.

Women-led organizations have expanded their advocacy to the international stage. The report cites September 2024 as a key moment when Canada, Germany, Australia, and the Netherlands announced plans to file a complaint against the Taliban at the International Court of Justice under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This achievement resulted from coordinated efforts by Afghan women-led organizations, both inside the country and in the diaspora.

The report further notes that consultations with over 2,100 Afghan women and activists have informed international advocacy, ensuring that the realities faced by Afghan women are reflected in global initiatives.

The report identifies significant challenges, including limited digital literacy among grassroots Women-led organizations and a lack of access to technology, which restrict their ability to engage with international stakeholders. Additionally, Women-led organizations often face exclusion from decision-making platforms concerning Afghanistan at the global level, coupled with insufficient flexible funding for local initiatives.

The report emphasizes the critical role of women-led organizations in sustaining advocacy efforts despite oppressive conditions. Coordination between Women-led organizations in Afghanistan and the diaspora has improved, enabling collective action and increased participation in international events.

"The WHS project has empowered cohort members to actively participate in advocacy, establishing themselves as credible sources of support for women and girls," the report highlights.

The report concludes with a call for increased global support for Afghan women-led organizations, stressing the need for flexible funding and their meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes. It highlights the ongoing resilience of Afghan women leaders, who continue to adapt their strategies to ensure their voices are heard in the face of adversity.

By documenting these efforts, "Leadership in Adversity" underscores the unwavering determination of Afghan Women-led organizations to advocate for women's rights and address the humanitarian and gender crises their country faces.

Stanekzai calls for water management in country



KABUL (TOLOnews): Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, the Political Deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, considers water management and the construction of dams crucial for the country.

Stanekzai stated that to prevent the country from facing drought, existing water resources must be managed, and the Ministry of Energy and Water should prioritize the construction of dams.

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs said: "You can see that the water level in Afghanistan is decreasing day by day, and the country is facing water shortages. If we do not manage and control our water resources and allow them to flow into other countries, this will harm us. A day will come when the entire country will lack drinking water."

How effective can water management and dam construction be in addressing water shortages?

Mohammad Asif Stanekzai, an economic expert, said: "Such projects can strengthen the national economy, create job opportunities, and preserve the value of the Afghan currency."

Sadiq Shinwari, a political analyst, said: "Afghanistan's water resources must be properly managed because the country urgently needs water."

In a recent statement, a member of Iran's Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Policy and National Security claimed that the Islamic Emirate does not adhere to water diplomacy and agreements. He also emphasized: "Water rights are to be claimed, not granted."

United Nations warns of rising child malnutrition in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Afghanistan has warned of a potential rise in child malnutrition cases this year, adding that climate change in 2025 will affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in Afghanistan.

In a report published, OCHA stated that over half a million children in Afghanistan will face the risk of malnutrition this year.

The United Nations highlighted that climate change has already impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in Afghanistan, emphasizing that this phenomenon limits people's ability to provide food for their families.

According to OCHA's statistics, around 22.9 million people—nearly half of Afghanistan's population—rely on humanitarian aid for survival.

The organization attributes Afghanistan's lack of progress and rebuilding efforts to an unstable economy, decades of war, natural disasters, climate impacts, and political instability and oppressive policies in the country.

This highlights the incompetence of successive regimes and governments over the decades, unable to effectively address critical issues, resulting in ongoing crises that continue to harm the country and its people.

OCHA also noted that unemployment and poverty in Afghanistan affect approximately 48% of the country's population.

Afghanistan remains one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, with thousands of lives already impacted by its consequences.

based on gender or race. However, Afghanistan's girls and women are not allowed to participate in cricket or other sports.

Minky Worden, directors of Human Rights Watch, stated in the statement that the Taliban has imposed numerous orders and regulations that strip women of their rights, including their rights to work and education.

Several human rights defenders have supported the boycott of the Afghanistan cricket team due to the close ties between some of its members and Taliban officials, particularly Sirajuddin Haqqani, the group's Interior Minister. However, opponents argue that boycotting the cricket team will not lead to any changes in the Taliban's policies.

The International Cricket Council has not supported the boycott of the Afghanistan cricket team, and the team is scheduled to play against England in the Champions Trophy in Pakistan in February.

This growing tension highlights the ongoing struggle for women's rights in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. The international community is grappling with how to address human rights violations while maintaining engagement with Afghanistan sports and cultural institutions.

The debate over the Afghanistan cricket team's participation is emblematic of the broader global response to the Taliban's restrictive policies.



# PHC extends bails of 18 PTI leaders for 3 weeks

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmad has extended the protective bail of 18 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders including Member National Assembly (13MNAs) along with Special Assistant to Chief Minister Pakhtunkhwa for Anti-corruption and provincial's Minister for Food, on Thursday.

The PTI leaders include MNAs named Atif Khan, Shandana Gulzar, Junaid Akbar, Sher Ali Arbab,

Yousaf Khan, Arbab Aamir Ayub, Sultan Muhammad Khan, Sajid Khan, Subghatullah, Suhail Sultan, Salim ur Rehman, Ahad Ali Shah, Abdul Latif, Provincial Minister Zahoore Shah Toru, Special Assistant Anti-Corruption Muhammad Musaddiq along with others leaders Ali Zeman, Hamida Shah and Khadija Shah.

During the hearing, Chief Justice Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim made remarks that since all the members of the National and Provincial Assemblies are present in court, a session of the assemblies could be held here today

(on Thursday), and the quorum would also be complete.

The petitioners were represented by Alam Khan Adenzai advocate while the federal government was represented by Assistant Attorney General Dawlat Khan. NAB prosecutor was also present in court.

The petitioners' lawyer informed the court that cases have been registered against the petitioners, but details are not being provided. He stated that most of the petitioners are members of the National and Provincial Assemblies and are leaders of PTI.

The Assistant Attorney

General submitted a report from the FIA and other agencies in court, while the court was informed that a report from NAB is still awaited.

In the meantime, Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim remarked that since all the members of the National and Provincial Assemblies are present in court, a session of the assemblies could be held here today, and the quorum would also be complete. His remarks were met with laughter in the courtroom. PHC granted a three-week protective bail to all the petitioners and directed NAB to submit its report on the next hearing.

## KP CM inaugurates KPITB Yearbook 2024

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur officially inaugurated The KPITB Yearbook 2024 and Work Plan for 2025 on Thursday.

According to the highlights of 2024, the IT Board during last calendar year 2024 has launched E-Domicile and E-Stamping services to revolutionize public service delivery.

The board has also started work to set up Pakistan Digital City Haripur and

Software Technology Parks to foster economic growth and imparted digital skills to more than 16000 youth under youth empowerment programme (KPYEP) to prepare future leaders.

Dastak Platform initiated by the KP IT Board has succeeded to recognize Dastak Platform as a global leader in public service delivery. Similarly, policies like the Cloud First Policy and Digital Right of Way Policy to modernize

governance.

The board has also prepared a Work Plan for the Year 2025 to scale successes with enhanced e-Governance platforms and paperless offices, acceleration of public service digitization through the Dastak Platform, empowering youth via advanced digital skills training and specialized schools for AI and Game Development and establishment of special technology zones and promoting entrepreneurship.

## PHC extends Bushra Bibi's bail F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted a one-month extension of protective bail to the wife of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Bushra Bibi.

The court also directed Bushra Bibi's lawyer to obtain details of the cases registered against her from the relevant high court and subsequently disposed of the case, on Thursday.

During the hearing, Bushra Bibi's lawyer, Alam Khan Adenzai, appeared before the court and informed that the petitioner was currently present in Islamabad, as she was required to appear in court for the Toshakhana case. Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, inquired from the lawyer whether an exemption application had been filed on behalf of Bushra Bibi.

He responded affirmatively, confirming that the application had indeed been submitted. Following the confirmation, the court granted Bushra Bibi a one-month extension of her protective bail.

Furthermore, PHC's divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmad directed the petitioner to obtain detailed information regarding the cases registered against Bushra Bibi from the relevant high court. With these instructions, the court disposed of the case.

## Pakistan envoy to Canada meets Governor general F.P. Report

OTTAWA: High Commissioner of Pakistan to Canada Ambassador Muhammad Saleem presented his Letters of Credence to Her Excellency The Right Honourable Mary J. May Simon, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada. The ceremony held at the historic Rideau Hall, was attended by senior diplomats of the High Commission, Consul General Toronto, Consul General Montreal and Trade & Investment Counsellor.

During his tête-à-tête with the Governor General, Ambassador Saleem conveyed the greetings from the President, the Prime Minister, and the people of Pakistan to the Canadian leadership and people. He stated that Pakistan and Canada have a rich legacy and strong foundations to further strengthen the bilateral ties.

He underscored the significance of Pakistan-Canada relations and highlighted the potential for greater collaboration on shared priorities.

In his remarks following the ceremony, the High Commissioner stated, "I am honored to represent Pakistan in Canada, a country with which we share strong people-to-people ties and mutual interests. I look forward to working with the Canadian authorities to foster a deeper and substantive partnership with special focus on economic diplomacy."

The High Commission and the three Consulates will continue with their efforts to promote bilateral engagement through active dialogue, business linkages and cultural diplomacy, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Commander Combined Task Force (CTF) - 150 Commodore Asim Sohail Malik of Pakistan Navy hands over the command to Commodore Rodger Ward of Royal New Zealand Navy at HQ Combined Maritime Forces, Bahrain.

## Pak Navy hands over command of CTF 150 to New Zealand Navy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Navy has successfully relinquished command of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 and Commodore Asim Sohail Malik formally handed over command to Commodore Rodger Ward of Royal New Zealand Navy in the presence of Vice Admiral George Wikoff, Commander of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).

The change of command ceremony held at Naval Support Activity, Bahrain, said a press release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy).

During Pakistan Navy's tenure from July 2024 to January 2025, CTF 150 conducted numerous maritime security operations.

In addition to its active participation in CTF 150, ships of Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency independently interdicted three narcotics-laden dhows. Collectively, Pakistan Navy and CMF intercepted approximately 10 tonnes of narcotics, with a street value exceeding 50 million US dollars over the last six months.

Under Pakistan Navy's leadership, CTF 150 also actively fostered regional collaboration, securing the participation of ships from Kenya Navy and

Royal Navy of Oman in CTF 150 operations.

To further strengthen CMF's objectives, Commodore Asim Sohail Malik engaged with key civil and military leaders of Mauritius, Kenya, and Sri Lanka. He emphasized collaboration, information sharing, and the exchange of best practices to address shared maritime security challenges.

Reflecting on his tenure as Commander CTF 150, Commodore Asim Sohail Malik shared his thoughts on the invaluable experiences, opportunities, and lasting memories of working with colleagues from around the globe. He highlighted

Pakistan Navy's unwavering commitment to collaborative maritime security in line with Pakistan's foreign policy and the vision of Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Chief of the Naval Staff of Pakistan.

He further stated that Pakistan Navy takes pride in its active participation within CMF, underscoring its steadfast dedication to contributing to maritime security. The incoming Commander CTF 150, Commodore Rodger Ward, expressed his gratitude to Pakistan Navy for its exemplary leadership and operational successes during its tenure. CTF 150 is one of five task forces under CMF, the world's largest naval partnership.

## Sindh Cabinet okays major reforms in education, transport, infrastructure

KARACHI (PPF): During a four-and-a-half-hour meeting, the Sindh cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, made several significant decisions, including the recruitment of 195 teachers, the creation of 700 more teachers positions, the approval of amendments to the education board laws, and the operation of 100 electric buses in the city on a rent-to-own basis.

The cabinet also urged the federal government to initiate Flood Protection Plan IV on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis. Additionally, the Chief Minister directed the education department to develop a Transgender Education Policy and granted a tax exemption on Sindh Revenue Board (SRB) fees for K-IV procurement.

The meeting took place at CM House and was attended by provincial ministers, advisors, special assistants, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, and other relevant secretaries.

Recruitment of teachers: The provincial cabinet was informed that to enhance the quality and standard of education, the Teaching License Policy was approved in 2023. Sindh is the first province in the country to introduce this policy.

Following the Teaching License Policy, a test was conducted in March 2024 through the third-party Sukkur IBA, in which both pre-service (fresh candidates) and in-service teachers participated. A rigorous assessment was carried out, with a total of 4,000 candidates appearing for the test.

Only 646 candidates (195 fresh candidates and 451 in-service teachers) qualified by achieving high standards of 50 or more marks in both content and pedagogy sections.

The cabinet was informed that 700 new posts of Elementary School Teachers (EST) at BS-16 were created specifically for in-service and pre-service candidates who hold teaching licenses. However, the finance department has only included 352 of these posts in the budget, leaving 348 posts yet to be reflected to accommodate all teaching license holders. The CM directed finance department to clear 348 posts.

Regarding the 195 fresh teaching license holders, the cabinet granted them a time exemption for the written test, referring them to the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC) for interviews for their appointments against the vacant EST (BPS-16) positions.

Amendments in Education Board laws: Amendments to the Sindh Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education Bill - 2024 and the Sindh Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Ordinance 1972 were also discussed. The amendments include the inclusion of members from civil society, headmasters, and principal representatives on the board.

Under these amendments, the government will have the authority to remove any board member and will not allow any benefits, allowances, or concessions to individuals working there. The Chairman will

hold office for a term of three years from the date of their appointment and will be eligible for reappointment for additional specified periods.

The Chairman will be appointed by the Controlling Authority through either a direct recruitment process or by transfer from among cadre officers of BPS-19/20, on terms and conditions determined by the authority.

Electric Buses for Karachi: The cabinet was informed that the National Energy & Transport Corporation (NE&T) has submitted a proposal for a total of 8,000 electric buses (EB), which will be implemented in phases. In Phase 1, 500 buses are planned for the first year, with 50 already operational. Phase 2 will introduce an additional 1,500 buses, and Phase 3 will see 4,000 to 6,000 buses deployed over the next four years, along with the development of charging infrastructure, depots, and bus stations. A solar plant of up to 1 GW (Giga Watt) is also expected to be completed by the end of Phase 3.

On May 30, 2024, the proposal for a pilot project comprising 50 electric buses (12 meters each) on a rent-to-own model was approved. Under this model, NETC will procure and supply the buses at a specified cost per kilometre, covering a defined distance per annum.

The buses are currently operational on four major routes in Karachi. An Independent Expert has been appointed to monitor all aspects of the project,

including technical, financial, and legal considerations.

The cabinet approved a contract agreement between the Sindh Mass Transit Authority (SMTA) and NETC for the supply, construction, operation, and maintenance of 100 electric buses on a rent-to-own basis. The cabinet also allocated Rs 412.50 million for the last quarter of the fiscal year (April-June 2025) and Rs 1.65 billion annually (for eight years) for monthly payments related to the 100 electric buses.

National Flood Protection Plan IV (NFPP-IV): The Sindh cabinet has urged the federal government to finance Flood Protection Plan IV on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis. The cabinet was informed that the Ministry of Water Resources had requested the Sindh government to comment on limiting federal financing to federal entities' projects. Proposed federal financing has been capped at Rs. 77.533 billion, making up 9.4% of the total estimated cost of Rs. 824.5 billion.

Sindh Transgender Education Policy (STEP): Discussing STEP, the Chief Minister emphasised the need for a policy that is free from all forms of discrimination. He noted that the transgender community in Pakistan has very limited access to education. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023 census report, the literacy rate of transgender individuals at the national level is 40.15 pc, while in Sindh it is 34.16 per cent.

## Chinese delegation meets Sharjeel

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: A delegation of a Chinese bus manufacturing company called on Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon in Karachi. The meeting was attended by Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, Managing Director of Sindh Mass Transit Authority Kamal Dayo, and officials from a Chinese bus manufacturing company.

The Chinese company, in a meeting, briefed Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon about their latest

est range of buses for both urban and intercity transports.

During the meeting, Senior Minister Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon showed keen interest in the introduction of double-decker buses with an aim to better the public transport system in Karachi city. He assured that the quality and capacity of the Company's manufactured bus was highly encouraging.

He said that the Sindh government was committed to further improving the transport structure in the

province and underlined that foreign investment in the transport sector was very important for development and innovation.

He said that Pakistan was a strategic market for international companies willing to invest in transportation, adding the Sindh government would extend all possible support to the investors investing in the province.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said they are committed to upgrading the transport, providing job opportunities, and earning for the national exchequer.



## PM for ensuring early conclusion

*Continued from Front Page*

During the meeting, it was informed that following the instructions of the Prime Minister, after taking all the stakeholders into confidence, the loan form for SMEs was made easier and simpler so that maximum SMEs could improve their business and benefit from the loan facility.

The forum was informed that the classification of SMEs was being done in such a way that all small and medium scale businesses could benefit from the government's support and facilities and ensure that they were provided with loans on timely and easy terms.

It was also added that on the instructions of the Prime Minister, a new category would be introduced to facilitate the SMEs and housewives in

SMEs, in which they would be given easy access to loans and government support for business improvement.

The meeting was briefed on the stats of SMEs in three major cities by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and it was told that in the next few months, a survey would be conducted to plan the provision of better facilities to the SMEs in the entire country.

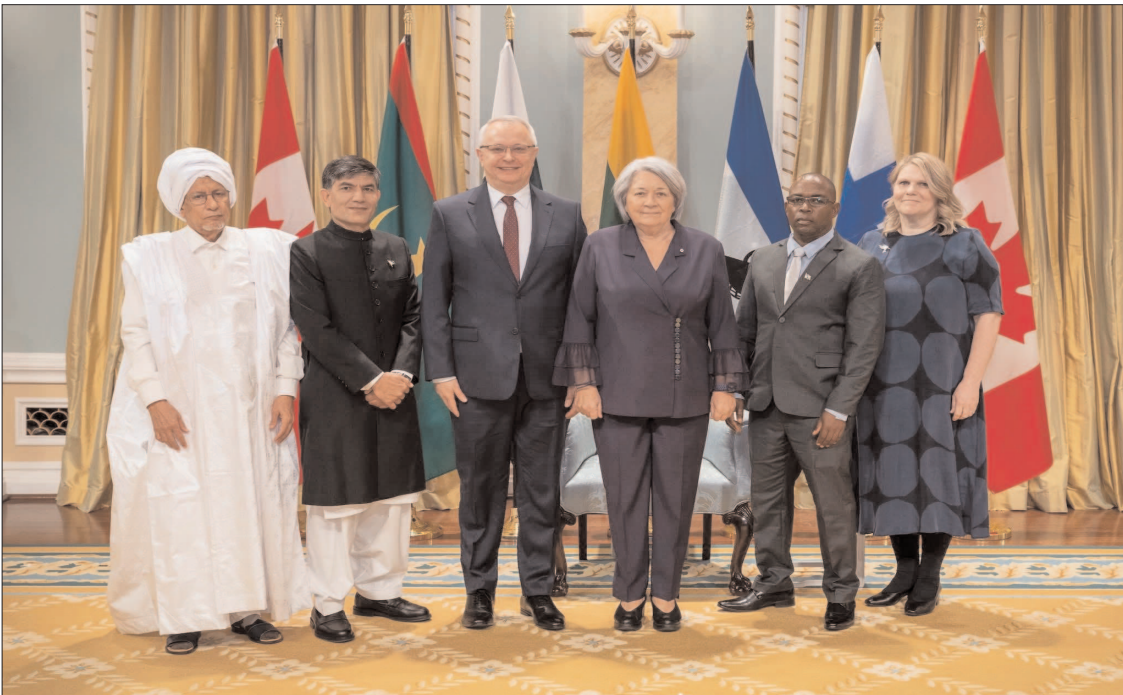
The meeting was also given a comprehensive briefing on the goals of the government plan to support SMEs and the period of their completion on the instructions of the Prime Minister. The meeting was told that SMEDA (SMEs Development Authority) would launch a financial literacy and training program for SMEs by February this

year. Apart from this, the program would be finalized and released by the middle of this year to introduce SMEs to modern technology.

The meeting was also briefed about the goals of the comprehensive action plan for the increase in domestic exports with regard to SMEs and their deadlines.

The meeting was also informed about the progress on the policy being formulated for the development of women entrepreneurs.

Federal Ministers Rana Tanveer Hussain, Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister of State Shaza Fatima Khawaja, State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmed, four provincial chief secretaries, representatives of SME sector and relevant senior officials participated in the meeting.



OTTAWA: Pakistan's High Commissioner to Canada, Ambassador Muhammad Saleem presented his credentials to Her Excellency The Right Honourable Mary J. May Simon, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada.