

Aleema, Uzma bail extended
F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore Anti-terrorism Court has extended the interim bail of Aleema Khan, Uzma Khan, and other nominated accused in the Jinnah House attack and October 5 arson cases. The hearing was conducted by Judge Arshad Javed of the Lahore ATC, where PTI leaders faced multiple charges. Aleema Khan and Uzma Khan, appeared in court as their interim bail period ended.



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Morocco boat tragedy Probe initiated against 20 FIA officials

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: After at least 44 Pakistanis reportedly lost their lives in the Morocco migrant boat tragedy, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has kicked off a probe against its 20 officials who had allegedly cleared travel documents of victims at three major airports.

The development came after the federal government launched a high-level probe into the tragic boat incident in Morocco wherein dozens of Pakistani migrants drowned while attempting to reach Spain from West Africa earlier this month.

In a statement on Saturday, an FIA spokesperson said that the agency initiated a probe against its 20 officials over suspicions of their involvement in human smuggling. It added that the officials had allegedly cleared the victims of the ill-fated boat at airports. The unfortunate incident occurred on January 16 when a boat carrying irregular migrants from the African nation of Mauritania to Spain capsized. 50 migrants, including 44 Pakistanis, were presumed dead.

Although, as many as 36 Pakistani citizens were rescued, the rest still remain missing which, as per a report from the Pakistani Embassy, should be presumed dead. The ill-fated boat departed from Mauritania on January 2 with 86 migrants on board. Moroccan authorities reported that 66 of the passengers were Pakistani nationals and noted that it had rescued 36 people after the accident.

The suspected FIA officials include eight from Faisalabad airport and six each from Karachi and Lahore airports. The agency also revealed that Mauritania was the "third and new route" for human smuggling after Turkey and Libya. Separately, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar also issued instructions for coordination of the government's response and asked the ministries of foreign affairs and interior to ensure the provision of efficient and timely assistance to the Pakistani victims of Moroccan boat tragedy.

Dar chaired a meeting on issues relating to 3rd country relocations of Afghan

nationals, media reported citing press release. The meeting also reviewed in detail the boat tragedy off the coast of Morocco leading to several deaths. The secretaries of the ministries of foreign affairs, interior and other officials attended the meeting.

In a major development today, the FIA arrested two alleged human smugglers including a woman and her son from Gujrat, whereas, another suspected trafficker was taken into custody from Azad Jammu and Kashmir's Bhimber area. The sources closer to the FIA said that the accused woman had confessed to being involved in human smuggling along with her three sons. One of her sons, Khawar, had taken 10 people to Senegal with him following his previous visit to the African country in April 2024.

They revealed that the suspect's son Hasan was residing in Italy while her another son was absconding since the boat tragedy. The agency had collected details from bank account and mobile phone after arresting the woman from Gujrat's village of Jaurah a day ago.

The human trafficking gang had established itself in March 2024 by constructing safe houses and started transporting people to Mauritania in June last year. The traffickers used to carry people to Senegal via air travel to take them to Mauritania via land routes, according to the FIA. According to the federal agency, several Pakistanis were still present in those safe houses in Mauritania who wanted to reach Spain via Morocco.

The FIA claimed that the prime suspect of last month's Greek boat capsizing incident, Qamaruz Zaman, was also present in Mauritania along with several other traffickers who fled from different countries to the northwest African country after a similar incident that took place in June 2023. The human traffickers also included Afzal Jajja who ran away from Libya following the horrific boat capsizing near Greece. It is pertinent to mention here that more than 80 Pakistanis drowned after their boats capsized near Greece on the night between December 13 and 14, 2024.

Pakistan first country to implement Digital FDI under WEF

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif said on Saturday Pakistan is the first country to implement the Digital Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Initiative, launched by the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Digital Cooperation Organisation (DCO).

According to a spokesperson, the premier said Pakistan's first Digital FDI project had been making significant efforts to identify targets and promote digital progress. He elaborated that Pakistan's Digital FDI project was a framework aimed at implementing digital infrastructure, digitization and export of digital services. It would focus on sectors likely to attract foreign investment into the country, he added.

"It is an important milestone towards creating an investment-friendly environment in the country," the premier said, adding that the country was heading towards a vibrant digital economy, which was a vital step in achieving sustainable progress and prosperity. PM Shehbaz Sharif remarked that the initiative reflected the government's commitment to fostering economic growth.

Operation planned in Kurram

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the aftermath of a deadly ambush in Lower Kurram's Bagan area, the authorities are preparing for an operation against militants. Temporary displacement camps (TDPs) are being set up for civilians affected by the violence.

A notification from the Deputy Commissioner announced on Saturday that designated locations for these camps in Thall and Hangu. Facilities like Thal Degree College, Technical College, and Rescue and Court buildings will be used for the purpose. The district administration has contacted provincial relief agencies to expedite the camp arrangements.

The development came after an ambush targeting a convoy traveling to Parachinar. The attack claimed the lives of six drivers and two security personnel. In a retaliatory operation, officials reportedly killed six attackers and injured ten others.

The authorities in Urawali area of Lower Kurram recovered four bodies of drivers having signs of torture. Police said the bodies were moved to the Lower Kurram Alizai Hospital.

The recent wave of violence in Kurram has overshadowed peace efforts. A member of the Grand Jirga, a tribal council, voiced concerns about the Bagan attack's impact on the recently signed peace agreement. Jirga representatives highlighted the stress caused by road closures and recurring attacks.

PTI decides to challenge verdict

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has decided to challenge the verdict given by an Accountability Court in Al-Qadir Trust case on Monday.

This was decided during a meeting of political committee of PTI held under the chairmanship of Barrister Gohar Khan. The meeting was attended by Omar Ayub, Shibli Faraz, Ali Amin Gandapur, Asad Qaiser, Salman Akram Raja and others.

Matters related to Al-Qadir Trust case verdict and PTI's dialogues with the government came under discussion. Sources further said that the PTI legal team gave briefing on Al-Qadir Trust case during the meeting.



GAZA: Relatives of Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks mourn after an Israeli air strike on tents - despite announcement of a ceasefire agreement - in Khan Younis.

Atta Tarar criticises PTI for using religion as shield in £190m case

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar asked Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to refrain from using religion in politics for its vested interests.

Addressing a press conference alongside religious scholars on Saturday, he criticised the PTI for resorting to religious sentiments after failing to present a legal defence in the £190 million case, which he described as an "open-and-shut" matter with no ambiguities or legal loopholes.

The minister challenged the PTI to clarify whether the £190 million recovered by the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) was handed over to Pakistan and questioned if the money was returned to the same individual from whom it was confiscated.

Calling the case one of Pakistan's most significant legal verdicts, Tarar accused the PTI of using religion to

conceal corruption. He alleged that during PTI's tenure, Shahzad Akbar, head of the Asset Recovery Unit, confirmed to the NCA in 2020 that the funds had been recovered and transferred to Pakistan. However, Tarar claimed the funds were returned to the original offender following cabinet approval in a sealed envelope.

Terming it the largest robbery in Pakistan's history, Tarar pointed out that PTI's founder and other accused were convicted in the case. He questioned the source of wealth used by the PTI leader and his wife to purchase a luxury home worth Rs 250 million and a 200-kanal property in Lahore. He also alleged that PTI leadership demanded five-carat diamond rings and misused public funds.

The minister stressed that the recovered money was meant for Pakistan's welfare, including education, health, and infrastructure projects, but was instead returned illegally to the offender. He criticized PTI's

actions at sacred sites, such as Masjid-e-Nabwi, where political protests disrespected the sanctity of the mosque.

Regarding the Al-Qadir Trust case, Tarar alleged that PTI gave the trust a religious facade while using it for personal gain. He highlighted that constructing a mosque or religious institution with stolen money is impermissible. He stated that the corruption and scandals of the former prime minister had made global headlines, yet the PTI continues to exploit religion for political gain. Tarar demanded that religion should not be used as a tool in politics, asserting that politics does not hold the sanctity that religion does. Concluding his remarks, Tarar assured that the government is committed to recovering stolen national wealth for public welfare. Religious scholars present at the event echoed his views, urging political leaders not to use religion as a cover for corruption.

Israel approves Sunday ceasefire

JERUSALEM/CAIRO (Reuters): Israel on Saturday approved a ceasefire deal with Palestinian group Hamas that involves release of hostages in the Gaza Strip, and Israeli forces bombed the tiny enclave ahead of the agreement's scheduled start on Sunday. The agreement is set to halt a 15-month-old war between Israel and Gaza's rulers Hamas that has decimated the Strip, killed nearly 47,000 Palestinians and 1,200 Israelis, and destabilised the Middle East.

Early on Saturday, after meeting for more than six hours, the Israeli cabinet ratified the U.S.-brokered ceasefire deal which is meant to stop fighting and see the release over several weeks of dozens of hostages held by Hamas in return for scores of Palestinians in Israeli prisons. "The Government has approved the framework for the return of the hostages. The framework for the hostages' release will come into effect on Sunday," Netanyahu's office said in a brief statement.

In Gaza, Israeli warplanes have kept up heavy attacks since the deal was agreed, and continued to pound the territory on Saturday. Israeli tanks shelled the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza City and airstrikes hit central and southern Gaza, residents said. Medics in Gaza said five people were killed in an airstrike that hit a tent in the Mawasi area, west of the city of Khan Younis.

At least 123 Palestinians have now been killed by Israeli bombardment since the ceasefire deal was announced on Wednesday, the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said. The Israeli military said it had carried out strikes on 50 "terror targets" across the Gaza Strip on Friday and did not immediately respond to

questions about its actions on Saturday.

Sirens sounded in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv on Saturday. The military said it had shot down a missile fired from Yemen and made no mention of any casualties. The Houthi group, which controls large parts of Yemen, indicated they would launch attacks on Israel should it "violate" the ceasefire. The Gaza war - which began when Hamas staged the most devastating attack in Israel's history on Oct. 7, 2023, killing hundreds in southern Israel - has set off a series of other, smaller conflicts in the Middle East.

Israel began bombing Gaza immediately and soon clashed with Lebanese Hezbollah, an Iran-backed ally of Hamas, eventually invading southern Lebanon and killing most of Hezbollah's top leadership. The Yemeni Houthis, also backed by Iran, have since the start of the Gaza war carried out hundreds of attacks on what they say are Israeli-linked cargo ships travelling via the Red Sea, and fired a number of missiles at Israeli territory. Israel has responded by bombing Yemen. Israel has also killed a number of senior officers in the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, Iran's elite military force, many of them in strikes on Syrian territory including the Iranian embassy compound in Damascus last year. It is not clear whether the end of fighting in Gaza would help calm wider regional tensions. If successful, some observers say, it could ease hostilities elsewhere in the Middle East.

The ceasefire will come into effect at 0630 GMT on Sunday, the Qatari foreign ministry spokesman posted on X. The White House expects three female hostages to be released to Israel in the afternoon through the

Red Cross. Under the deal, the three-stage ceasefire starts with an initial six-week phase when hostages held by Hamas will be exchanged for prisoners and detainees jailed in Israel.

Thirty-three of the 98 remaining Israeli hostages, including women, children, men over 50 and ill and wounded captives, are to be freed in this phase. In return, Israel will release almost 2,000 Palestinians from its jails. They include 737 male, female and teen-aged prisoners, some of whom are members of groups convicted of attacks that killed dozens of Israelis, as well as hundreds of Palestinians from Gaza in detention since the start of the war.

Israel's Justice Ministry published their details early on Saturday, along with the ceasefire agreement, which said 30 Palestinian prisoners would be released for each female hostage on Sunday. After Sunday's hostage release, lead U.S. negotiator Brett McGurk said, the accord calls for four more female hostages to be freed after seven days, followed by the release of three further hostages every seven days thereafter. With the accord opposed by some Israeli cabinet hard-liners, media reports said 24 ministers in Netanyahu's coalition government voted in favour of the deal while eight opposed it.

The opponents said the ceasefire agreement represented a capitulation to Hamas. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir threatened to resign if it was approved and urged other ministers to vote against it. However, he said he would not bring down the government. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, also threatened to quit the government if it does not go back to war to defeat Hamas after the first six-week phase of the ceasefire.

PTI, military leadership meeting Saif says wave of unrest in PML-N's camp created

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Information Advisor, Barrister Saif, has claimed that after the recent meeting between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and military leadership, a wave of unrest has emerged within the camp of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

He alleges that Sharif has directed his team to sabotage the ongoing negotiations, which could pave the way for political stability in the country. Saif asserts that elements within the political landscape who do not wish to see stability have begun to actively work against these peace talks.

In a statement, Barrister Saif urged government ministers to uphold their

oaths and refrain from politicizing the meeting between PTI and the military. He emphasized that PTI is committed to the path of dialogue and peace, while accusing an unelected faction of trying to derail the process in order to protect what he termed as their "illegitimate power."

Saif's comments come amidst reports suggesting that Nawaz Sharif has instructed his team to undermine the negotiations, possibly due to fears of political shifts that might weaken his position. In addition to his remarks on the negotiations, Barrister Saif also condemned the recent conviction of PTI founder Imran Khan in the Qadir Trust case.

He called the conviction "regrettable" and described it as part of a broader pat-

tern of judicial delays and injustices. According to Saif, the prolonged postponement of the verdict sealed the fate of justice being denied to Imran Khan, labeling the case as baseless. Saif reaffirmed that PTI would challenge the conviction in the High Court, asserting that such decisions will not deter the party's resolve. He further emphasized that Imran Khan remains steadfast, declaring that he will endure his prison sentence for the sake of the people and will never compromise by making a deal.

In conclusion, Barrister Saif expressed confidence that the unjust cases against Imran Khan, like others before them, will eventually be overturned, and that PTI's leadership would not be intimidated by such tactics.

Angelenos anxiously search for somewhere to live

CALIFORNIA (Reuters): Thousands of Angelenos who lost their homes in some of the most destructive wildfires in California history find themselves in fierce competition with one another for an affordable place to live in Los Angeles' post-disaster housing market. The fires have killed at least 27 people as of Friday and destroyed more than 10,000 structures in the residential enclaves of Pacific Palisades and Altadena. In the wake of the fires, rents have surged and uncertainty over insurance settlements has left some of the displaced in limbo.

In interviews this week, Angelenos described the anguish of exile from beloved neighborhoods and the daunting task of figuring out what comes next for themselves and their families. Here are some of their stories: John Adolph, a 48-year-old video producer, and his wife, two small children and two dogs have been staying with friends since they

fled their Altadena home a week ago. Their ranch-style home of six years near the Angeles National Forest was totally destroyed in the Eaton Fire.

"We thank God we're safe, but we don't know what's next," he said. "We both are lucky, our jobs are still here. I know people who have lost their livelihoods and have to start totally over. We're still employed," Adolph and his wife, Christine, are lifelong Angelenos, and have no plans to move from the area permanently "unless it's done kicking and screaming," he said. For now, the family was content to stay with friends, but knows it's a lot to ask long term. They were already looking at rental apartments.

"We have two kids and older dogs, we can't just bounce from hotel rooms to Airbnbs," he said. "We need something stable for the kids." When they went to view a rental, there were already six families lined up

ahead of them. "It's totally crazy," Adolph said. "It's going in insane mode." Even though his home was insured, he worries that surging construction costs and new insurance rates might price them out of their own neighborhood. "So it's up in the air if we can actually rebuild," he said. He has no idea how long the county will take to clear the debris before they can even start. "We'd really love to stay, but who knows, we don't know."

On the GoFundMe page, opens new tab set up by Kate Alexandria, she includes a photograph of the fire consuming her rental apartment in Altadena and says her credit cards are maxed out. People had donated more than \$3,000 as of Friday, Alexandria, a 27-year-old grant writer, moved to Los Angeles three years ago from Grass Valley, a small city north of Sacramento, after becoming unnerved by nearby devastating wildfires.

Mashhood inspires NAVTTC graduates at prestigious ceremony



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs, Rana Mashhood Khan, addressed the participants at the passing out ceremony of NAVTTC professional courses in FINTECH, Data Analytics, and Website Development. The event was attended by representatives of NAVTTC, the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants (ICMA), along with distinguished graduates from across the country.

In his address, Rana Mashhood Khan stated, "Pakistan's economy is on the rise, and foreign direct investment (FDI) is continuously increasing, which is

a very positive sign. Every day, delegations from foreign countries are visiting Pakistan, and new Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for mutual investments are being signed. These developments will benefit our youth by promoting and strengthening their opportunities in the global market."

Highlighting the initiatives under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Khan remarked, "This initiative is the vision of Mian Nawaz Sharif, and we are now building on it by launching the Digital Youth Hub Program through the NAVTTC website. This platform will

introduce one-window operations to streamline youth services and opportunities across Pakistan."

He further emphasized the recent milestones in Pakistan's progress, stating, "You can see many changes taking place. Recently, Pakistan hosted the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Conference, numerous investment summits including the Saudi Delegation's visit, and the 'Conference on Islam and Women' held in Islamabad from January 10-14, 2025. Prominent speakers such as Malala Yousafzai participated in these events, reflecting Pakistan's global standing. Additionally, the Islamabad Declaration, passed by

Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif, will soon be presented at the United Nations."

The SAPM also announced plans to expand educational access to underserved groups, noting, "Madrassa students are part of our youth, and we are determined to include them in these programs by offering access to courses such as Fintech and Website Development, ensuring they stay updated with recent trends."

Concluding his address, Rana Mashhood Khan expressed his optimism for the future, stating, "This is just the beginning. Our aim is to expand this program's reach across the nation and harness the potential of our youth population. With their active participation, we will witness positive GDP growth and improved living standards for all."

The ceremony ended with a vote of thanks from representatives of ICMA, who praised the dedication of the graduates and reiterated their commitment to supporting youth-centric initiatives to strengthen Pakistan's workforce.

CCPO orders zero tolerance on crime against women, children

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Bilal Siddique Kamyana presided over a meeting on Saturday and reviewed progress on cases related to women, children and financial crimes. DIG (Investigation) Zeeshan Asghar briefed the meeting about arrest of proclaimed offenders involved in crimes against women, children and financial crimes.

The CCPO directed that all proclaimed offenders involved in crimes against women, children and financial crimes be apprehended at the earliest and pending cases should also be disposed of. The field officers must strictly enforce the policy of zero-tolerance regarding crimes against women and children.

Kamyana also directed investigation officers to ensure better coordination with the Forensic Science Laboratory and the Prosecution Department to bring cases to a logical conclusion. He called for scientific methods to be used in investigations to ensure that the culprits are duly punished.

The CCPO highlighted that the investigation wing plays a pivotal role in the delivery of justice. He urged the police to play a proactive role in providing prompt relief to the citizens. The meeting was attended by SSP (Investigation) Muhammad Naveed, Divisional SPs (Investigation) and the In-Charges Special Sexual Offences Investigation Unit (SSOIs).

Japanese envoy, Punjab CM discuss cooperation in various sectors

LAHORE (APP): Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan Akamatsu Shuichi called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, here on Saturday and discussed opportunities for enhancing bilateral relations.

During the meeting, CM Maryam Nawaz expressed Pakistan's interest in collaborating with Japan across various sectors, including agriculture, minerals, information technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, and energy. She underscored

the importance of increasing economic cooperation between the two countries. "We hold Japan in high regard and are keen to explore new avenues for mutually beneficial cooperation," CM Maryam Nawaz stated. She also extended her gratitude for Japan's support during the devastating 2022 floods, recognizing Japan's consistent assistance to Pakistan in times of crisis.

Highlighting the deep-rooted friendship between the two nations, she praised Japan's public

welfare initiatives and development projects. She invited Japanese investors to explore opportunities in Punjab, assuring them of full support and protection for their investments.

Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi commended the efforts of CM Maryam Nawaz and the leadership of her family, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, in advancing public welfare. He also extended an invitation for her to visit Japan, which she graciously accepted.

LHC CJ chairs full court meeting

LAHORE (APP): Lahore High Court Chief Justice Ms Aalia Neelum Saturday chaired a full court meeting at the judges' new library.

The meeting was attended by judges of the Lahore High Court, including Justice Ali Baqar Najafi, Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh, Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan, Justice Syed Shahbaz Ali Rizvi and Justice Faisal Zaman Khan. LHC Registrar Abher Gul Khan was also present.

The meeting focused on establishing mechanisms for the expeditious disposal of pending cases at the Lahore High Court, including its Principal Seat and

benches at Multan, Bahawalpur, and Rawalpindi, as well as in the district judiciary across Punjab. Several proposals were presented to expedite the resolution of older cases, reduce the backlog, and formulate a comprehensive policy aimed at ensuring swift and quality justice. The overarching objective is to provide citizens with timely and effective justice, thereby strengthening public confidence in the judiciary.

A detailed report was presented during the meeting, highlighting key judicial statistics. According to the report, over 3.8 million

cases were resolved in the Lahore High Court and district judiciary across Punjab during the year 2024. It further revealed that 148,453 new cases were filed at the Lahore High Court's Principal Seat and its benches in 2024, while 144,122 cases were decided during the same period. Similarly, the district judiciary resolved 36,570,102 cases in 2024, with 37,896,639 new cases being filed in the same year.

Currently, the Lahore High Court and its benches have 198,000 pending cases, while the district judiciary is dealing with 1,494,868 pending cases.

PIC performs 75 peads cardiac procedures in a week

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Institute of Cardiology (PIC) has achieved a significant milestone in pediatric cardiac care.

Within a week, 75 children with congenital heart defects successfully underwent device-based procedures to close holes in their hearts. This achievement was made possible through collaboration with the Pakistan Child Heart Foundation and included the participation of pediatric cardiologists from Egypt, the Netherlands, and Qatar.

Speaking to the media, PIC Dean Professor Dr.

Shahkar Ahmad Shah and Head of Pediatric Cardiology Professor Dr. Ejaz expressed gratitude to the Child Heart Foundation for their support and trust.

Dr. Shahkar stated, "It is an honor for PIC that international experts have trusted our institution and successfully carried out such a large number of cases here. PIC is a source of pride for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan, providing state-of-the-art facilities to patients."

Professor Dr. Ejaz added, "PIC is equipped with world-class facilities in pediatric cardiology. In 2024 alone, over 800 chil-

dren received life-saving treatment to close heart defects using advanced devices. PIC is a beacon of hope for families who previously had to seek costly treatments abroad or were unable to afford them."

International experts commended PIC for its exceptional services, advanced facilities, and the dedication of its doctors and staff. CEO of the Pakistan Child Heart Foundation, Farhan Ahmed, also thanked the PIC administration for their cooperation, emphasizing that this partnership ensures a brighter future for children suffering from heart diseases.

Alhamra pays tribute to Amrita Pritam

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Arts Council Alhamra hosted the latest edition of its literary series to introduce the younger generation to the legacy of literary legends.

This session paid homage to the renowned Punjabi poet and writer Amrita Pritam with acclaimed scholar Dr. Asghar Nadeem Syed leading the discussion on her literary journey.

The event was graced by the presence of Alhamra's Executive Director Taqbir Haider Kazmi. Dr. Asghar Nadeem Syed delivered an engaging talk, highlighting various aspects of Amrita Pritam's life, contributions, and poetry.

He remarked, "Punjabi literature and poetry have seen many remarkable writers, but what Amrita Pritam achieved is timeless. While she wrote in both Urdu and Punjabi, her Punjabi works stand out and have become immortal.

Her writings have a magical essence, and her biography has been translated into multiple languages."

Syed further emphasized, "Amrita Pritam's language is deeply rooted in her land and culture. Every language thrives on its strength, and her works exemplify the power and beauty of the Punjabi language."

The event concluded with a lively question-and-answer session, where a large audience of literature enthusiasts actively participated and expressed keen interest in Dr. Syed's insightful discussion.

The session celebrated Amrita Pritam's enduring legacy and reminded us of the profound impact of her literary contributions on Punjabi and Urdu literature.

New vehicle registration rule in Punjab

LAHORE (DNA): The Punjab government has approved a significant shift in its vehicle registration policy, aimed at curbing tax evasion and improving security.

Under the new policy, citizens of Punjab will be prohibited from registering their vehicles in other provinces or in Islamabad.

The decision, which was recently ratified by the Punjab cabinet, has been welcomed by the Punjab Excise and Taxation Department.

Excise officials have long expressed concerns over the widespread practice of Punjab residents registering their vehicles outside the province, often in neighboring regions or the federal capital, to avoid local taxes.

This, they say, has not only led to a loss of rev-

enue but also created security challenges for law enforcement agencies. According to sources within the Excise and Taxation Department, the new policy will make it mandatory for all vehicles owned by Punjab residents to be registered within the province.

A fine will be levied on those found registering their vehicles elsewhere, with an emphasis on preventing future occurrences of such practices.

In addition, the department will work closely with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to incorporate district codes, which will help authorities track and control vehicle registrations outside Punjab.

To further enforce the policy, vehicles discov-

ered to be registered outside the province will be confiscated during routine security checks.

Excise officials also noted that there is an existing law in place to re-register vehicles previously registered in other provinces or Islamabad back in Punjab. The recent cabinet approval is expected to streamline the process and ensure that vehicles comply with the new registration requirements.

A summary of the law's enactment will soon be presented to the provincial government for formal approval, after which the new measures will come into effect. The government hopes the policy change will enhance the integrity of the registration system and improve tax compliance across the province.

Claims of Imran as Sadiq and Ameen have been shattered

LAHORE (PPI): Provincial Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that "Tehreek-e-Fasad" is in disarray after being proven a certified thief of £190 million. The decision has shattered the claims of the founder of PTI as Sadiq and Ameen. The £190 million case is Pakistan's largest theft, and Farah Gogi and Shehzad Akbar brought the deal to completion.

According to Punjab Information Ministry's statement issued today, Imran Khan, along with Bushra Bibi, committed a robbery worth billions of rupees, and after the decision, they continued to laugh shamelessly.

It is highly shameful for PTI to give a religious colour to their theft. She expressed these views while addressing a press conference at DGPR.

She mentioned that the British agency NCA contacted the Pakistani government regarding the return

of the money, but instead of transferring the money to the government account, it was transferred to the Supreme Court's account. They distributed the money among themselves. The accused were given 15 opportunities to record their statements, but they used all delaying tactics in the case. Aleema Khan had stated that they wanted the case's verdict to be announced, and 35 hearings were held to complete the cross-examination. Shehzad Akbar was the central figure in the case.

Azma added that Shehzad Akbar was allowed to leave the country honourably, and now, after the decision, questions arise about allowing him to leave. Umar Ayub says that if corruption is to be questioned, it should be done with Hassan Nawaz, and the NCA cleared Hassan and Hussain Nawaz after investigating their accounts.

Information Minister

further stated that Sheikh Waqas Akram has repeatedly talked about sealed envelopes, but these should have been opened when they were brought to the cabinet. Those who brought the founder of PTI into politics should be ashamed, and it is also shameful that a person like Imran Khan was described as Sadiq and Ameen.

The Information Minister stated that the consequences they are facing now are the result of their actions. They claim to be spokespersons for higher courts, but how can they say that they will get relief from them? I am concerned about who is advising them on this. Higher courts should take notice of this matter. She also mentioned that the Asset Recovery Unit has wasted millions of rupees in Pakistan, and despite that, it gave them a clean chit. As Prime Minister, how could they have been trustees?



LAHORE: Candidates participate in a physical test, running 1.6 km within 7 minutes as part of the evaluation process. —APP Photo

PHC approached against announced extension to Hayatabad

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A writ petition has been filed at Peshawar High Court (PHC) challenging the Government of Khyber

Smuggler convicted for lifetime imprisonment

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Additional Sessions Judge Peshawar Atta Ullah Jan has sentenced a convicted smuggler to life imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1 million for attempting to smuggle narcotics worth millions of rupees.

The Assistant Public Prosecutor Dennis Murad, represented the prosecution in the case. The convicted smuggler, Muhammad Sabir, was accused of attempting to smuggle 48 kilograms of hashish in a carry vehicle on the Motorway checkpoint. He was arrested by the Excise Police on February 5, 2024, and a case was registered against him under the Anti-Narcotics Act.

After completing the investigation, the Excise Police submitted a complete challan to the court. The court, after examining all the witnesses and evidence, found the accused guilty and sentenced him to life imprisonment and a fine of Rs.1 million.

Additionally, if the accused fails to pay the fine, he will have to undergo an additional five months of imprisonment.

UAP confers Emeritus Status on Dr. Ibrahim

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The University of Agriculture Peshawar (UAP) has conferred the prestigious Emeritus Status on Prof. (Rtd.) Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim Khattak, former Vice Chancellor of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak. The decision was made by the University Senate in its 12th meeting held on May 21, 2024, upon the recommendation of the 115th Syndicate.

The Emeritus Status is granted under Section 4(iii) of the UAP Professor Emeritus Statutes 2016. It recognizes Dr. Khattak's exceptional contributions and his distinguished service to higher education in Pakistan. Dr. Khattak is a highly respected scholar with a wealth of experience in research and education.

He served as the Vice Chancellor of Khushal Khan Khattak University for several years, during which he made significant contributions to the development of the institution. He is also known for his research and publications in various areas.

The Emeritus Status is a prestigious honor conferred upon retired faculty members who have made outstanding contributions to their field and the university. It allows them to continue their association with the university and contribute to its academic and research activities.

Pakhtunkhwa announcement to launch two new phases, Phase 8 and Phase 9, in Hayatabad. The petition filed by Huma Kahn advocate, a resident of Hayatabad seeking declaration of the government's December 3, 2024, orders as null and void.

The petitioner, Huma Khan, has been a resident of Hayatabad for the past 27 years, living there with her family. She argues that Hayatabad is a posh area, known for its unique architecture and excellent amenities, making it an ideal residential area. Additionally, the area boasts top-notch security, setting it apart from other localities.

However, according to

the petition, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has recently announced the launch of two new phases, Phase 8 and Phase 9, in Hayatabad, despite the area already having seven phases. The petitioner contends that this decision is unlawful, as it will lead to a shortage of facilities and exacerbate existing problems.

The petition highlights that the residents of Hayatabad are already facing numerous issues, including increased gas and electricity bills over the past few years, which have resulted in significant financial burdens. Therefore, the government's decision to expand the area will only serve to worsen the situation.

Instead of expanding

Hayatabad, the petition suggests that the government should focus on completing existing housing projects, such as Peshawar Valley, Regi Model Town, and other housing schemes. The writ argued that thus would effectively address residential issues in the provincial metropolis.

The petition has requested the court to declare the government's announcement null and void and direct the relevant authorities to prioritize the completion of existing housing projects. The petition has made the provincial government, local government department, and Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) as respondents in the writ.

AD&SJ acquits three persons in narcotics case

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Sessions Judge (AD&SJ) Nadia Syed has acquitted three individuals accused of smuggling narcotics worth millions of rupees.

The accused, Nadeem Shahid, Abdullah, and Sajjad Hussain, were arrested by the Excise Police on January 20, 2022, while allegedly attempting to smuggle narcotics in a vehicle.

The counsel Amir Junaid advocate, presented arguments before the court. He stated that the petitioners, Nadeem Shahid, Abdullah,

and Sajjad Hussain, were accused of smuggling narcotics on January 20, 2022. However, he argued that the Excise Police had failed to provide concrete evidence against his clients.

The lawyer further argued that the prosecution's case was based on flawed evidence, which had several contradictions. He pointed out that the Excise Police had claimed to have recovered the narcotics from the accused, but they had failed to provide any evidence to support this claim.

Moreover, the counsel argued that the Excise Police had not maintained a

proper record of the raid, including the daily diary report of the police party that conducted the raid. He stated that this lack of documentation raised serious doubts about the credibility of the prosecution's case.

The counsel concluded his arguments by stating that the accused were innocent and had been wrongly implicated in the case. He requested the court to acquit the accused due to the lack of evidence.

After hearing the arguments, the court acquitted the three accused, Nadeem Shahid, Abdullah, and Sajjad Hussain, due to lack of evidence.

Minister: Govt decides to release imported wheat

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to release imported wheat stored in godowns across the province, with a comprehensive release policy finalized in a high-level meeting chaired by Provincial Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru.

The meeting, held in Peshawar, was attended by the Adviser to the Chief Minister on Anti-Corruption Musaddiq Abbasi, Secretary Food Department Sagib Raza Aslam, Additional Secretary Ashfaq Ahmed, Director Food Musarrat Zaman, and other officials.

During the session, Secretary Sagib Raza Aslam provided a detailed briefing on various aspects of the imported wheat release policy. Following the briefing, Zahir Shah Toru said that 77,762 metric tons of imported wheat is currently stored in different godowns across the province.

Zahir Shah extended that the government has decided to release the wheat to operational flour mills in respective districts at a price of Rs. 2,400 per 40 kilograms.

To ensure transparency in the process, a monitoring committee has been constituted, comprising the

Divisional Deputy Director of Food, District Food Controller, and Assistant Food Controller. The committee will oversee the entire release operation.

Additionally, CCTV cameras have been installed to monitor the movement of wheat within the warehouses. The release will only occur during daylight hours, between sunrise and sunset.

The provincial minister further stated that the imported wheat has been declared safe for human consumption by NIBGE Faisalabad, following which the government decided to proceed with its release.

Izhar hopeful of mammoth gathering on 1st February

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial leader of Awami National Party (ANP), Izhar Ullah Khalil has said that a massive public gathering will be held at Nishtar Hall on 1st February on eve of anniversaries of Bacha Khan and Khan Abdul Wali Khan.

Talking about the upcoming even with media men on Saturday, ANP provincial leader said that they welcome party head Aimal Wali Khan to

Nishtar Hall who will address the party workers on the occasion and talk about the memories and their political struggles for Pakhtuns.

Izhar stated the party leadership would talk about worsening law and order situation in the province and poor economic condition of the people as well.

He made it clear and saying their leaders will give future course of action in the forthcoming program over various issues and province natural resources.



As ANP has always raised its voice for natural resources of the province and it's autonomy, he added.



PESHAWAR: Chairmanship of Special Assistant to CM for Energy Engr. Tariq Sadozai and Chairman PESCO Board of Directors Himayat Ullah Khan jointly presiding over a meeting.

Governor expresses grief over death of Javed Jhgara

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Saturday expressed sorrow and grief over the death of Javed Zafar Jhgara, the younger brother of former Governor and former Secretary General of Pakistan Muslim League (N), Iqbal Zafar Jhgara.

The Governor extended heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the family of the deceased, saying that Javed Zafar Jhgara's death was an irreplaceable loss to the family.

He described Javed Zafar Jhgara as a person of great dignity, who upheld noble family traditions.

The Governor prayed that may Allah grant the deceased a high place in Jannah and provide his family with the strength and patience to bear this loss.

Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed deep sorrow over the demise of Shaheena Khan's husband, Finance Secretary of PPP Women's Wing KP.

He extended condolences to her family, praised her dedication to the party, and prayed for the deceased's forgiveness and strength for the grieving family.

MORA hold workshop

PESHAWAR (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) here Saturday arranged a training workshop for the intending pilgrims of KP. The event was held at Convocation Center, Institute of Management Sciences, Hayatabad.

The intending pilgrims were provided extensive training by the master trainers of MORA, and Deputy Secretary Hajj Operation, Nasir Aziz Khan, Muft M. Ilyas and Khateeb Haji Camp mosque on matters related to administration, requirements and overall Hajj procedures.

The intending pilgrims were also educated about the use of mobile app "Pak Hajj" in administration affairs, preparation for traveling and facilities required for Hajj, compulsory vaccine schedule, airport, arrival, stay and food services at Saudia Arabia.

Muqam inquires health of police cop at hospital

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam here Saturday visited the Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) where he inquired about the police head constable Muhammad Suleman injured recently during an attack in Shangla district. He directed providing best medical treatment to the policeman wounded during unknown gunmen attack on his post at Porun Shangla. He praised the bravery and steadfastness of the cop and provided him financial assistance and prayed for his speedy recovery.

Deliberations starts on running PESCO

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In light of the instructions of the federal government, consideration has been started on the proposal to run the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) under the supervision of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government.

The government of KP has started working on various options for running the affairs of the distribution company of the federal institution and other administrative matters.

In this context, a special meeting was held under the chairmanship of Special Assistant to Chief Minister KP for Energy Engr. Tariq Sadozai and Chairman PESCO Board of Directors

Himayat Ullah Khan. Moreover, the Secretary Energy & Power Mohammad Zubair Khan, Chief Executive Officers of PESCO and PEDO, the senior officers had also attended the said meeting.

Meanwhile, various options were considered regarding the privatization of PESCO or handing it over to the province.

The meeting was also informed that reportedly PESCO is a loss-making distribution company, which is facing a loss of Rs. 130 billion annually in terms of line losses and recovery. For this purpose, various options were also discussed and experts' opinions were taken to run the company under the

supervision of the provincial government.

Similarly, discussions were also held on facilitating the cooperation of the police along with the provincial and district administrations in the PESCO's recovery campaign.

Furthermore, in the meeting, a briefing was also given on the model of selling the electricity generated by PEDO's 1000 MW cheap hydropower projects to the industrial sector at low rates during the next 2 years.

At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that final recommendations would be made by setting up a task force to consider the option of handing PESCO to provincial custody.

Govt decided to sack staff hired during caretaker tenure

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has decided to sack employees hired during the caretaker government's tenure.

As per details, a bill, titled the KP Employees Bill 2025, has been drafted to facilitate the dismissals, which will affect employees hired between January 22, 2023, and February 29, 2024.

The proposed bill exempts employees hired through the commission, including those recruited under the children and minority quotas. A seven-member committee, headed by the Secretary Establishment, will be formed to oversee

the process and address any obstacles that may arise during the terminations.

The committee's decisions will be final, and all departments will be required to submit reports on the recruitments within 30 days. The bill aims to declare the caretaker government's recruitments illegal and pave the way for the termination of affected employees.

This development comes after an inquiry exposed 566 illegal posts created during the caretaker government's tenure, resulting in an annual loss of PKR 480 million to the public exchequer.

Earlier, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Department issued a stern warning to government employees for skipping official office hours. Negligence may result in salary deductions, transfers, or disciplinary actions.

In response to public complaints, a notification was sent to all provincial offices and departments, instructing employees to strictly follow office timings from 9 AM to 5 PM.

The directive emphasizes that negligence in fulfilling official responsibilities will not be tolerated, and strict actions will be taken against violators.

Growers to oppose abolishment of PTB

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Kissan Board KP Central has strongly condemned the recent decision of the Ministry of National Security and Research, terming it a "premeditated conspiracy" to economically murder tobacco growers. In a consultative meeting held at Shergarh, the Kissan Board

KP Central, presided over by President Haji Abdul Akbar Khan, declared that the Ministry's decision was a deliberate attempt to destroy the tobacco industry and the tobacco crop.

The meeting was informed that the Ministry's decision would lead to the abolition of the Pakistan Tobacco Board and the Tobacco Act 1968 (MLA 482), leaving the tobacco industry and tobacco farmers without legal protection. The meeting pointed out that around 80,000 people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Central are directly associated with the tobacco industry, while around 1.5 million people are indirectly associated with it through various means.

The meeting condemned the Ministry's decision as an attempt to economically

murder the 80,000 tobacco farmers and 1.5 million people associated with the tobacco industry.

The speakers at the meeting, including Kissan Board President Haji Abdul Akbar Khan, Provincial President Rizwan Ullah Khan, Haji Niamat Khan, Ali Haider Khan, Haji Qasim Shah, Azad Khan Bangash, and Provincial Secretary Information Farhad Ali Khan, vowed to resist the Ministry's decision.

The meeting announced that the Kissan Board would organize a grand jirga of farmers' organizations across the province and stage a protest in Islamabad against the Ministry's decision. The meeting also decided to use media, social media, and other means to resist the Ministry's decision.

Teaching, research, and burnout: Why faculty feels frustrated

Dr Imdadullah Mohammadzai and Dr Waseem Hassan

Ali and Asad had been close friends since college, sharing dreams and challenges as roommates. Ali pursued science, aiming to become a teacher, while Asad studied arts, aspiring to work in administration. After graduation, their paths diverged—Ali became a college lecturer, and Asad rose to assistant commissioner.

Ali's dedication to academic excellence drove him to complete an M.Phil and PhD, securing a position at a public university. He hoped this transition would bring stability, better finances, and career growth. However, over time, the disparity in their lifestyles became apparent. Asad's role brought authority, financial security, and societal recognition, while Ali, despite his passion and qualifications, faced the frustrations of limited rewards and growth in academia.

Research in natural and physical sciences is heavily constrained by financial limitations, compounded by the broader economic crises affecting universities and the country. These constraints often push faculty to focus on comparing the financial benefits of administrative roles, diverting attention from academic responsibilities. Additionally, dissatisfaction with employment systems, such as the Tenure Track System (TTS) and Basic Pay Scale (BPS), is widespread, with some faculty feeling trapped in roles that fail to meet their professional or financial expectations.

For those working in remote universities far from state capitals, psychological stress is heightened due to inadequate housing and infrastructure. Faculty hostels are often overcrowded, and basic amenities such as chairs, tables, and sanitation facilities are outdated or poorly maintained. For instance, some faculty members (in departments/centers or institutes)

are forced to use decades-old furniture and share unhygienic washrooms with students. The issue of outdated curriculum further adds to their frustrations, as efforts to update academic materials face resistance from colleagues, despite the pressing need for periodic revisions.

Financial crises have also led to merit being unofficially bypassed in admissions, resulting in under-qualified students joining programs. This not only undermines the quality of education but also diminishes faculty motivation, as they struggle to train students who lack basic competencies. Similarly, research-oriented faculty members face challenges due to absenteeism among MS/PhD scholars, who often prioritize private work over academic commitments.

Societal factors also contribute to faculty stress, with the lack of defined norms creating tension among a diverse student body that includes radical and overly liberal

individuals. These issues are compounded by excessive workloads, low salaries, limited professional growth opportunities, and biased performance evaluations. Together, these challenges underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms to address the well-being of faculty and elevate the quality of higher education in Pakistan.

Universities operate under acts that outline democratic procedures for selecting faculty representatives for bodies like the syndicate and senate. However, internal alliances have emerged, with faculty members pushing specific agendas. In the 2021-2022 elections, over 80 faculty members nominated themselves under different groups, resulting in three major factions. This led to the entire faculty voting to support one group.

While elections promote democracy, the competition raises concerns. Should multiple factions mobilize the

entire faculty for a single agenda? This process has created social divides, with faculty members aligning with specific groups and viewing others as adversaries, fostering tension and undermining collaboration.

In short, faculty members in Pakistani universities face challenges that lead to discomfort, insecurity, and dissatisfaction. Addressing these systemic problems requires urgent action. How can universities ensure transparency, fairness, and inclusivity in administrative and academic processes? What steps can bridge social divides and foster collaboration? Reforms are needed to balance workloads, improve facilities, and address financial and psychological concerns. Most importantly, how can universities make faculty feel valued, enabling them to focus on teaching, research, and mentorship? These questions are critical for enhancing faculty well-being and advancing higher education in Pakistan.



In brief

Under construction projects inspected F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner has said that the Punjab government is committed to provide all communicational, health, educational and other facilities to people at their doorsteps and huge amount is being spent to complete different development projects in district Hafizabad. While inspecting under construction road from Sukheki to Pindi Bhattian near Sukheki Mandi, he said that no compromise would be made on the standard of material being used in execution of the development projects at all. Deputy Director Development Hafizabad Tasawar Abbas and Officers of highway department gave briefing to Deputy Commissioner about reconstruction and carpeting of Sukheki-Pindi Bhattian. Meanwhile, DC also visited Girls Primary Schools Pindi Bhattian to review quality of education being imparting to students and other witnessed curriculum activities. DEO Hafizabad Samina Yasmeen and Deputy District Education Officer Pindi Bhattian Sofia Sajid were also accompanied by him. He went to class rooms and listened different lesson from girls students to check standard of education in government schools.

Crackdown against illegal pesticides F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Task Force Agriculture Punjab continues to carry out operations against illegal manufacturers and sellers of Pesticides. According to the details, the successful raid of the Department of Agriculture Pest Warning District Toba Tek Singh. Muhammad Asghar Shahid Assistant Director Agriculture Pest Warning Toba Tek Singh along with Abdul Rehman Agriculture Officer Pest Warning Gojra, conducted successful action against sellers of overdue illegal and agricultural pesticides without dealerships, invoices and stock register at Majid Traders Ghala Mandi Tehsil, Gojra. 9,600 liters and 07 kg of illegal and expired agricultural pesticides worth more than Rs.104,880 were seized and handed over to police. A case has been registered against an accused. Accused Abid Shafiq arrested red-handed. A FIR No. 75/25 has been registered against the accused at City Gojra police station.

Jl hold protest F.P. Report

WANA: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) South Waziristan arranged protest at Rustam Bazaar, Wana, against the worsening law and order situation, rising unemployment, and unannounced power outages. The protest was attended by the district chief of Jamaat-e-Islami South Waziristan Lower, Asadullah Bheer, President of Alkhidmat Foundation South Waziristan Lower, Maulana Umar Wazir, Saif-ur-Rehman Tayyab, former leader Nadeem, Jamaat-e-Islami workers, and a large number of prominent local elders, youth, and citizens. During the demonstration, participants strongly criticized the government's performance and highlighted the issues faced by the public, demanding immediate reforms. Protesters stated that the lack of job opportunities and unannounced power outages have severely affected the lives of people. On this occasion, Jamaat-e-Islami leader Saif-ur-Rehman Tayyab said the government has completely failed to address public grievances.

KP govt increases journalists endowment fund

F.P. Report

MINGORA: Secretary Information and Public Relation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Arshad Khan has said that the Khyber



Pakhtunkhwa government has increased the endowment fund allocated for journalists, which will benefit journalists across the

province.

For the first time in history, substantial funds have been released for the press clubs across the province for the welfare of journalists. Journalists should

delegation of senior journalists from Swat yesterday.

On this occasion, the delegation informed the Information Secretary about the problems and difficulties of journalists and also drew his attention to the problems of newspapers. Arshad Khan assured to solve the problems and difficulties of journalists and said that the current government welcomes positive journalism and is determined to solve the problems of journalists. Journalists should also play the role of a bridge between the government and the people and promote positive journalism.

Steps for elimination of drugs directed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Nisar Ahmed said that the scourge of drugs is causing the destruction of our future and our new generation, decisive action against drug peddlers is the need of the hour in which administration, police, excise and agencies have to play their role honestly.

He was addressing a meeting of the Divisional Level Action Committee against Narcotics. Regional Police Officer Najeeb ur Rahman, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, Secretary to Commissioner Sara Tawab, Director Narcotics Control Excise, Additional Deputy Commissioners, representatives of public universities of Mardan and Swabi, officers of social welfare department and intelligence agencies were present in the meeting.

In the meeting, the campaign against drugs, especially ice, was reviewed in detail in Mardan and Swabi. The representatives

of Abdul Wali Khan University, Engineering University Mardan, GIK Swabi and University of Swabi who participated in the meeting explained the details of the drug awareness campaign in the relevant institutions and said that there is a system to monitor the students in the universities under which visitors are monitored.

LHWs reject news on boycott of anti-polio vaccination drive: Lady Health Workers (LHWs) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have termed the news of their boycott of the polio campaign baseless and a conspiracy to create misunderstandings between them and the government. They have demanded that the government immediately approve their upgradation and fulfill their legitimate demands.

Addressing an urgent press conference at Takhtbhai Press Club, the provincial President of Shaheen Lady Health Workers Association, Akhtar Bibi, and General Secretary Ishrat Bibi said

that the government must immediately approve their charter of demands and provide them with financial security. District Mardan President Nasira Bibi, General Secretary Riffat Bibi, and Vice President Safia Bibi were also present on the occasion.

LHWs demanded that they too should be upgraded from Scale 5 to Scale 9. Although the upgradation and regularization files are submitted with the government, and meetings have been held with the Health Minister and other senior officials, their rival group is trying to blackmail them by staging a boycott of the polio campaign to pressurize the government.

However, their group is not in favor of boycotting the polio campaign and will fully participate in it. They appealed to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, to promptly accept their demands and provide them with dignity and financial security.



HYDERABAD: A woman vendor displaying chicken soup to attract customers at Latifabad.

Free medical camps arranged F.P. Report

ZHOB: The Trust for Vaccines and Immunization (TVI), in collaboration with the Aga Khan Foundation, organized numerous free medical and vaccination camps for poor and marginalized communities, having limited access to the health-care facilities in both rural and urban parts of Zhob.

The health officials in the area say, in order to improve the vaccine's acceptability and cover missed and not available children during the anti-polio drives, the camps have been set up in the Nasirabad, Hassanai, and Sheikhan areas—on the outskirts of the city. Health officials and the local influencers inaugurated the camps and inspected the health facilities provided to the patients. Hundreds of patients, including women and children, suffering from various seasonal diseases were examined by male and female doctors.

According to the TVI district coordinator, Rohullah Babar, holding the free medical and vaccination camps aims at providing medical facilities to the underprivileged communities and restoring their trust in vaccines.

Two killed including ASI over plot dispute

F.P. Report

SHAHADKOT: A dispute broke out between two groups of Gadehi community over the ownership of a plot in village Darro Gadehi near Warh city of Qambar Shahdadt Kot district.

Due to firing and sticks and axes, one ASI of the police department Nasirabad, Sikandar Ali Gadhi, was killed on the spot, while 5 people were seriously injured.

On the other hand, the body of the slain ASI was shifted to the hospital for necessary action. However, when the dispute escalated,

the people present there and the police personnel intervened to prevent further bloodshed. It should be noted that the slain ASI was on duty at Nasirabad police station and was killed when he came to the village for some reason. As of last information, the police have neither arrested the accused nor registered any case.

Meanwhile, a protest rally arranged by laborers against the management of Rice Mills at Koto Moto Chowk in Shahdadt Kot city for non-increase in wages of workers. The labor leaders Gulab Khan Baloch,

Baghar Kharani, Abdul Rasool and others said that every year, the Rice Mills management holds talks with the workers to increase their wages, but even after assuring the workers, it is not implemented.

The speakers further said that the workers are already facing many problems in this period of inflation, while the Rice Mills management has shown its anti-labor nature by not increasing the wages of the workers. They demanded that the unrest spread among the workers be ended by increasing the wages.

Special Secretary visits Larkana to probe textbook scandal

F.P. Report

LARKANA: After went viral news of the sale of primary curriculum textbooks sold by the Education Department to a peddler in Larkana, the provincial government took strict notice. The higher authorities

appointed Special Secretary School Education Syed Imdad Ali Shah as an inquiry officer. He reached Larkana and visited the warehouse and the peddler's shop and inspected the textbooks.

During this, math and science books, including math

books of the year 2023, were recovered in 7 bags. The Special Secretary Education has started such an investigation. In this regard, Special Secretary Education Syed Imdad Ali Shah met the peddler who bought the textbooks and obtained complete information.

International Jewish diaspora and Zionist state of Israel

Sardar Ali Khan

ON May 14 1948 at 4:00 p.m. 8-hours before the British mandate in Palestine came to an end the Jews proclaimed the state of Israel. Early in the morning the British has lowered the Union Jack over the High commission office at Jerusalem a befitting end of a drama played on the International stage. A plot of deceit, treachery, betrayal and dishonorable conduct buried under layers of lies sanctified by the high and the mighty "The Financial Rulers of the World". Ben-Gurion prime minister designate read the declaration of the proclamation of the state of Israel. President Truman in a shock announcement from the white house a few minutes later if not seconds after the proclamation recognized the provisional government.

The news stunt delegates to the UN the Jews had returned to the Jerusalem after more than 1800 years in triumph. It was not the first time of their "home coming" nor was the "home coming" less miraculous than those of Yesteryears. Their first home coming led by Musa (A.S) (Latin-Moses) from Captivity in Egypt, though, it was Joshua who brought them back to land of their great ancestor Ibrahim (A.S), Ishaq (A.S) and Yaqub (A.S) {Latin-Jacob}. The second home coming was due to their release from captivity by the Persian King Cyrus resulting in their return to rebuild the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. The city captured by Dawood (A.S) {Latin-David} from the Jebusites. Jerusalem was destined to be held by the Greek Seleucids to be liberated by the Jews to from an independent Jewish state under the rule of the Husmonian dynasty only to be overshadowed by the yoke of Roman rule.

The pagan Roman Empires conversion into Christian Byzantine Empire passed on Jerusalem to Christianity. Since the dawn of Islam to the proclamation of the state of Israel the history of the region has been a perpetual struggle between Christianity and Islam for possession of Jerusalem. Why Jerusalem passed into the hands of the Jews is the under-lying factor with determines the present geo-political situation the region and in the world. How the Jews returned from political wilderness to become the dominant world power on the planet from the day the city was flattened by Hadrian's

order in (135 A.D) to the triumphant declaration by Ben-Gurion, is what needs to be understood.

A study reveals that Medieval Monarchs tended to rely on loans from wealthy banking families to finance their deficits. Siennese and Florentine bankers lent to the Kings of England, Tuscan bankers to the Romans, South-German bankers to the Habsburgs, Swiss and Italian bankers to the French. The first true public banks were Banko Della Piazza Da Rialto (founded in 1857), the Amsterdamse Wissel Bank (1609), the Venetian Ciro Bank and the bank of England (1694). However, the beginning of worldwide dominance by bankers "Financial Rulers of the world" can be traced to Mayer Amschel Rothschild (1743-1812). He is perhaps the only individual in modern world history who has played the determining vital role in the destiny of the human race. No other name has become more synonymous with the Illuminati and Free Masonry than Rothschilds. It is believed that both the secret organizations have been used by the Rothschilds as a mean to achieve their goal of worldwide dominance. Mayer Amschel Rothschild (1743-1812) was born in Frankfurt-on-the-Main in Germany, the son of Moses Amschel bauer, bankers and goldsmith. Their name was derived from "the red shield" (rothschildt) that hung over the door of their shop and had been the emblem of revolutionary Jews in Eastern Europe.

Information is knowledge, knowledge is power, news a mean of information and there never was any news more precious than the news of the out-come of the battle of Waterloo. Nathan Rothschild received the news on June 20th and immediately begun to sell all of his stocks on the English stock Market. Everyone else followed his lead and also begun selling. As hundreds of thousands of dollars of worth of consol poured into the market, their value started to slide, then they begun to plummet. The selling turned into a panic as people rushed to unload their worthless consol or paper money for gold and silver in the hope of retaining at least part of their wealth, consol continued their nose-dive towards oblivion. After several hours of feverish trading the consol lay in ruins, it was selling for about five cents on the dollar. Nathan Rothschild had taken up his usual position besides the famous "Rothschild's pillar" amid the

feverish speculation on the outcome of the battle.

Thus, the Rothschild gained control of France. Henry Kissinger writing in his book a "World restored Metternich, Castlereagh and The problems of Peace" (1812-1822) regarding the task of reconstructing a new international order, following Napoleons defeat in Russia in 1812 and subsequently at Waterloo in 1815, fails miserably to identify the real forces behind the events of that period. He erroneously labors in futile detail regarding the correspondence of the Austrian foreign Minister Prince von Metternich and the British foreign secretary Viscount Castlereagh. Though he records in Minute detail the congress of Vienna and the interest and concerns of the powers that took part in it, He knowingly conceals events and their repercussion on world order. Soon the Rothschild spanned Europe with railroads, invested in coal and ironworks, financed England's purchase of Suez canal, paid for oil exploration in Russia and Sahara Desert, Financed the Czars of Russia, supported Cecil Rhodes' diamond operations, aided France in creating an Empire in Africa, Financed the Hapsburg Monarchs, and saved the Vatican from bankruptcy. In United States of America, through their American and European agents, they helped finance Rockefeller's standard Oil, Carnegie Steel, and Harriman's Railroad. Werner Sombart, in his book "The Jews and Modern Capitalism", said that from 1820 on, it was the "age of the Rothschild" and concluded that there was "only one power in Europe and that is Rothschild."

However, the 20th century was to see the emergence of the United States of America, as a world power. Therefore, 4 the Rothschild sent one of their top experts, Paul Moritz Warburg, over to New York to take direct charge of their assault upon the only true champion of individual liberty and prosperity United States. Shortly thereafter, the United States plunged into a monetary crisis that had all the earmarks of a skillfully planned Rothschild 'job'. The creation of the privately owned "Federal Reserve System", which placed control of the finances of the United States securely in the hands of the power-crazed money monopolists. Paul Warburg became the Fed's first chairman! Congressman Charles Lindbergh put his finger firmly on the truth when he stated, just after the

'Federal' Reserve Act was passed by a depleted Congress on December 23, 1913: "The Act establishes the most gigantic trust on earth. When the President [Wilson] signs this Bill, the invisible government of the monetary power will be legalized... The greatest crime of the ages is perpetrated by this banking and currency bill.

The realization of their plan demanded the complete destruction of the then world order and the truth, as it unfolds, will prove to be eye-opening and educational to those who are seeking to more clearly understand the mind-boggling events that have been taking place on the national and international scenes. World War-I began as Germany invaded Belgium in 1914. United States joins the war and assists the Allies in 1917 with an Armistice signed on November 11, 1918 ending the war at 11:00 a.m. The end of the war saw a different world. The peace conference that convened at Versailles in January 1919 was the pinnacle of Weizmann's diplomatic achievements. He managed to ensure that the British would remain in Palestine. The conference met to determine, among other things, the fate of the former Ottoman Empire. Weizmann, at the head of the Zionist delegation, pleaded for the international ratification of the Balfour Declaration.

As a result, the League of Nations agreed to grant a mandate to the British, empowering them to govern Palestine, that included an explicit responsibility to help the Jews establish a national home in the country. The mandate was Weizmann's own personal achievement. Prime Minister Lloyd George and Foreign Secretary Balfour were baffled by Weizmann as a leader possessed of some mysterious, world encompassing power to pull the strings of history. Britain, together with the rest of Europe, had endured one of the most dramatic periods in its history. Close to a million British soldiers had been killed in the war and two million wounded; the Spanish influenza epidemic had cut a swath through Europe; millions were out of work. Britain was in state of shell shock, forced to confront a new world, new values, and new ways of life that were causing much agony.

The Ottoman Empire lost all its possession on the European continent and in Asia was reduced to the Turkish homeland where Kamal, abolished the Muslim Caliphate in 1924, having survived, the capture of Bayzed by

Taimur and seen the glory of Suleiman the magnificent Turkey plunged into political wilderness and its present rejection by the European Union is testimony to it. The Romanov Dynasty having ruled Czarist Russia for 150-years fell prey to "the communist Manifesto" of KARL Max's and Angels, and the move, financed by Rothschild and Spear-headed 6 by Lennon from no other place but France and Europe saw the old-world order crumbling under the weight of the "Mighty Proletariat".

It is no mere co-incidence that events of such magnitude did take place and the required results would follow in subsequent years. If we are to believe the story of Nathan Rothschilds takeover of the British economy and the truth of the statement from Frederic Morton's book in 1806, when Napoleon had declared that it was his "object to remove the House of Hess Cassel from ruler ship and to strike it out of the list of power "Napoleon failed to do what he stated". Then it is difficult to comprehend how a person of Humble Origin and one who had written "Mein Keif" long before he managed to wield power in Nazi Germany, to create the third Reich, was to reach such dizzy heights without the knowledge of those who controlled the events on the continent. The contents of Mein Kampf also did not conceal the intention of its author and surely it could not have been possible for the intelligence units of Rothschild to miss both on the book and the thump of the Nazi military machine in its infancy. We can therefore, only conclude that the rise of Nazi Germany could not have been possible without a nod from the "International Bankers" housed across the border in Switzerland.

The recent happenings in the region were foretold by Arab leaders and the duplicity of the USA and UK is evident to all in its manifestation. Niall Ferguson writing in "The War of The World" Shrouds the truth with ambiguity by the last paragraph of his book "We shall avoid another century of control only if we understand the forces that caused the last one—those dark forces that conjure up ethnic conflict and imperial rivalry out of economic crisis, and in doing so negate our common humanity. "They are forces that stir within us still". He surely knows who "The Dark forces that conjure up ethnic conflict and rivalry out of economic crisis" are. He conceals their iden-

tification with jugglery of words and knowingly misleads his readers for in his book the "Cash Nexus" he has traced the origin of modern banking and is an authority on the subject knowing exactly who controls the events on the globe and why.

The geopolitical situation in the region is manifest. The Palestinians supported by Iran face Israel and its allies. Pakistan is consistent in supporting the Palestinian cause, whose plight is no less than the Muslim living in the occupied Kashmir, where India implements the same policy as Israel. Turkey under Erdogan struggles to achieve its political status as a regional power. Russia is being punished for Putin's defiance of the Jews, the Gulf States standby while the OIC and the UN pass resolutions which they are unable to implement. The Diaspora ordered 1800-years ago by the Roman Emperor Hadrian had sown the seeds of the "International Jew". The Romans had forced the Jews to vacate Jerusalem and had scattered them throughout the Empire. This inherent weakness was converted in the 20th century into a source of strength. Their presence throughout the world now enabled them to form with ease a network to control the top echelons of power in the countries where they were domiciled.

Now there is at the top level of governance in all the industrialized countries a Jew interacting with another Jew. Through this mechanism this minority has subjugated the nations of the world. The modern world boosts of human rights, civil rights, dignity of labor, religious freedom, free enterprise and the nation states believe to be adhering to the rule of the UN. All this is not true as events have revealed. The modern world is not ruled by those we elect, nominate or those who usurp power or by dictators. It is ruled by multinationals who have no nation no religion no scruple playing proxy to their masters "The International Bankers of the World" who through various multinationals, international institutions, WB, IMF, UN control and govern the earth "be lords and masters of the money supply of the world and therefore of virtually everything". Israel is the tip of "The Iceberg" of this power which rules and controls the world.

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Trump's Greenland bid stirs debate in China

BEIJING/HONG KONG (Reuters): For years, the US government has urged China to show "restraint" in pushing its claim on Taiwan and to drop military threats to bring the democratically governed island under its control.

Now - some Chinese commentators say - the power of that long-held US message has been undermined by the threats by US President-elect Donald Trump to take control of Greenland and the Panama Canal, by force if necessary, Trump takes office on Jan. 20. The implications of Trump's comments for US policy on Taiwan have been widely discussed on China's social media platforms in recent days and by foreign policy analysts.

While nothing in the military standoff over Taiwan is likely to change in the near-term, some say Trump's break with the norms of American diplomacy could create an opening for China. One Chinese expert said Trump's first term in office signalled that he views foreign policy as transactional in nature, and suggested he may be amenable to a deal on Taiwan. Zhao Minghao, a professor at the Institute of International Studies at the Fudan University in Shanghai, said Trump's threats to take Greenland, the Panama Canal and even Canada needed to be taken seriously. "Besides that, we need to think about Trump's transactionalism, which he is serious about as well. Many in China still perceive Trump as a deal-maker, even on very tough issues like the Taiwan question," he said.

China's foreign ministry said it was "absurd" to try and link Greenland's status to Taiwan. "The Taiwan issue is an internal Chinese matter, and how to resolve it is something for the Chinese people," it said in a statement sent to Reuters. Taiwan's foreign ministry, asked whether Trump's comments could provide impetus to China creating trouble over Taiwan, said that the Republic of China, the island's official name, is a "sovereign and independent country".

"Any distortion of Taiwan's sovereign status will not change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait," it said in a statement. The Trump transition team did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China has maintained that Taiwan is part of its territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring the island under its control. A limiting factor for Beijing is that the US is bound by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, although whether US forces would come to Taiwan's aid in the event of a war with China is unclear under a policy of "strate-

gic ambiguity".

Trump offered strong support to Taiwan, including regularising arms sales, in his first term. But during the campaign last year, Trump said Taiwan should pay the US to be defended. Taiwan has repeatedly said it is committed to increasing its defence spending. To be sure, the Taiwan question is vastly different to the Greenland, Canada or Panama Canal situations: in China's eyes, Taiwan is already legally Chinese territory whose destiny is to be "returned to the motherland". Taiwan rejects those claims. Nevertheless, Trump's comments on Greenland have created a stir on Chinese social media, which is subject to censorship. "If Greenland is annexed by the United States, China must take Taiwan," wrote Wang Jiangyu, a professor of law at City University of Hong Kong, on microblog site Weibo. One commentator on a blog run by Chinese search engine Baidu said that if Trump does move on Greenland, China should "seize the opportunity to take back Taiwan". "Trump seems to be serious, so we too should see what we could get from this," the person, writing as "Hongtu Shumeng" wrote.

Chen Fei, an associate professor at Central China Normal University's School of Politics and International Studies, wrote on Chinese news portal NetEase that just like Greenland for Trump, Taiwan was a core security interest for China. But the two issues are not the same as what Trump is doing is directly threatening another country's sovereignty, he added. "Taiwan is China's intrinsic territory and a pure internal Chinese matter.

It has nothing to do with another country's sovereignty." However, Bonnie Glaser, a Taiwan expert at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, said that for Chinese President Xi Jinping there were other factors carrying greater weight, especially his assessment of the country's military capabilities and the likely costs China would incur if it used force against Taiwan. "I doubt that Beijing will draw parallels between Greenland and Taiwan," she said.

"The Chinese believe that Taiwan is already and always has been part of China - they won't pay money for it and no government in Taiwan will agree to be bought." Drew Thompson, a Senior Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore and former US Department of Defense official, also said it was "quite preposterous" to think Trump's Greenland comments could embolden China's claims on Taiwan.

Turkey ready to support Syria

ANKARA (Reuters): Turkey is ready to provide support to the new Syrian administration for the management of Islamic State camps in the country, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said. "As we have always said, we are also ready to provide the necessary assistance to the new administration in the management of DAESH camps and prisons," Fidan said, using the Arabic acronym for Islamic State.

Speaking in Ankara following his meeting with his Syrian counterpart Asaad Hassan al-Shibani, Fidan also said that Ankara was pleased with the determination of the new administration in the fight against terror. Shibani said the extensive presence of US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in parts of northern Syria "was no longer justified". "We will not accept having any parts of Syria or northern Syria outside of the administration's control," he said. In the joint press conference, Shibani said that the country's new administration would not allow Syrian land to be a source of threat to Turkey.

Since 2016, Turkey has mounted four military operations across growing swathes of northern Syria, citing threats to its national security. Turkey is estimated to maintain a few thousand troops in towns including Afrin, Azez and Jarablus in northwestern Syria and Ras al Ain and Tel Abyad in the northeast. Ankara said it may discuss and reevaluate the issue of Turkey's military presence in Syria with the new Syrian administration when necessary conditions arise.

Biden promised to turn page on Trump

WASHINGTON (AP): Joe Biden promised nothing short of a national exorcism when he took office. He wanted to "restore the soul" of the country and prove that Donald Trump was only a footnote in the American story, not its next chapter. The pitch was "let's try to get things back to normal as best we can," said Sean Wilentz, a historian who met twice with Biden in the White House.

It didn't work out that way. Despite exceeding expectations when it came to cutting bipartisan deals and rallying foreign allies, Biden was unable to turn the page on Trump. Four years after voters chose Biden over Trump, they picked Trump to replace Biden. It's an immutable and crushing outcome for an aging politician in the last act of his long career, one that will likely become the prism for how Biden is viewed through history. "The fact is, the abnormality did not end," said Wilentz, a professor at Princeton University. "He may not have appreciated what he was up against."

Trump's impending return underscores the limits of Biden's ability to reshape the country's trajectory as his celebrated predecessors were able to do. With the end of his single term only days away, Biden acknowledged in his farewell address that his central promise remains unfulfilled. America exists in a state of "constant struggle, a short distance between peril and possibility," he said. Biden also said that "our democracy has held strong, and every day I've kept my commitment to be president for all Americans for one of the toughest periods in our nation's history." The country hasn't waited for his assessment. Only a quarter of Americans said Biden, a Democrat, was a good or great president, according to the latest poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That's lower than the views of the twice-impeached Trump, a Republican, when he left office soon after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol and during the deadly depths of the coronavirus pandemic. Biden's friends and supporters insist that views will shift over time.

"We lost a close election under closely contested, hard fought issues, but that doesn't mean that what we did and how we did it hasn't helped change the country for the better," said Steve Ricchetti, a longtime adviser to Biden who served as White House counselor. Ricchetti argued that Biden provided a model for repairing damage caused by Trump, one that will help another president down the line.



GAZA: Residents inspecting their damaged houses hit by Israeli military.

S Africa rescuers say clearance of clandestine miners now over

CAPE TOWN (AFP): Rescuers retrieving illegal miners from a disused South African gold shaft said a final sweep appeared to show nobody was left underground, after 78 bodies and more than 200 miners were lifted out this week. Many of those rescued looked frail, their legs just skin and bone. Nine people are in hospital under police supervision, a spokeswoman for the force said.

Illegal miners, most of them foreign nationals, had occupied the shaft -- once part of South Africa's vast mining industry. The move spurred a months-long police crackdown to remove the miners, some of whom had been underground for weeks, if not months. At least 246 people have resurfaced since a specialised machine installed sent a cage down the 2.6-kilometre (1.6-mile) shaft near Stilfontein, about 140 kilometres southwest of Johannesburg. Investigators face "a mammoth task" in identifying the dead as some of the bodies were already decomposing, and in some cases just bones, police spokeswoman Athlenda Mathe told journalists at the site. Since the police operation began in August, a total of 87 bodies have been retrieved and 1,907 miners have resurfaced.

The vast majority of the clandestine miners are foreign nationals, with 1,125 from Mozambique and 465 Zimbabweans, police said. Only 26 are South Africans. Rescuers determined there was no-one left in the shaft, the head of Mines Rescue

Services, Mannas Fourie, told reporters at the site. The cage was sent down again with cameras for a final sweep. "We couldn't see any person still left behind and we couldn't hear any voices on the recording," Fourie said.

The miners had been located at a level some 1,280 metres (around 4,200 feet) below ground but the cage was sent down further until it hit water to confirm there were no other people, he added. No longer viable for commercial extraction, the mine was entered illicitly by the men trying to eke out a living. Locally known as "zama zamas" -- "those who try" in the Zulu language -- illegal miners frustrate mining companies and are often accused of criminality by residents. All those who resurfaced from the derelict Stilfontein site have been arrested by police and charged with illegal mining and related offences. Among the dead, only two have been identified so far, Mathe said. Identification will be a lengthy process given the condition of the remains and the fact many miners were undocumented migrants, she said. The causes of death will also need to be determined. Community leader Johannes Qankase told AFP that he believed most of the men starved to death.

To force the miners out, police had restricted supplies of food and water that the surrounding community had been dropping down the shaft. In November, a court ordered police to

end all such restrictions. The site had been turned into "a mass grave by the government, killing our people like this because people are hungry", Qankase said. The acting provincial police commissioner defended officers' actions. Speaking at the site, Patrick Asaneng said that if they had allowed local people access to the shaft, they would have been "in a way aiding and abetting crime and criminality -- and we're not supposed to do that". Police said they were investigating the broader criminal networks that orchestrate the mining activity, recruit miners and traffic the illicit gold. "Those ringleaders who are controlling what happens underground... some of them have been retrieved, some already in police custody, but we are looking for the real kingpins," Mathe said. University of Limpopo criminologist Witness Maluleke told AFP illegal mining was organised by international "elite individuals" across borders that posed to law enforcement "a mountainous web to curtail". "If left unattended, more South Africans will learn this criminal behaviour and become elusive experts, to add more numbers to this practice," he said. Police suggested the mine shaft would eventually be sealed off but community leader Qankase said he believed that would not stop illegal gold extraction. The miners "come to this risky, dangerous situation because of poverty, because of hunger", he said. "They will reopen it."

Polish leader to use EU presidency for Ukraine's membership quest

WARSAW (AP): Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk vowed to use his country's presidency of the European Union to push forward with Ukraine's membership quest as the two sides reported progress in recent days on a major irritant in their relations.

"We will break the standstill we have in this issue," Tusk told reporters in Warsaw, as he stood alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "We will accelerate the accession process."

Poland now holds the rotating presidency of the European Union, the 27-member bloc that Ukraine aspires to join, and Warsaw will have the influence to put the issue high on the agenda for the next half year. Zelenskyy was in Poland after the two countries reached an agreement under which Ukraine will allow the exhumation of some Polish victims of World War II-era massacres by Ukrainian nationalists, a longstanding source of tensions.

Zelenskyy's visit came just days after Tusk announced progress on starting exhumations.

Although Poland has been one of Ukraine's most stalwart supporters since Russia's full-scale invasion nearly three years ago, the issue of the Polish victims lying in mass graves in the Ukrainian region of Volhynia eight decades after they were brutally killed has left a festering bitterness among many Poles. Tusk, in power for more than a year, faces domestic pressure to show progress on an issue of continued importance to many people in Poland. It is particularly important as his party's candidate in a presidential election in May is expected to face a strong challenge from a nationalist opposition candidate. Standing next to Zelenskyy, Tusk said the two sides are "finding a common language and methods of action on the issue of the Volhynian crime and sensitive issues of our history."

"We will help Ukraine, but we will also look after our national interests and this is obvious to both sides," Tusk said. Zelenskyy noted that the ministries of culture were already working on the details. "I believe we must move forward together with Poland. We are neighbors, and Russia is the main threat. This threat exists today, it will exist tomorrow, and we must do everything to strengthen our alliance."

A pro-EU centrist, Tusk has been working for some time to embrace an inclusive form of patriotism - part of an effort to prevent nationalist conservatives from presenting themselves as the leading advocates of Poland's interests. Western Ukraine was once under Polish rule, with Ukrainians largely subservient to a Polish landowning class. Resentments erupted in ethnic bloodshed during World War II, when the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a nationalist military formation,

slaughtered tens of thousands of Poles in the Nazi-occupied Polish regions of Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in 1943-44. Entire villages were burned down, their inhabitants killed by the nationalists and their supporters who were seeking to establish an independent Ukraine state. Thousands of Ukrainians were killed in retaliation.

Poland in 2016 declared the massacres to be genocide, which led Ukraine to block exhumations. Poland has in recent years been asking Ukraine to let Polish authorities exhume the victims to give them proper burials. The issue is sensitive for Ukraine. Some of the World War II-era Ukrainian nationalists are today regarded as national heroes because of their struggle for Ukraine's statehood. A nongovernmental organization, the Freedom and Democracy Foundation, said that it would begin exhumation work on victims in Ukraine in April.

A mother's anguish: One son to be freed from Gaza, another left behind

KFAR SAVA, Israel (Reuters): News that Israel and Hamas have reached a hostage release deal after 15 months of war in Gaza is bittersweet for Ruth Strum -- one of her sons is expected to be freed, but a second will be left behind in captivity for now.

"It is not easy for a mother to hear this," Strum told Reuters, wearing a red t-shirt emblazoned with photos of her two burly sons and the plea: "Bring Iair and Eitan home". Although she has no information on their whereabouts in the heavily bombed Gaza Strip, Strum said she was sure they had been kept together. "But what will happen at the moment when they will be separated and told that one is coming out and one is not?" she said, her voice quivering. "I know that their strength is to be together, to be there for

each other." Eitan Horn, 38, was staying with his brother Iair Horn, 46, at his home in Kibbutz Nir Oz, near the Gaza fence, when Hamas launched its surprise attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. The two men were seized and dragged into the Palestinian enclave along with 249 other Israelis and foreigners, triggering a war that has devastated Gaza. Some 98 hostages are still in captivity, but under the terms of ceasefire, only 33 will be released over the next six weeks, including women and children, men over 50 and sick or wounded people. This suggests Iair might not be well, although there has been no word about his health. The handover of the remaining 65, some of whom are believed to be dead, is due to be negotiated subsequently. Since the abduction of

Iair and Eitan, Ruth has clung to fragments of information about them. The last confirmation of their well-being came during a brief truce in November 2023, when some released hostages mentioned seeing the brothers alive. "They said that they were not injured," she recounted. "At first, they were held in an apartment but were later moved to the tunnels." Strum says she talks to them aloud all time, as though they were still with her. "I ask them to wait just a little longer, it will happen and you will be back with us. I ask for their forgiveness, for all the time that has passed in which they are not back here." The family originally came from Argentina, but immigrated to Israel to set down roots in Jewish communities. The bushy-bearded Eitan lives with his mother in the centre of the country

while Iair embraced community living in a kibbutz. "I have been optimistic from the first day, despite the ups and downs," said Ruth. She has thrown herself tirelessly into campaigning for the release of all the hostages, whose faces are plastered on posters across Israel, covering bus stops, stapled to trees and wrapped around lampposts. "It's true that I cry and that I am angry, but I feel that there is no point in falling, staying in bed and not wanting to see anybody, or talk, or do anything," she said. "I want all 98 hostages to be brought home," she said, making a direct plea to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom critics say has been too hesitant to strike a deal with Hamas. "I ask you, Bibi, do everything. The people are with you. You have the support to make this happen."

Citizen's killing: Australia mulls 'all options'

SYDNEY (AFP): Australia said that "all options are open" in its response to the reported killing of one of its citizens after his capture by Russian forces in Ukraine. Foreign Minister Penny Wong said the government was working "very hard" to confirm a report that Australian Oscar Jenkins had been killed.

"We hold grave concerns for his welfare," she said. Australia's Channel Seven said his body had been found but had not yet been officially identified, citing unnamed sources. Video emerged online in December of Jenkins -- who reportedly fought with Ukrainian forces -- being questioned and slapped in the face by a man speaking Russian. Wong told broadcaster ABC that Russia's ambassador to Australia had been called in this week "at my direction" over the matter. Asked how Australia would react if the killing was confirmed, and whether the Russian ambassador might be expelled, she said: "I want to be clear, all options are

on the table." Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the government was "greatly concerned". "We will await the facts to come out, but if there has been any harm caused to Oscar Jenkins that is absolutely reprehensible," the Australian government will take the strongest action possible," he told reporters. The Kremlin said it was "not aware" if the Australians had raised the specific case with Russia's foreign ministry, but said foreigners fighting with Ukraine were "legal targets" for Russia's troops. "We are well aware that foreign mercenaries are taking part in the conflict on the side of the Kyiv regime," Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"They are fighting against our military with weapons in their hands. Accordingly, they become legal targets," he added. Australia's foreign minister said Russia had an obligation to treat prisoners of war in line with international law, including humane treatment and the right to a

fair trial. Australian relations with Moscow have been "very difficult" for many years, Wong said. She cited the "illegal and immoral" Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the July 2014 downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 by a Russian-made missile. The MH17 crash over eastern Ukraine killed 298 people aboard, including 38 Australians. "Australia has maintained diplomatic relations with Russia through that period under different governments," Wong said.

"However, we will consider all options once we have ascertained the facts and once we can verify what has actually occurred here with Mr. Jenkins," Wong said her thoughts were with Jenkins' family. "They have lived with the fear and uncertainty of a loved one in the middle of a foreign war for many months," she said. "I know these reports will be devastating to them, and they are in my thoughts, and I'm sure the thoughts of many Australians."

Mozambique inaugurates new president

MOZAMBIQUE (AFP): Mozambique's new president Daniel Chapo took the oath of office in front of a heavily guarded audience of dignitaries in the capital Maputo following weeks of violent demonstrations over the fiercely disputed election results.

Chapo, 48, extends his Frelimo party's 50-year rule of the gas-rich African nation amid claims by opposition candidate Venancio Mondlane that the vote was rigged, which sparked unrest that an NGO says has left more than 300 dead. Taking the oath, Chapo vowed "to devote all my energies to defending, promoting and consolidating national unity, human rights, democracy and the well-being of the Mozambican people".

But on the eve of the inauguration, Mondlane threatened to "paralyse" the new government with daily demonstrations following

his earlier calls for a national strike in the days leading up to the ceremony. Mondlane, 50, who is popular with the youth, maintains the October 9 polls were rigged in favour of the Frelimo party, which has governed Mozambique since independence from Portugal in 1975. "This regime does not want peace," Mondlane said in an address on Facebook, adding that his communications team was met with bullets on the streets this week. "We'll protest every single day. If it means paralyzing the country for the entire term, we will paralyse it for the entire term." Chapo called for stability, telling journalists at the national assembly "we can continue to work and together, united... to develop our country". International observers have said the election was marred by irregularities, while the EU mission condemned what it called the

"unjustified alteration of election results". Neighbouring South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa attended the inauguration, while former colonial ruler Portugal sent Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel. Ahead of the ceremony, Maputo-based political and security risk analyst Johann Smith told AFP that an absence of a large number of foreign heads of state "sends a strong message". "Even from a regional point of view, there is a hesitancy to acknowledge or recognise that Chapo won the election," Smith said. Security forces blocked roads throughout Maputo and around Independence Square, where the swearing-in was held. The extent of the unrest from now on "depends on how Chapo will tackle the crisis", analyst Borges Nhamirre told AFP. The inauguration of parliamentary lawmakers was held amid relative calm.

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Gaza ceasefire may stop killing but won't end conflict

A senior Palestinian official told the BBC that Hamas would release three female soldiers on the first day of the ceasefire. Mediators in Doha are trying an earlier start to the ceasefire, Thursday evening instead of Sunday. Until the ceasefire does come into effect, the war that started when Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October 2023 goes on. At least 12 Palestinians were killed by Israeli strikes on northern Gaza around the time the ceasefire was announced. In what has been at times even an hourly ritual over the last 15 months, video has come out of northern Gaza showing their bodies being carried out of ambulances in sheets and laid out in a line outside a hospital.

The ceasefire is a considerable diplomatic achievement. It's long overdue. Versions of the deal have been on the table since it was announced by US President Joe Biden in May last year. Hamas and Israel have blamed each other for the delays. In Khan Younis in Gaza, journalists working for the BBC filmed Palestinians dancing and chanting as it became clear that the ceasefire had been agreed. Israel does not allow international journalists to enter Gaza to report freely, so the BBC and other news organisations rely on valiant Palestinian journalists to gather news for us. Reporting of the last 15 months of war would have been impossible without them. Israel has killed more than 200 Palestinian journalists in Gaza. Umm Muhammad, an elderly Palestinian woman, told one of our journalists she felt happy and relieved. "The pain has disappeared a bit, though it's still there. Hopefully it will be overcome by joy. Let our prisoners get freed and the injured get treated. People are exhausted." Apart from survival there is not much to celebrate for Palestinians in Gaza. Israel has killed almost 50,000 people at least. More than two million people have been forced out of their homes by Israeli military action.

Israel's response to the Hamas attacks on 7 October 2023 that killed around 1200 people, mostly Israeli civilians, has left Gaza in ruins. According to the Hamas run health ministry, Israeli attacks have killed almost 50,000 people, both combatants and civilians. A recent study in the Lancet medical journal says that might be a major underestimate. In Tel Aviv, it was also a bittersweet moment for the families and supporters of Israeli hostages, living and dead. In the first phase of the ceasefire, 33 women, older men and the sick and wounded are due for release in the next six weeks in return for hundreds of Palestinian detainees and prisoners - but the future of the rest of the hostages depends on more negotiations. Negotiations on the second phase of the agreement, to free the remaining Israeli hostages in return for imprisoned Palestinians and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza are due to start sixteen days into the agreement.

The first big challenge is making sure that the ceasefire holds. Senior western diplomats fear that after the first phase of 42 days the war could resume. The Gaza war has had immense consequences across the Middle East. It did not, as many feared, lead to a general war in the region - the Biden Administration has claimed credit for that - but it has led to geostrategic upheaval. Hamas is still able to fight but it is a shadow of what it was. Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence minister have been accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Court. The International Court of Justice is investigating a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide.

After Hezbollah in Lebanon intervened in the war, it was, eventually, crushed by an Israeli offensive. That was a factor that led to the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria. Iran and Israel exchanged direct attacks - weakening Iran. Its network of allies and proxies that Tehran called the Axis of Resistance has been crippled. The Houthis in Yemen have halted much of the shipping between Europe and Asia that passes the Red Sea. Now reports say that they have announced their own ceasefire. Since they started attacking shipping early in the war they have said that only a ceasefire in Gaza would stop them. With luck, political will and hard diplomatic effort the ceasefire will hold despite inevitable violations. With luck, it can stop the killing and get Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees and prisoners back to their families. But after 15 months of war in Gaza, the conflict which has lasted more than a century is as bitter and intractable as ever. The ceasefire doesn't end the conflict. The consequences of so much destruction and death will be felt for a generation, at least.

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Biden's poignant farewell dwells on his fears for country he loves

Stephen Collinson

PRESIDENT Joe Biden said his presidency would be a bridge - and it was. But he didn't build it to a promised new Democratic generation. Instead, he's the president who stayed too long and whose administration thus arched between two terms of a nemesis he once defeated and then let back into power: Donald Trump. To call this Biden's political tragedy would be crass. This, after all, is a man who lived unending personal anguish after burying his first wife and two of his children. But it's the fate he's been handed by history - and his own grave electoral miscalculation.

This dark reality shadowed Biden's farewell address on Wednesday night - his latest attempt to write a first draft of history about a presidency he insists is worth far more than the ignominy of a single term. "My eternal thanks to you, the American people," the president said from the Oval Office at just after 8 p.m. on the East Coast. "After 50 years of public service, I give you my word I still believe in the idea for which this nation stands, a nation where the strengths of our institutions and the character of our people matter and must endure." But by Monday afternoon, the foe who Biden warned in 2020 represented a mortal threat to America's soul will be back behind the Oval Office desk, with Biden headed into a Delaware retirement and leaving the country to face whatever happens next. With this in mind, Biden used his address to warn of the threat he thinks Trump's second term - and what he styled as his successor's band of "robber barons" - represents. If anything, he appears to believe the existential peril is greater now than it was when he launched his 2020 campaign. "Tonight, I want to warn the country of some things that give me great concern," Biden said. He cited "a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of a very few ultra wealthy people" and sounded an alarm about "dangerous consequences if their abuse of power is left unchecked." Like President George Washington in his farewell address, Biden warned of storms gathering around democracy.

"Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedoms and a fair shot for everyone to get ahead," he said. And echoing President Dwight Eisenhower, who conjured the threat posed by the military industrial complex as he exited the White House, Biden spoke of a new age of danger posed by social media and artificial intelligence and the tech bro billionaires and millionaires who are packing Trump's incoming adminis-

tration.

"I'm equally concerned about the potential rise of a tech industrial complex that can pose real dangers for our country as well," Biden said. "Americans are being buried under an avalanche of misinformation and disinformation, enabling the abuse of power. The free press is crumbling ... social media is giving up on fact checking. The truth is smothered by lies told for power and for profit." Biden was resolute and collected as he spoke, with a photo of his late son Beau, who died of brain cancer, on the table over his left shoulder.

The burden of a gruelling four-year presidency that is ending in his ninth decade was poignantly evident, however, in his reedy voice and the slurring of his words. If Biden is still up to the act of being president, age robbed him of the power to sell his ideas and to paint the national narrative months ago. Viewers were left to wonder how Biden had ever concluded he'd be fit to serve out a full second term that would have taken him to the age of 86.

Biden was not just saying goodbye to the country Wednesday evening. He drew down the blinds on the only adult life he's ever known - his decades as a senator, vice president and president and the unslaked ambition that sustained him through rounds of personal torment. He arrived in Washington as a young senator, already tipped as a future commander in chief, half a century ago. Back then, Mao Zedong led China, Leonid Brezhnev ruled the Soviet Union with an iron fist and Richard Nixon worked in the office from where Biden spoke on Wednesday.

So, the 82-year-old president was closing a political era - and a link with the 20th century and a worldview that he shared with all of his modern predecessors, but one, that was built around the system of American alliances that won the Cold War. Biden was born in 1942, when Franklin Roosevelt was in the White House, but will cede power at noon on Monday to a successor who seems bent on tearing down the West's geopolitical infrastructure first envisioned by FDR. One of the ironies of Biden's long, excruciating goodbye that has unfolded since Vice President Kamala Harris lost the November election was that, on paper at least, he can lay claim to one of the more successful one-term presidencies.

Biden brought the US economy back from the Covid-19 pandemic so badly managed by Trump with greater growth and job creation than all of America's top competitors. His legislative haul is more impressive than Trump's first term and such an extraordinary proportion of lost lives is necessarily speculative - but there are factors that are impossible to ignore. The Israeli Defense Forces have access to sophisticated monitoring equipment, such as Pegasus, which secretly infects mobile phones and discloses their precise locations. They have AI-powered systems known as "Lavender" and "Gospel" to select targets and program weapons systems to precise geo-locations. They also have a fleet of deadly drones.

Neither of these are the only circumstantial evidence that something terrible is in progress. International reporters have been barred from Gaza since the war's outset. Foreign correspondents have repeatedly petitioned to pass through the Rafah crossing to witness events for themselves, and they have been consistently denied. The Foreign Press

ry lap. The insistence that high prices were "transitory" set off a slow-motion political disaster.

Officials' months of insisting there was no "crisis" at the southern border also misjudged the country's mood and concern about undocumented migration, which intersected with feelings of widespread insecurity encompassing fear of crime and families' economic struggles - all of which Trump exploited. Biden insists to this day that he was right to end America's longest war in Afghanistan. But his claim to be a foreign policy expert was shattered by haunting images of refugees clinging to US planes taking off from Kabul amid the Taliban's advance and the deaths of 13 US service personnel in a suicide bombing during a chaotic evacuation. But it was Biden's insistence that he could beat Trump again that led to the painful eclipse culminating in Wednesday's farewell address. He made the decision to run despite polls that showed Americans believed he was too old and testimony of voters who consistently gave the same message. In truth, Biden's presidency effectively ended in 10 excruciating minutes in Atlanta in June, when his advanced age and blurred mental capacity were laid bare in a CNN debate with Trump. With one devastating jab, after an incomprehensible Biden statement, the Republican nominee said what millions at home were thinking: "I really don't know what he said at the end of that sentence. I don't think he knows what he said, either."

Clips of that encounter will be played - likely alongside a younger Ronald Reagan's dismissal of the age question - as long as televised debates take place. Future generations won't remember the younger Biden - the wise-cracking, handsome senator and politician who kept getting knocked down by life but who always got up, or the grandpa with a twinkle in his eye and an ocean of empathy in his heart whom voters chose in 2020 to restore some semblance of normality amid the pandemic.

They'll see him at his most frail and ineffective. And unlike Jimmy Carter, whom Biden eulogized in one of his last acts as president, the outgoing commander in chief will not get decades to refashion the reputation of his single term. As he closed his address, with his political energy all but exhausted, Biden was like the aged magician Prospero in Shakespeare's "The Tempest," alone on the stage when his "charms are all o'erthrown." "Now it's your turn to stand guard. May you all be the keeper of the flame, may you keep the faith," Biden told the country. "I love America. You love it too. God bless you all."

CNN In retrospect, Biden's term foundered on four historic errors, which involved the White House telling Americans that events they could see unfolding with their own eyes were not in fact happening. The administration never really understood the gut punch inflation inflicted upon Americans - as evidenced by the president's off-key "Bidenomics" victo-

Indonesia joined BRICS. What does Russia want from them?

Saahil Menon

DURING Russia's 2024 chairmanship of BRICS, four member states of the Association of South East Asian Nations were offered partnership status in lieu of direct entry. Whereas Vietnam remains in "wait-and-see" mode, Thailand and Malaysia rushed headlong into affiliating themselves with the non-Western alliance soon after invitations were extended their way.

Meanwhile and somewhat unexpectedly, Indonesia became a full-fledged BRICS member earlier this week despite Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announcing an enlargement moratorium just six months ago.

With Saudi Arabia still dragging its feet on accession talks, tensions simmering between Turkey and Russia over recently-toppled Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, and Kazakhstan ruling out BRICS membership, Indonesia was among the few non-aligned middle powers left to join the group in short order. That said, the country's newly elected strongman Prabowo Subianto - whom the Kremlin doubtless sees as a like-minded, no-nonsense ally - almost certainly helped

fast-track Indonesia's admission to BRICS. Although the revolving door of retired army generals being thrust into frontline politics is commonplace throughout Southeast Asia, Subianto's ascent to power in late October 2024 was an especially positive development for Russia since his inauguration coincided with the 16th annual BRICS forum in Kazan. Notwithstanding his domestic and international reputation for brutality for flagrant human rights abuses earned him a 20-year US travel ban, the Subianto sought to reassure ordinary Indonesians that he has changed his spots by pulling numerous publicity stunts like launching a \$4 billion free meals scheme for schoolchildren and building an image as a cat-lover on social media.

However, his predecessor and two-time presidential rival Joko Widodo campaigned on a similar, albeit less ostentatious, man-of-the-people ticket when he first ran for office, only to do away with checks and balances during his decade-long tenure as head of state. Having referred to democracy as "tiring" and "messy," it is hard to imagine Subianto as anything other than an autocrat-in-waiting bent on applying the finishing touches to what he deems a failed social experiment and ushering in an era of retrograde, junta-inspired governance. Over and above his chequered past as a loyal supporter of the blood-thirsty Suharto regime who was discharged from the military for kidnapping and roughing up peaceful activists, the 72-year-old made no bones about his sympathy towards Russia while serving as Defense Minister under Widodo's administration.

Notably, Indonesia also refused to endorse the final communiqué at the 2024 Peace Conference in Switzerland. On July 31, Subianto was received by Vladimir Putin in Moscow and described Russia as a "great friend." At this meeting, he also proposed launching non-stop Aeroflot flights to Bali, ear-

marking a scholarship fund for 160,000 Indonesian medical students to pursue higher education in Russia and intensifying cooperation with Rosatom. Furthermore, his first overseas trip as head of state was to China in November to sign bilateral trade deals with \$10 billion. Irrespective of buoyant Sino-Indonesian relations, Russia looks set to be the biggest beneficiary of Indonesia's inevitable pivot towards tyrannical rule.

Opaque as BRICS' intake procedure might seem, the bloc's founding members have sought to create the impression that aspirants must go through the motions and cannot be admitted on a luck-of-the-draw basis or at the whim of any individual participant. Yet in Indonesia's case, Russia was clearly the driving force behind its accession, gifting their scandal-ridden leader a major diplomatic win. Granted, Indonesia is a regional powerhouse in its own right and a worthy contender on merit alone given its strategic location, abundant mineral reserves, OECD candidacy and "independent and active" foreign policy. But the debt of gratitude Jakarta now owes Moscow begs the question of what Putin expects in return.

Boasting a 280-million-strong population with a median age of just 30 Indonesia could become a hotbed for Kremlin-led mercenary recruitment as the war in Ukraine grinds on. From Putin's standpoint, the best-case scenario would be establishing a North Korea-esque arrangement whereby able-bodied, fighting-age Indonesians are dispatched to the conflict zone and passed off as ethnic Buryats or Tuvans to give both parties plausible deniability.

On the people-to-people front, it is no secret that the countries of Southeast Asia continue to welcome Russian tourists and long-term residents alike with open arms. Lax entry requirements, year-round warm weather, sinfully low living costs and politically unaware locals who routinely mistake them for Europeans have fueled the influx of draft dodgers and digital nomads from Russia.

This differs starkly from the mood in the post-Soviet space, where immigration authorities take a much harder line toward Russian expats. Azerbaijan, for instance, recently capped the maximum length of time citizens of Russia can spend on its territory visa-free at 90 days per calendar year and kept its land borders closed to prevent the post-mobilization demographic change that has taken root in neighboring Georgia and Armenia. Kazakhstan introduced similar legislation back in 2023 aimed at discouraging the prolonged stay of non-resident Russians.

Amid waning influence in what it sees as its own backyard, Russia is aligning itself more closely with ASEAN in the hope that these states will continue to push back against enforcing Western sanctions. As far as Putin is concerned, bringing Indonesia into the BRICS fold and propping up its controversial, Euroskeptic commander-in-chief will not only ensure the current status quo is maintained but also help peel neighboring applicants such as Thailand and Malaysia away from the transatlantic orbit.

Israel's war on truth: Deadly struggle of journalists in Gaza

Tim Dawson

THE number of journalists killed in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023 is unprecedented in human history. More media workers have lost their lives in the Gaza war than in World War II, the Vietnam War or the 1990s conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. Tallies vary because of different counting methodologies. The International Federation of Journalists puts the toll at 148 deaths while others record a figure of over 200. For context, there were around 1,000 journalists working in Gaza at the start of 2023, so the mortality rate is significant.

Of course, the overall toll in this war is horrendous; more than 45,000 have perished, according to the authorities in Gaza. However, the death toll among journalists is dramatically higher than that among any other occupational group. Explaining

such an extraordinary proportion of lost lives is necessarily speculative - but there are factors that are impossible to ignore. The Israeli Defense Forces have access to sophisticated monitoring equipment, such as Pegasus, which secretly infects mobile phones and discloses their precise locations. They have AI-powered systems known as "Lavender" and "Gospel" to select targets and program weapons systems to precise geo-locations. They also have a fleet of deadly drones.

Neither of these are the only circumstantial evidence that something terrible is in progress. International reporters have been barred from Gaza since the war's outset. Foreign correspondents have repeatedly petitioned to pass through the Rafah crossing to witness events for themselves, and they have been consistently denied. The Foreign Press

Association in Jerusalem has stated: "Never before has Israel enforced such a long and strict information blackout. It has repeatedly rejected our appeals for access, (and) fought us in court to uphold this draconian ban."

During the same period, the Israeli daily paper Haaretz has been sanctioned by its own government, and the Qatari television station Al Jazeera has been banned from operating in both Israel and the West Bank. The most profound effect of this campaign is felt in Gaza, of course, but such an attack on free reporting has an impact all around the world.

As long as the Israeli government pursues such a policy, and is facilitated by its allies, it provides cover for all those around the world who would undermine media freedom. So,

what then can be done by those of us who support free and unfettered journalism? The first step is to recognize the extraordinary bravery of those who continue to report from Gaza. They deserve every form of support that we can provide. In recent months, the IFJ, working with UNESCO, has launched three journalists' solidarity centers in Gaza where reporters work, recuperate, socialize and access training. Alongside many other agencies, the IFJ also directly aids journalists through their union, the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate. Anyone can support this work via the IFJ's International Safety Fund.

No less important is the demand for an international investigation into what has happened to journalists in Gaza. Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor of the

International Criminal Court has already announced that he has "reasonable grounds to believe that Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant bear criminal responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity." It is critical that Khan's investigation progresses and that its findings are examined in a court of law. Only when this happens will there be a chance for Palestinians to start believing that international law protects them.

Such a long wait for the ICC to take up this case - and previous crimes such as the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh in 2022 - makes it clear that obtaining international justice for journalists is a significant challenge. For this reason, the IFJ has long campaigned for a specific UN Convention on the Safety of Journalists. This would not create new rights, but would make international law more

accessible when journalists are targeted. Adoption of such a Convention in the next few years will be of little comfort to those who have lost their lives in Gaza. It would, however, be a recognition of the service that journalists provide and the sacrifice that this often demands.

Without journalists, the people of the world would have little idea of how lives beyond their own neighborhoods are impacted by global events. Most of us may have cause to disagree with the perspectives of some or many individual journalists, but the more reporting is available to us, the more voices are heard, the better we will be able to make up our own minds about what is important. Emphasizing the international legal provisions that protect journalists will improve the safety for all - whether they work in war zones or at home alone.

Los Angeles fires were larger and more intense

THE fires that have ravaged Los Angeles over the past week were larger and burned hotter than they would have in a world without planet-warming fossil fuel pollution, a new analysis suggests. Climate change could be blamed for around 25% of the fuel available for the fires, according to the rapid research from scientists at the University of California, Los Angeles. The report is clear in saying the fires likely still would have occurred in a world without climate pollution, but it concludes they would have been "somewhat smaller and less intense."

The result raises the question of whether the fires could have been controllable were it not for the fire-fueling effects of climate change. The UCLA scientists refer to their analysis as a "starting point" for deeper studies. Twelve fires have ignited in the Los Angeles area since January 7, when a once-in-a-decade Santa Ana wind storm blew across Southern California's drought-parched landscape. Since then, more than 60 square miles have

been charred and more than 12,000 structures have burned, such as homes, businesses, sheds and garages.

Four days after they began, the Eaton and Palisades fires had grown enough that CalFire ranked them the first and second-most destructive in Southern California history. Some of the climate-related factors that contributed to the increase in available fire fuel were the excessive moisture of previous winters, Southern California's abnormally warm summer and fall and a severely delayed rainy season so far in the winter of 2024-2025.

Two winters in a row, downtown Los Angeles recorded twice as much rain as a normal winter, researchers noted. This in itself is a calling card of human-caused climate change, which promotes more moisture in the atmosphere, leading to larger rainfall totals in the wettest years. The rain spurred the growth of "substantially more" grasses and shrubs than normal. The vegetation in the Los Angeles region was among the greenest

since 2000, they noted. When the weather pendulum swung over to dry last summer, the grasses and shrubs - what Southern California wildfires feed on - began to dry out. The exceptionally late onset of the rainy season contributed even more to that drying.

Southern California's status quo is extreme swings between dry and wet, the UCLA researchers noted, but the lack of rainfall since May 2024 was exceptional. At only 0.29 inches of rain between May 1, 2024 and January 8, the period ranks second-driest behind 1962-1963, with records dating back to 1877. By the time the first fires ignited, the moisture in the dead vegetation was 6th-lowest on record, according to the report.

These massive swings from dry to wet to dry conditions - known as "weather whiplash" - are becoming more frequent as the planet warms due to fossil fuel pollution, CNN previously reported. These swings worsen the severity and chances of hazards like wildfires and flash floods. While the extremely dry condi-

tions were enough to fuel a dangerous fire, this event was also sparked in part by an unusually strong Santa Ana wind event. The UCLA researchers found the winds were "indeed a highly unusual Santa Ana event, though perhaps not entirely unprecedented." They also noted there is no physical explanation for how a planet warming due to fossil fuel pollution could lead to more extreme Santa Ana winds.

The researchers concluded that given the clear connection between wildfire size and intensity, and knowing that fires will continue to get worse as the planet warms, the focus should be on "aggressive suppression" during high wildfire risk, strategies to prevent homes from catching fire easily and avoiding high-risk zones when developing new urban areas. January is typically Southern California's second-wettest month. February is its wettest. The forecast for Los Angeles suggests the prospect of a completely dry January. At the very least, below-normal rainfall is expected to persist into February.

American battleground

Tom Foreman

There are more names.

FOR the MAGA faithful, Matt Gaetz might be the perfect pick for US attorney general. The Florida congressman has defended Donald Trump at every turn, embraced the lie of a stolen 2020 election and pushed the idea that perhaps Trump supporters weren't really responsible for the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. When Trump was on trial in New York in his hush money case and on his way to being convicted, Gaetz joined the procession of Republicans tramping in to support their leader. Along with a photo of himself standing behind Trump, Gaetz posted a phrase associated with the far-right, extremist Proud Boys: "Standing back and standing by, Mr. President."

On Trump's social media platform, Truth Social, the president-elect writes in mid-November, "Matt will end

Weaponized Government, protect our Borders, dismantle Criminal Organizations and restore Americans' badly-shattered Faith and Confidence in the Justice Department." A shockwave rolls through that department, which Gaetz has called so partisan it should be radically reformed or abolished. Then something at least modestly peculiar happens. Gaetz resigns his House seat. Some Republicans say by stepping down from the 118th Congress promptly, Gaetz could help the party quickly replace him through a special election, protecting one more vote in the next Congress for Trump's agenda. But critics note a detail: His resignation will halt a long investigation of Gaetz by the House Ethics Committee. And suddenly here is Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, another Trump booster, saying since the Cabinet pick from Florida is no longer in Congress, any findings should remain sealed. "I'm going to strongly request that the Ethics Committee not issue the report," Johnson says.

For a brief time, the but-tress holds. But information from the investigation is soon splintering off to lawmakers and the media. The rumbles grow more intense, and everything comes crashing down. Not too many days after Gaetz is tapped for the top law enforcement job in America, his coveted nomination is in ruins. He bows out to the disappointment of Trump and the relief of some who were to sit in judgment. "There were a lot of Republican senators who were concerned about defying Trump," CNN's Manu Raju reports from Capitol Hill, "but just could not get themselves to supporting Matt Gaetz's nomination."

When the report is released after much wrangling, it is every bit as bad as Republicans feared. Gaetz is rocked with allegations he paid women tens of thousands of dollars for drugs or sex - among them, a 17-year-old. He repeatedly denies having sex with a minor or paying for sex. Gaetz admits to unsavory behavior in his younger years but denies committing crimes, and commentators note he was never charged with breaking laws despite a Justice Department investigation. However, weeks later, when it is announced on the House floor that the MAGA firebrand will not be reclaiming his seat, some members of Congress applaud. Commentators note it is the first and biggest failure for Trump since his November victory. Trump issues a terse thanks to Gaetz and pulls in former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi as a replacement, noting on social media, "I have known Pam for many years - She is smart and tough, and is an AMERICA FIRST Fighter." Mindful of the urgency to charge out of Inauguration Day staffed and ready for action, Trump is now stacking up his other Cabinet picks fast. He's made a safe bet choosing Sen. Marco Rubio for secretary of state. Although the Florida senator has been the butt of many of Trump's jokes, he is an experienced political pro who will likely draw relatively little heat. New York Rep. Elise Stefanik is picked for United Nations ambassador - a tidy fit for Trump's more combative views about international relations. Former pro-wrestling executive and big Republican donor Linda McMahon gets tapped for the Department of Education, which Trump is threatening to shutter. Howard Lutnick, head of the big financial firm Cantor Fitzgerald, is chosen for the Department of Commerce. "He will lead our Tariff and Trade agenda," Trump posts.

An independent candidate for most of the presidential contest, RFK Jr. suspended his campaign in late August and mounted the stage alongside Trump in a shower of fireworks. Trump told the cheering crowd, Kennedy is "a man who has been an incredible champion for so many of these values that we all share." Now he is Trump's pick to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. It's an odd pairing, considering that Kennedy formerly accused Trump of betraying his MAGA followers, and Trump called Kennedy "the most radical left candidate in the race."

But if Trump can push aside the differences, some lawmakers and healthcare advocates are deeply concerned about a choice that strikes them as unusual to the point of unhinged. Although Kennedy denies being against vaccines, he has long suggested they should be voluntary. He's raised unfounded questions about the safety of inoculations and promoted unproven links to autism. He says fluoride should be removed from the nation's water supplies, even though it has long been considered key to preventing childhood tooth decay. He's promoted conspiracy theories about AIDS, saying it comes from wearing down the immune system with drug use, which is not true. And he once allegedly chain-sawed a dead whale on a beach and dumped a dead bear in Central Park.

"This time around, he's putting people in place ... who are not experts in their field," says CNN's Jim Acosta. After years of covering Trump, he believes the incoming president is seeking a kind of grand, political experiment. "He's almost a mad scientist in a way because I think he wants to go back into the laboratory and see what happens if there are no guardrails. In the way that we learned the consequences of having a post-truth presidency, we might learn the consequences of having a post-expertise presidency." Just before Thanksgiving, Trump goes to Texas with his new government make-over mogul, Elon Musk, to watch the launch of a massive SpaceX rocket. The tech billionaire later shows up at Trump's side at the Army-Navy football game too. Close observers say the pair is growing tighter by the day. The richest man in the world is helping the president-elect make picks for the new team and has shown a taste for dabbling in the issues. And the two new buddies are not waiting for the inauguration to flex their muscles. Outside the White House, a jubilation of song and dance heralds the lighting of the National Christmas tree. President Joe Biden, who has kept his public appearances low-key since the election, seems once again in his element - smiling, clapping, enjoying the season. "My wish for you and for the nation, now and always," he says to the cheering crowd, "is we continue to seek the light of liberty and love, kindness and compassion, dignity, and decency. Merry Christmas, America!"

But that was a few days ago. Now, two miles away, where Biden was inaugurated in a ceremony Trump unceremoniously skipped, the grand white dome of the Capitol is covering an uproar. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson has negotiated a delicate bipartisan budget deal called a "continuing resolution" to avoid a government shutdown before the holiday. Capitol Hill is joyful over the rare show of cooperation that produced the 1,500-page agreement. Then Musk blows it all up. "This bill should not pass," he writes on his social media platform

X. Through more than 100 posts in a day, he rips the deal as misguided, wasteful and "criminal." Never mind that some of his claims about it are provably false. He invokes the ever-present threat of retribution by the MAGA base, writing, "Any member of the House or Senate who votes for this outrageous spending bill deserves to be voted out in 2 years!" Trump comes out against it - and injects a new demand of raising the nation's borrowing limit before he takes office. The bill collapses. Over the next few days, a stripped-down version is cobbled together, the votes are wrangled for approval, and all of official Washington furiously speculates about what the episode might portend for this new presidency.

For Democrats, like Washington state Rep. Pramila Jayapal, the read is easy: "It's clear who's in charge, and it's not President-elect Donald Trump. President Elon Musk spent all day railing against Republicans' CR, succeeded in killing the bill, and then Trump decided to follow his lead." Others on her side of the aisle start pushing "President Musk" and "shadow president" memes online. Trump, at least initially, gives no sign he is bothered. But voices inside his team indirectly suggest he is by insisting to journalists that Trump, not Musk, really is in charge. And again, there is an interesting detail: The final version of the budget bill does not contain the debt ceiling suspension Trump seems to badly want. Trump tells CBS he'd like to go even further. "The debt ceiling should be thrown out entirely," he says. The move surprises Republicans who have frequently criticized Democrats who want more borrowing authority as economically careless. But many analysts say Trump's wish is underpinned by a simple reality. For all his talk of making government smaller and cheaper, he is proposing a combination of programs and tax cuts that could cost trillions of dollars. He may need all the money he can get. And if he can expand his right to borrow it on Biden's watch, so much the better to avoid future blame. Yet, his party's congressional delegation has told him no. And in the rapid sequence of events that led to that moment, in the influence of Musk, and in this gentle but effective push-back from the party, Zelensy suspects potential future troubles for Trump. "Even a month before Trump's second term starts," he says, "we (were) seeing these challenges of governing. Lot of cooks in the kitchen, and who is in charge?" Undaunted, the weekend before Christmas, Trump throws a fresh stunner into the headlines. He declares he wants the US to retake the Panama Canal, which President Jimmy Carter put under the control of Panama in a 1977 deal that guaranteed neutral, international access to the waterway.

Trump ominously suggests that somehow China is up to shenanigans. And Panama is charging too much. "We're being ripped off at the Panama Canal," he declares in a cut-and-paste of his standard grievance, "like we're being ripped off everywhere else." Within days he will expand his Christmas wish list to include American ownership of Greenland, as Donald Trump Jr. covets on the island territory taking selfies and handing out MAGA hats. His dad hints that it would also be nice to scoop up Canada and rename the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America. And if force is needed, Trump indicates he might consider deploying the military to Greenland and Panama and putting an economic squeeze on Canada. Some world leaders shrug, some ridicule the idea, all imply any notion of America conquering their lands is ludicrous. But the clock keeps ticking down to the final hours of 2024, and for better or worse, Trump keeps rolling out his aspirations and lining up his team. With the backing of agreeable judges he planted in the courts his first time around, he is bracing to meet the flurry of legal challenges his norm-shattering agenda will surely bring. He seems confident he can ignore any noise from the cornered Democrats, and unconcerned about any rebellions that might arise from Republicans. Indeed, just as he did in his first term, only more so, Trump seems prepared to push the limits of presidential power as far as he can. And everyone knows if it works, he could become the most powerful chief executive in modern times. Maybe ever.

Why aren't Russia's elites fleeing Putin?

Aaron Lea & Borukh Taskin

ONE of the landmark events of the past year was the return to Russia and the immediate arrest at the airport of Denis Gribov, the former federal deputy minister of education. Why would an elitist who had left for safe countries go home to Russia, where a corruption purge is clearly unfolding and where he is clearly facing prison?

The Gribov case has caused cognitive dissonance among analysts and observers: why did at least some of the recently arrested high-ranking representatives of the Defense Ministry and regional leaders not flee to the West, even though in most cases these wealthy people knew that a decision had been made to arrest them. Many of them had spent critical time before their arrest trying to negotiate. Maybe they thought their patrons would be able to defend them.

Why are Russian diplomats, intelligence officers and scientists (who are increasingly under FSB pressure) not fleeing to the West? Between 1953 and 1990, over 1,200 Soviet elites chose to emigrate (or escape) to Western countries - a figure that does not include the Refusenik movement and the mass emigration of Jews. Why does nobody try anymore? Do they all love Russia so much that they are willing to live and work until the moment when they come to be arrested? Or do they hope that they will be bypassed by purges?

The elites in the USSR, were never monolithic. The emigration of prominent members of the Soviet elites to the West is divided into two clear periods - emigration from Stalin's regime, was often due to the threat of repression or assassination, while people left after his death in pursuit of freedom and life in the West. The most significant holes in the Soviet ideological boat after Stalin's death were the famous KGB assassin Bogdan Stashinsky, dancers Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Stalin's daughter Svetlana Alliluyeva, UN Deputy Secretary-General Arkady Shevchenko, grandmasters Viktor Korchinot and Lev Albut, diplomats and intelligence officers Oleg Gordievsky, Stanislav Levchenko, Yuri Bezmenov, scientists Mikhail Voslensky, Stanislav Kurilov - but hundreds of others also escaped. A rich cross-section of intellectuals, high-ranking diplomats and intelligence officers, representatives of the creative and scientific elite, for whom the main motivation for emigration was the impossibility of living in the USSR, the impossibility of creative and scientific growth, and sometimes even physical threats to life.

After the collapse of the USSR, emigration rose so high that it was difficult to identify significant representatives within it. The choice of a new country with the opportunity to return home safely, guaranteed by the Constitution of 1993, was driven by economic reasons and professional ambitions. At the same time, a counterflow also took shape: hundreds, if not thousands of Russian emigre businessmen and intellectuals, as well as those with Russian roots, returned to Russia. If we consider the annexation of Crimean and the occupation of Ukrainian territories to be a moral rubicon, we find that very few members of Russia's ruling elite left. Those who did mostly left for business reasons, not out of disgust with their government. Some creative and businessmen have left Russia and integrated into other countries with varying degrees of success, writers Boris Akunin, Dmitry Bykov, and Dmitry Glukhovsky, economist and administrator Sergei Guriev, financier Lev Khasis, scientist and administrator Vladimir Mau, and Anatoly Chubais are notable names. And only Chubais out of the entire list of those who left represents for Russian and Western elites a kind of "consolidation point" of joint efforts of the Russian and Western ruling classes. With the exception of high-ranking diplomat Boris Bondarev, Oleg Smolenkov (who had to escape as he was a CIA agent) and Yuri Khokhlov, very few diplomats and high-ranking officials have left. The invasion of Ukraine by

Russian troops in February 2022 did not become a watershed. Representatives of the political elite rarely leave the Russian Federation at all. The story of a pillar of Putin's regime, the late Mikhail Lesin, a former minister and prominent dignitary who created the media management system in the Russian Federation, is of a different nature. His departure to the United States looks more like an attempt to infiltrate the American political elite in order to corrupt it than a frontier emigration. In general, the Russian Federation has not suffered any significant losses over the past 20 years. Business continues to profit from war and the blood of its own people and others, while the managerial elites have proved to be much more consolidated than even in Soviet times.

Today it is believed that elites remain generally loyal to the regime, which drags them further and further into international crimes like a mafia as they continue to work and make money mainly on connections. However, rather than an active consensus, this cohesion is the product of several factors that prevent elites from breaking from the ranks of the criminals running Russia. The phenomenon of crabs in a bucket is well documented. When one crab tries to clamber out of the container, the others drag it back in. You can see the same behavior in humans when people try to prevent others from ascending the social ladder.

This is not uncommon in cultures ranging from Britain and America, to Japan and India. But the peculiarities of the Russian mindset make things work differently. If the crabs were patriotic-minded Russians, they would drag their colleague trying to break free more out of a collective fear of the unknown, rather than out of a desire to push the upstart back in. According to Russian historian Dmitry Shusharin's book Russian Totalitarianism, Freedom Here and Now, Russia's privileged liberals "realize the duality of their position": the media and financial sectors they work in have the potential to destroy the regime, but are inseparable from how the regime exercises its power. Furthermore, they depend on the same system that oppresses them and have forgotten what it is like to live without it. Even though they are opposed to the regime, they are still affected by its rhetoric.

Of course, this paradigm does not apply only to liberals. It is characteristic of the entire ruling elite. Russian elites also display a sense that they are untouchable and are ready to do anything to avoid losing their status in the system and are ready to go to prison next to other elites. Their attempts to preserve status even through the threat of arrest and prison may indicate a social phenomenon of an unprecedented scale.

Here we have to describe the motivations of the Russian elites in terms of the mixing of needs in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. For example, Nazi propaganda caused a seemingly small change in the value system in the 1930s. Fascism forced Germans to put the value of national identity in the form of racial theory before other civilizational values. It took about 20 years of denazification in Germany for the Germans' hierarchy of values to take a civilized form. Similarly, Kremlin propaganda and the soaring incomes that come from being complicit in Moscow's criminality make Russians value in-group respect above their security. This incredible value-somersault and its consequences are yet to be studied by scholars, and for now, it is difficult to predict where it will lead Russia. Perhaps the national madness will go much further than where it went in Nazi Germany and the consequences of such value shifts for the world are unpredictable since the Kremlin has threatened to unleash nuclear destruction.

This feeling of belonging to the circle of the untouchables and permissiveness is also inherent in some liberals, as shown by Leonud

Gozman's wife being placed under house arrest after trying to take "culturally sensitive" crockery out of Russia when she visited in late 2024. Thus, the inability of the Russian elite to stay in the West is probably related to the fear of losing status and their inability to integrate into elite circles abroad. This inability is a direct consequence of the fact that many Russians have not acquired easily convertible and in-demand skills in other countries. This is especially noticeable among the managerial elite, which has become accustomed to a highly distorted way of exercising power and management. The presence of big money abroad is not the anchor that can hold these elites, because the type of mentality that was selected during their career development does not save them from the loss of status and the privileges that (together with money) power gives.

Another explanation may be the position of the closest family members who do not want to lose their social status even if their loved ones are targeted. This paradoxically intersects with "grassroots" commercial patriotism, which forces mothers and wives to send their husbands and sons to war for the sake of buying a white Lada or paying the mortgage, which Vladimir Inozemtsev called "deathonomics." How did Russia come to ossify its international image and deny any accepted civilizational norms that it seemed to have learned over the past 30 years? After a long period of hard and servile obedience to those values that made Russia's economy one of the largest in the world, it suddenly turned out that the Russian elites did not need any of it and could continue behave like it was the Soviet days without consequences. Moreover, the blatant rhetoric of the Russian elite at the international level has long outstripped the protocol form adopted during the late Soviet era. Therefore, it seems to us that the elites are inseparable from today's Russia, and it is not Putin who created them, but they created Putin as we know him.

It is very unlikely we will see a split among Russia's elites, as they have formed and cemented themselves in a monolithic and logical manner. Moreover, the West does not create opportunities for them to leave Russia and separate from the essentially criminal groups that are called the modern Russian government, except in extreme scenarios like death threats. But the Kremlin is boiling their elites over a slow fire and it is hard to jump out of that cauldron. Moreover, in some cases, the West and the Kremlin act as if they were acting in concert. European asylum processes have been repeatedly noted for their inflexibility and even repression of fleeing Russians, which only confirms the Kremlin's claims that Russians are not welcome in the West.

There are dozens of cases where Russian elites have tried to integrate into European society but could not find the right arguments to obtain the necessary rights of residence. All these had previous experience of living in European countries and appealed to MEPs and members of the US Congress for help. But for various reasons, dialog with Western authorities has not worked. These cases are widely discussed among Russia's elites and hardly encourage people to try and leave forming an excellent base for Putin's propaganda narrative of the russophobic West.

What should the West do to undermine Putin's system and absorb a part of the Russian managerial elite in its interests? First, the West must construct policies that support the freedom of Russians to seek sanctuary in the West rather than continuing to exist in criminal Russia. This should apply to a select group of citizens, since criminal cases will be brought against those who have left in the Russian Federation, and search and extradition requests will be filed with Interpol. It took the French judicial system almost three years to recognize criminal prosecution for evading mobilization to fight in Ukraine as political persecution. The world

changes too quickly to wait for bureaucracy.

Given the specifics of Putin's regime, a separate methodology should be developed for Russians in the UNHCR and Interpol, facilitating the conditions of their escape from the country and guaranteeing them legal protection. The Kremlin is bound to send its agents with waves of emigration, but this can be dealt with, including through trusting work with Russian emigrant communities. Second, mechanisms should be created to integrate Russian elites who have left for the West into the daily agenda of the coalition countries. Clear guarantees should be given that their capital taken out of the Russian Federation will be amnestied, perhaps if a portion is used to rebuild Ukraine, and reliably protected by laws that will also apply to Russian elites.

Third, a large number of NGOs, charitable foundations, think tanks, mass media and high-tech startups where Russian emigres can find employment as board members, sponsors, supervisory board members, consultants, etc. should be created. Fourth, we should consider involving carefully selected high-class managers and investors from Russia in the formation of at least investments, crypto-asset circulating and fiat cross-border payments between the countries they have chosen to live in. This will give an immediate advantage to the West in understanding how Russia is creating multiple ways to circumvent sanctions restrictions.

Fifth, a NATO-monitored integration service should be created for the departed siloviki and others with sensitive knowledge, which would then approach member countries, Interpol and UNHCR from the position of the value of these people as an asset to support collective security mechanisms. We believe there is a significant potential for splitting Putin's elites, creating conditions for their flight from Russia and integration into Western civilization and subsequent return to a future democratic Russia. This window of opportunity will not always exist and the mechanisms supporting such a split must be discussed at the highest levels and created now.

If this is not done immediately, Russia's elites, driven behind the new Iron Curtain on both sides, will continue to support Putin's power from within. Proposals aimed at dividing and fragmenting the Russian establishment (which is exactly what Western countries are doing to develop separate regulations for certain categories of Russians) will not have the desired effect either, since they should be personalized and personal, but in no case should lead to the revision or lifting of country-specific economic sanctions against citizens or structures, as proposed by the Anti-Corruption Foundation and Maria Pevchikh. Economic sanctions against Russia cannot be changed or revised without the participation of the Ukrainian side. But decisions about individual persons and the definition of who is allowed into the West are as much a tool to fight Putinism as sanctions on Russia's economy. Most likely, the introduction of such "special regimes" for some categories of citizens will cause indignation among Russian security services, which will see them as subversive activity.

We believe that Russia's transformation toward democracy and civilizational development depends on the ability of Western countries to help overcome both the psychological barriers faced by Russian elites and the systemic problems created by Putin's regime. By fostering an environment conducive to change based on trust, economic opportunity, ideological engagement and international solidarity, the West can help create a future in which Russian society transcends its current limitations and can re-integrate into the civilized world. We believe that through cooperation and with the involvement of responsible Russian elites, it is possible to reshape the political landscape of Russia to allow freedom to flourish rather than the dictatorship to continue.

The Moscow Times



In brief

FIFA bans Venezuelan soccer official

ZURICH (Agencies): FIFA has banned a Venezuelan soccer official from the sport for five years for financial wrongdoing and fined him nearly \$1m. Manuel Álvarez was secretary general of the Venezuelan soccer federation when his conduct enabled the "misappropriation and misuse" of its and FIFA's money, soccer's world body said announcing the verdict late Friday. FIFA's ethics committee had also charged Álvarez with breaching "duty of loyalty" and "general duties" under its code. FIFA, which makes at least \$2 million available in funding each year to all 211 member federations, gave no details about the financial misconduct. The verdict can be challenged on appeal. It is unclear how FIFA can enforce payment of the fine if Álvarez does not return to soccer. Venezuela is the only member of the 10-nation CONMEBOL group of South American federations that has never qualified to play at the men's World Cup.

Murphy makes 147 maximum break

LONDON (Agencies): Shaun Murphy compiled only the sixth 147 maximum break in the history of the Masters in his semi-final against Mark Allen at Alexandra Palace. The Englishman is only the fifth player to achieve snooker perfection - clearing all 15 reds with 15 blacks, followed by all the colours - since the event was first staged in 1975. Kirk Stevens recorded the first at the old Wembley Conference Centre in 1984, while Ding Junhui (twice), Marco Fu and Mark Allen have also achieved the feat. Murphy's special effort came in the sixth frame against Northern Ireland's Allen and gave him a 4-2 lead in the best-of-11 encounter. It prompted joyous scenes as the fans inside the auditorium erupted with Murphy, who missed out on a 147 in his quarter-final win against Neil Robertson, being warmly congratulated by Allen. World number seven Murphy has now made nine 147 breaks during his career, with Ronnie O'Sullivan (15), John Higgins (13) and Stephen Hendry (11) the only players to have recorded more. His effort against Allen, the 210th 147 in professional snooker history, also puts him on course to claim the £15,000 prize awarded for the tournament's highest break.

Kvaratskhelia joins PSG from Napoli

PARIS (Reuters): Georgian forward K h v i c h a Kvaratskhelia has joined Paris St Germain from Serie A side Napoli on a deal until 2029, the Ligue 1 club announced on Friday. Neither side disclosed the financial details of the deal, but media reports said the French champions have paid a 70 million euro (\$71.93 million) fee plus add-ons for the 23-year-old. "PSG are delighted to announce the signing of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia," the Parisian club said in a statement. "The 23-year-old winger, who will wear the number 7 shirt, becomes the first Georgian player in the club's history." Kvaratskhelia arrives in the French capital after failing to reach an agreement with Napoli to extend his contract, which was due to run until 2027, with the winger requesting his exit last week. The Georgia international had previously been linked with a move to PSG in the close season before he stayed for another season under new coach Antonio Conte.

Pakistan tightens grip with 202-run lead against West Indies

MULTAN (APP): On the second day of the Multan Test, Pakistan ended their second innings at 109 runs for the loss of three wickets, building a commanding overall lead of 202 runs against West Indies.

In the second innings, Captain Shan Masood stood out with a well-constructed 52 before being run out, while Mohammad Huraire contributed 29. Babar Azam managed only five runs before departing while Kamran Ghulam (9 not out) and Saud Shakeel (2 not out) remained unbeaten at stumps. Jomel Warrican was the standout bowler for the visitors, claiming two crucial wickets.

Earlier, West Indies were bundled out for a paltry 137 runs in their first

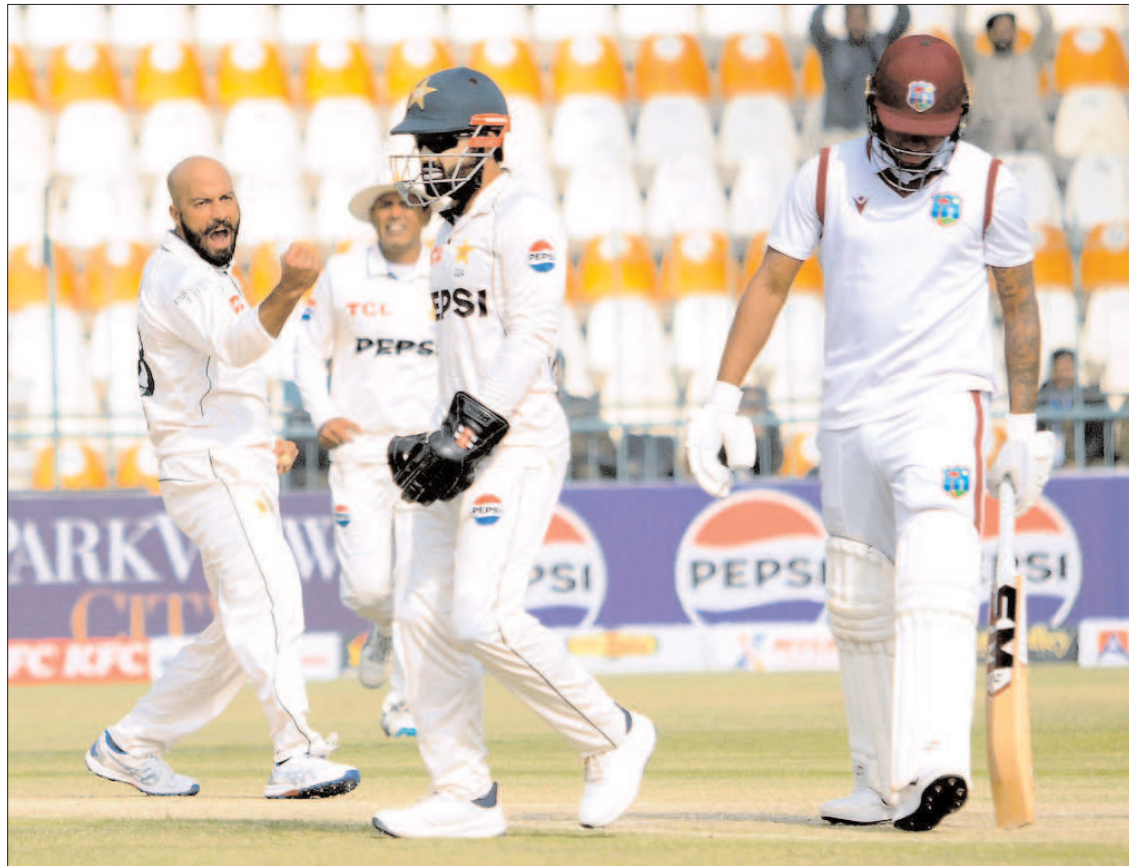
innings, giving Pakistan a 93-run lead. Jomel Warrican (31) and Jayden Seales (22) were the top scorers for the visitors. Pakistan's spinners wreaked havoc, with Noman Ali taking a magnificent five-wicket haul, Sajid Khan claiming four and Abrar Ahmed chipping in with one.

Pakistan's first innings saw them post 230 runs, with Saud Shakeel's stellar 84 and Mohammad Rizwan's gritty 71 forming the backbone of their innings. For West Indies, Jayden Seales and Jomel Warrican picked up three wickets each, while Sinclair and Motie shared the remaining breakthroughs.

The second day's play

began with Pakistan losing their remaining wickets quickly, but their spinners turned the game on its head. Sajid Khan, in particular, was lethal upfront, dismantling the top order and taking four early wickets. Noman Ali then capitalized on the pressure, sending five more West Indian batters back to the pavilion while Abrar Ahmed wrapped up the innings by dismissing Jayden Seales.

As Pakistan heads into Day three of the first test march with a strong lead and seven wickets in hand, the hosts appear to have the upper hand in this thrilling contest, leaving West Indies with a monumental task to stay alive in the game.



MULTAN: Pakistan's Sajid Khan celebrates after taking the wicket of West Indies' Mikyle Louis during the second day of the first Test cricket match between Pakistan and West Indies at the Multan Cricket Stadium.

Sadaf reaches National Junior Squash C'ship final, aiming for Trophy victory

PESHAWAR (APP): Emerging squash star Sadaf Afridi from Peshawar has showcased her exceptional talent by reaching the final of the U-15 Plate Event in the Shell Pakistan National Junior Squash Championship 2025, currently underway in Islamabad.

The Championship is being played from January 15 to 19, has attracted young players from across the country competing in various categories.

Known for her impressive gameplay, Sadaf Afridi secured her spot in the final by delivering a stellar performance in the semi-final, defeating her opponent convincingly.

Hailing from Peshawar, the city renowned for producing world squash champions like Jansher Khan, Jahangir Khan, and Qamar Zaman, Sadaf attributed her success to



her relentless hard work, the continuous guidance of her coaching team, and the unwavering support of her parents.

"It is a great honor for me to reach the final of this prestigious championship. My ultimate goal is to bring glory to my country," Sadaf Afridi remarked.

Sadaf's achievement is not only a personal milestone but also an inspiration for the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Her

journey serves as a beacon of hope, proving that with dedication and the right support, young athletes from the region can excel on national and international platforms.

Competitions like the National Championship provide young players with a platform to showcase their abilities and prepare for larger contests. Sadaf's performance underscores the immense potential of squash players in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. With the provision of adequate opportunities, these players can bring global recognition to Pakistan.

Sadaf Afridi's success is a matter of pride not just for her but for the province and the country as a whole. She represents the bright future of Pakistan in the field of squash, embodying the promise of greater achievements on the global stage.

KP Sports Fest begins at Peshawar Sports Complex

PESHAWAR (APP): A major motorcar sports race event, KP Sports Fest (Autocross), organized by the Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has begun at Peshawar Sports Complex, in which more than 120 vehicles from across the country participating in six different categories.

The race was officially inaugurated by Director General Sports Abdul Nasir, accompanied by Director Operation Naimatullah Marwat, Deputy Director Jamshed Baloch, Organizing Secretary Muhammad Saad and other dignitaries.

Talking to the media, DG Sports Abdul Nasir said that the main objective of organizing the event is to promote motor sports in the province and in the same vein, an automotive car show was also organized last month.

The said event is being organized as per the vision of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the leadership of the Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jahan.

Deputy Director Jamshed Baloch while talking to the media said, that this is the first time in the history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that this event is being organized in which 200 vehicles participated in the first phase, out of which 120 vehicles were selected for the final race.

He said that the race includes races of 6 different categories, including front wheel drive, all wheel drive, four wheel drive, small vehicle, and drivers participating in the category of beginners will demonstrate their driving skills.

The youth took extraordinary interest in the Auto Cross Show, which was held for the first time in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and more than 200 vehicles from all over the country registered, out of which 120 vehicles were selected for the final round.

Forest by Matz Sels' superb saves and they were being frustrated by another in-form 'keeper, with Flekken saving well from Dominik Szoboszlai's low shot.

Szoboszlai was inches away from breaking the deadlock when the Liverpool midfielder slammed a 25-yard strike against the bar. Cody Gakpo should have done better than poke narrowly wide from Salah's pass after Liverpool carved open the Brentford rearguard. Early in the second half, Salah's shot deflected off Keane Lewis-Potter and was heading towards goal until Nathan Collins made a last-ditch clearance off the line. Slot sent on Andrew Robertson and Nunez, who immediately headed wide from the Scot's cross to the visible dismay of his manager.

Alisson saved twice in quick succession from Mbeumo's free-kick and the Brentford forward's follow-up effort. Liverpool's shot tally had reached 34 without a goal and they were nearly punished for their profligacy when Mbeumo's header was saved by Alisson. As the seconds ticked

India announces squad for Champions Trophy 2025

NEW DELHI (Agencies): The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has unveiled a 15-man squad for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy 2025, featuring a mix of experienced players and young talent.

The team will be led by captain Rohit Sharma, with Shubman Gill serving as vice-captain.

Before the Champions Trophy begins on February 19, India will play three bilateral ODIs against England on February 6, 9, and 12. These matches will mark India's return to 50-over games since their tour of Sri Lanka in August last year.

India is placed in Group A of the Champions

Trophy, alongside Pakistan, New Zealand, and Bangladesh. Due to government restrictions, all of India's matches will be played in Dubai. Their campaign will begin on February 20 against Bangladesh, followed by matches against Pakistan on February 23 and New Zealand on March 2.

The announcement came after the Indian fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah dismissed rumors regarding his complete bed rest and uncertainty over his participation in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. Taking to the microblogging platform X, Bumrah dismissed the reports as fake news.

"I know how easy it is to

spread fake news, but this one really made me laugh," he posted, accompanied by several laughing emojis.

On Wednesday, January 15, several Indian media outlets claimed that Jasprit Bumrah, who has been dealing with a back issue, has gone on bed rest and is unlikely to participate in the Champions Trophy.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill (vice-captain), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja.

Raducanu crushed by Swiatek in Melbourne

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Emma Raducanu suffered the joint-heaviest defeat of her career as second seed Iga Swiatek demonstrated her superiority in a one-sided Australian Open third-round match.

Britain's Raducanu was thrashed 6-1 6-0 in a chastening afternoon on Rod Laver Arena. The world number 61 lost serve five times as Swiatek took just 70 minutes to secure victory. It is the second time Raducanu has won just one game in a match, having lost 6-0 6-1 to Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina in Sydney three years ago.

"She played very well, but I also think I didn't play very well. It's just not a great combination," Raducanu, 22, said.

Five-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek has never gone past the Melbourne semi-finals but her level against Raducanu sent another warning to her title rivals.

The 23-year-old Pole has not dropped a set or even a service game in her first

three rounds in Melbourne.

"If a top player is playing perfect, it's already going to be a difficult match," Raducanu added.

Gulf between Raducanu and Swiatek clear

While Raducanu and Swiatek both won Grand Slam titles as teenagers, their careers have followed very different paths since. Raducanu famously won the 2021 US Open title as an 18-year-old qualifier but struggled with the spotlight on her afterwards.

The rigours of playing full-time on the WTA Tour also took its toll.

A series of injuries culminated in wrist and ankle surgeries in 2023, with Raducanu still finding her way back after dropping out of the world's top 300.

Swiatek, however, continued to thrive after winning the 2020 French Open. She has become dominant at Roland Garros, having won the title there for the past three years, and also claimed the US Open trophy in 2022.

Swiatek has won all four

of her meetings with Raducanu - and the gulf between the pair is stark.

Raducanu was unable to cope with Swiatek's top spin-heavy groundstrokes and athleticism, making a host of errors from the baseline as the pressure told on her backhand in particular.

Losing serve early was a fatal blow against a superb front-runner like Swiatek, who went on to secure the 78th 'bagel' of her tour-level career.

"The scoreline was obviously quite harsh," said Raducanu. "I'm very clear on what happened out there. If I'm not necessarily able to hold my service games or dictate, I feel like it seeps into the rest of my game. "On my second serves, how the point is structured from then on, and in the return games, you feel a lot more pressure. "That was probably a big aspect today." Positives for Raducanu after back issue While this defeat will sting, Raducanu will try to take the positives from a career-best run at Melbourne Park.

Leaders Liverpool strike late as Nunez sinks Brentford

LONDON (AFP): Darwin Nunez struck twice in the final minutes as Liverpool got their Premier League title charge back on track with a dramatic 2-0 win against Brentford on Saturday.

Arne Slot's side were in danger of enduring a third successive league draw after wasting a host of chances at the Gtech Community Stadium.

Of all the candidates to end Liverpool's wobble, Uruguay striker Nunez would have been low down the list given his struggles over the last two seasons. But he rode to Liverpool's rescue with a stoppage-time brace that lifted the Reds' seven points clear of second-placed Arsenal. The Gunners can close the gap back to four points with a win against Aston Villa in Saturday's late game.

But Liverpool will hold a game in hand on Arsenal and have the destiny of the title still firmly in their

grasp thanks to the much-maligned Nunez. Slot had admitted he couldn't find a way to get the best out of the former Benfica star earlier this week.

The 25-year-old had scored just four goals in 26 games in all competitions prior to his unexpected double in west London.

Slot will gratefully take Nunez's contribution as Liverpool's first win in three league games kept them on course for a first title since 2020.

Since the turn of the year, Liverpool had only won one game in four in all competitions, beating minnows Accrington Stanley in the FA Cup third round.

They had drawn their previous two league games against Manchester United and Nottingham Forest, while also losing 1-0 at Tottenham in the League Cup semi-final first leg, making this victory essential to steady their nerves.

Brentford kicked off

with the joint-best home record in the Premier League, an impressive statistic they underlined by scoring twice in the closing stages to draw 2-2 with Manchester City on Tuesday.

Nunez late show Thomas Frank's side should have had Liverpool on the ropes when Mikkel Damsgaard failed to convert Mads Roerslev's ball across the six-yard box.

Brentford threatened again as Bryan Mbeumo forced Alisson Becker into action with a drive from the edge of the area.

Luis Diaz glanced wide from Ibrahima Konate's pass before Ryan Gravenberch's long-range blast was tipped away by Mark Flekken.

Konate shot wastefully wide and Brentford captain Christian Norgaard headed over as chances kept coming at both ends.

Liverpool had been denied three points at



Mbeumo's free-kick and the Brentford forward's follow-up effort.

Liverpool's shot tally had reached 34 without a goal and they were nearly punished for their profligacy when Mbeumo's header was saved by Alisson.

As the seconds ticked

away, Liverpool grew more desperate and Trent Alexander-Arnold's 30-yard rocket did nothing to ease their angst as it fizzed just wide. But their pressure was finally rewarded in stoppage-time as Alexander-Arnold's cross

picked out Nunez and he kept his cool to slot home from close range.

Slot danced a jubilant jig on the touchline and the Dutchman was celebrating again moments later as Harvey Elliott's pass found Nunez inside the area and he lashed a blistering finish past Flekken.



In brief

FDE solarizes 100 schools

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) in partnership with the National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC) has successfully completed the solarization of 100 schools. The installation of solar panels will not only reduce carbon footprint but also provide a reliable and eco-friendly source of energy for our schools, said a press release. It said that the initiative would have a positive impact on the educational environment and empower future generations to thrive in a sustainable world.

Commissioner reviews progress on jail construction

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, visited the Islamabad Model Jail on Saturday, accompanied by member engineering and other officials, to review the ongoing construction progress. He inspected various components, including the road infrastructure, boundary wall, administration block, hospital, and barracks. During the briefing, it was revealed that the administration block and boundary wall are expected to be completed by next month. Over 88% of the barracks construction has been completed, while work on the hospital is in its final stages. The road infrastructure is also progressing rapidly and nearing completion. Chief Commissioner Randhawa expressed satisfaction with the progress and directed the timely completion of all remaining work, ensuring high-quality standards. He also instructed officials to allocate areas inside and around the jail for maximum plantation to enhance the green cover.

Chandio remembered on death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iconic Sindhi and Urdu TV drama actor Gulab Chandio was remembered on his sixth death anniversary on Saturday where fans, fellow artists and family members paying tribute to his remarkable contributions for drama and entertainment industry. Chandio's remarkable contributions to the Pakistani drama industry were remembered and celebrated, as people from all walks of life shared their favorite memories of the actor's impressive performances. His family members and colleagues also paid emotional tributes, recalling his exceptional talent, dedication and passion for his craft. Through his remarkable body of work, Gulab Chandio left an indelible mark on the Pakistani entertainment industry, and his legacy continues to inspire and influence new generations of actors and drama enthusiasts. Gulab Chandio emerged as TV actor in early 80s and started his career in Sindhi dramas. Gulab was a well-known Sindhi actor of Pakistani TV drama industry who was recognized for his excellent delivery of dialogues and famous as villain in most of the plays. Gulab Chandio has shown his talent and acting skills in several dramas including Noori Jan Tumachi, Natak Rang, Gulam Gardish, Zehar Baad, Bewafaiyan, Marvi, Saans Ley Aye Zindagi, Sagar Ka Moti and many more.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani in a group photograph with other participants during the opening ceremony of health & Fitness Gala at Police Lines. —APP Photo

Govt taking various steps for promotion of tourism sector in GB

ISLAMABAD (APP): The development and prosperity of Gilgit Baltistan were the top priority of the Federal Government and in this regard, various projects of development had been launched for the promotion of the tourism sector, health facilities, improvement in the education sector and mitigate the pressure of unemployment in this area. An official source told APP, he said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently announced a series of mega development projects for the development of the remote areas of the GB. He said

the incumbent regime also focused on developing the road network and connectivity of slum areas with each other to facilitate the local community.

The local government also upgrading the basic health units in the far-flung areas of the GB. He underlined that tourism is a lucrative business of the local community and in this regard, GB government provides training facilities to the youth of the area.

Tourism is the best source of income for the local population, as millions of tourists visit this area every year. He com-

mended the federal government's efforts in promoting tourism and emphasized the need for its enhancement.

He proposed the establishment of camping sites and tourism facilitation centers across all provinces aimed at facilitating tourists and promoting local attractions. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of extensive promotion of the Salam Pakistan portal, a dedicated platform designed to guide and assist tourists visiting Pakistan.

He stressed the significance of leveraging technology to provide seamless experiences for travelers.

Citizens urged to take precautions against viral infections

ISLAMABAD (APP): An infectious disease specialist at Dow Hospital, Professor Saeed Khan, on Saturday urged citizens to take precautions to avoid viral infections, wearing masks, covering them, and getting the influenza vaccine every year.

Talking to a private news channel, the professor said that many people in the city are suffering from colds, coughs, and fever. 10 to 12 percent of patients have influenza H1N1, while 5 to 10 percent of children are suffering from respiratory tract infections, he added. The symptoms of COVID-19, influenza H1N1, and other winter viruses are similar, many patients do not get tested, which leads to delayed diagnosis, he further added.

Additional Medical Superintendent Dr. Nizam Sheikh reported that 200 patients with viral infections visit Civil Hospital daily, while Jinnah Hospital receives 150 to 200 such cases every day. Doctors recommend citizens take timely precautions to protect themselves and their families during the winter season.

IRSA releases 30,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 30,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 40,100 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1477.86 feet and was 78.86 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 1135.65 feet, which was 85.65 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 20,400, 20,900, 2,000 and 4,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 15,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Gilani pays tribute to Police force

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, attended the Health & Fitness Gala organized by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) at ICT Police Lines, Islamabad.

The event, which also honored the contributions of the police force, especially the families of martyrs, saw a distinguished gathering of government officials, lawmakers, diplomats, and community leaders.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani expressed his deep appreciation for the FPCCI's efforts in organizing such a noble initiative, emphasizing that the event serves as a tribute to the dedication and sacrifices of the police force. "We owe our police force a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid. Every day, they put their lives on the line to

ensure our safety and security," said Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani.

Addressing the families of the martyrs, he said that the whole nation, the parliament and the government stand with you. Your loss is our collective loss. Pakistan has lost brave men and women. But we stand ever more determined and resolute to maintain peace and stability no matter what the cost, Chairman Senate stated.

Chairman Senate also highlighted the importance of promoting health and fitness within the society, stressing that physical activity is essential not only for individual well-being but also for reducing the burden of chronic diseases across communities. "Initiatives that promote health and fitness, such as today's gala, are vital in fostering a healthier society," he remarked.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani called for increased public-private partnerships, urging the private sector to take a more active role in promoting health and wellness initiatives. He also recommended integrating physical education into school curriculum and launching public awareness campaigns on the benefits of regular physical activity.

The event featured various activities aimed at promoting fitness, including physical exercises, health consultations, and wellness programs.

Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, while concluding, reiterated his commitment to supporting initiatives that benefit the health and well-being of the people of Pakistan and expressed hope that the momentum generated by this event would lead to further positive steps in promoting public health.

Pakistan, Britain vow to foster stronger ties



ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan and Britain have reaffirmed the commitment to foster stronger ties and collaborative efforts for mutual growth and development.

The resolve to this effect came at a meeting between Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott in Islamabad today.

On this occasion, the Minister reflected on the Vision 2035 initiative which serves as a strategic roadmap for Pakistan's economic and social development.

He also highlighted efforts to eradicate basic

education deprivation through public-private partnerships, provincial cooperation to enhance capacity in education, health, and human resources, and significant budget increases for higher education.

Ahsan Iqbal said that the government is committed to modernizing the higher education curriculum and skilling university students.

Alluding to the country's economic strategy, the Minister said that it aims to address five critical areas including exports, e-Pakistan, environment and climate change, energy and infrastructure, equity and

empowerment. He also emphasized the crucial importance of financial sector in promoting export growth, enhancing agricultural exports, fostering industrial development, and advancing critical areas such as IT, services, mining, workforce export, the blue economy, and innovation.

In her remarks, Jane Marriott also congratulated Ahsan Iqbal and commended the efforts of his entire team for preparing 'Uraan Pakistan National Economic Transformation Plan' to address key economic challenges through the targeted framework of 5Es.

CDA Chairman orders water quality test at filtration plants

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, has directed quarterly water quality testing of filtration plants in the federal capital through third-party validation by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR).

While chairing a meeting on Saturday, CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa was informed that water quality at all filtration plants is being maintained in accordance with WHO standards.

The Director General (DG) Water briefed the authority chairman on the restoration of water filtration plants and the installation of sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Islamabad to address water contamination in Rawal Dam.

Randhawa directed the immediate repair and restoration of all water filtration plants in the capital. He also instructed that a comprehensive survey of all filtration plants be completed without delay.

To ensure swift action, the chairman ordered the Member Finance to release necessary funds for the restoration and maintenance of the filtration plants. He further proposed exploring the option of outsourcing their long-term upkeep. Emphasizing the

urgency of controlling Rawal Dam's water contamination, Randhawa called for the rapid installation of sewage treatment plants. Officials informed the meeting that three STPs are being installed at Bari Imam, Bani Gala, and Simly Dam Road.

The tenders for these plants have already been opened, and the installation process will begin soon after bid scrutiny. Additionally, the chairman directed all housing societies in Islamabad to install sewage treatment plants without delay. To enhance environmental sustainability, Randhawa also instructed officials to explore additional wetland options in the city.

IG demoted 2 officers on poor performance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, took action during crime meetings held across all zones of the federal capital on Saturday and ordered to demote two officers for poor performance and rewarded two others for their exemplary work.

A public relations officer told APP that the Station House Officer (SHO) of Sihala police station was demoted to Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) due to poor performance. Similarly, the Investigation In-Charge of Koral police station was

relieved of his duties and transferred to the police lines.

He said the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) of the Investigation Unit in Swan Zone has been asked to provide an explanation for weak performance, while the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) of Koral Zone has also been issued a notice regarding inadequate results.

In contrast, the SHO and Investigation In-Charge of Humak police station received commendation certificates and a cash reward of Rs. 100,000 each for their out-

standing work in combating crime and maintaining law and order in their jurisdiction.

IGP Rizvi emphasized the importance of serving the public with dedication, urging officers across the district to work with a spirit of community service to curb criminal activities.

"Officers demonstrating exceptional performance will be rewarded, while those failing to meet expectations will face disciplinary actions," IGP said, reinforcing his commitment to accountability and excellence within the Islamabad Police.



ISLAMABAD: An eye catching view of sunset with scattered clouds over Sirinagar Highway in the federal capital. —APP Photo

Salang Pass reopened

KABUL (Amu TV): The Salang Pass, a critical highway connecting northern Afghanistan to Kabul, has been reopened to small vehicles, the Taliban-led Ministry of Public Works announced. The pass was closed on Friday night due to heavy snowfall and poor visibility. Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas, spokesperson for the ministry, stated that a single lane has been cleared, allowing vehicles stranded since the closure to resume travel.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Rajab 19, 1446 — Sunday, January 19, 2025

2,800 fish farms operational

KABUL (Amu TV): More than 2,800 fish farms are operating across the country, with an annual production capacity of nearly 13,000 tons of fish meat. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, led by the Taliban, said the farms—2,870 in total—operate at small, medium, and large scales and are contributing to the country's agricultural sector. However, some fish farmers have voiced frustration over insufficient support and rising operational costs.

Afghanistan Central Bank to auction \$18m

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban-led Afghanistan Central Bank announced plans to auction \$18 million into the market. This move was stated in a statement released on Saturday.

According to the statement, the Central Bank will release the \$18 million for bidding on Sunday. The bank has invited private banks and financial companies to participate in the auction.

The auction aims to curb the rising value of the US dollar against the Afghanistan's currency.

This measure is part of the bank's efforts to stabilize the economy amid ongoing challenges.

In recent days, the value of the US dollar has increased significantly against the Afghanistan's currency. Currently, one US dollar is exchanged for 73.40 Afghanis in the local currency market.

This auction highlights the Central Bank's strategy to maintain currency stability by injecting liquidity into the market. Such measures are critical to balancing the exchange rate and preventing further devaluation of the Afghan currency.

tion of the Afghan currency.

While the auction may provide short-term relief, Afghanistan's economy faces deeper structural issues, including limited access to international financial systems and economic isolation under Taliban rule.

Comprehensive reforms and global engagement are necessary to ensure long-term stability.

Meanwhile, supporting local businesses and encouraging monetary transparency can help stabilize the currency and economy.

Poverty forces vendors to sell below cost in Uruzgan

URUZGAN (Amu TV): Shopkeepers and street vendors in Chora district, Uruzgan province, are struggling to make ends meet, often selling goods at prices far below their market value to support their families.

Muzaffar Ali, 63, who sells secondhand items in Chora's old market, says the dire economic situation has left him no choice but to accept significant losses. "We are a family of nine," he said. "I swear to God, we haven't had flour at home for three days. The people in this market are just like me—they have nothing."

Other vendors share similar stories of desperation. They come to the market each day hoping to earn enough for a meal but often return home empty-handed.

"We're forced to sell shoes for just 10 or 20 afghanis," said Mali Khan, another local vendor. "We have no bread at home, and we need to bring something back for our families at night." Chora, one of the largest districts in Uruzgan, is grappling with severe economic challenges, including widespread unemployment and a lack of sustainable income opportunities.

The pervasive poverty has drastically affected daily life, leaving families in a constant struggle to survive.

EU, UNHCR join forces for Afghan refugees



KABUL (TOLONews): The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the European Union have signed a new agreement to continue to support displaced Afghans and host communities in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and countries in Central Asia.

According to this agreement, with substantial EU funding of 36 million, hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) will benefit

from essential protection, livelihood opportunities, and other basic services.

Veronika Boskovic Pohar, chargée d'affaires of Delegation of the European Union to Afghanistan, said: "The EU will continue our strong support to Afghans on the move. This new contribution to UNHCR is part of a bigger EU effort in the area of migration."

According to the EU report, Afghans represent one of the world's largest refugee populations, with

2.6 million registered globally. Of these some 2.2 million are in Iran and Pakistan.

Additionally, some 3.2 million people remain internally displaced within Afghanistan and hundreds of thousands have returned from neighbouring countries since September 2023.

UNHCR's Representative in Afghanistan, Arafat Jamal, said: "This long-standing partnership with the European Union marks a significant step forward in

our efforts to support Afghan returnees and refugees in host countries."

Although war is no longer the main cause of displacement, international organizations and the United Nations speak of the existence of a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

The report states that child labor, related violence, and restrictions on women are among the important factors that have caused the migration of Afghan citizens.

Ahmad Shah's residence restoration nears end



K A N D A H A R (TOLONews): Local officials in Kandahar province announced that the restoration work on the historic residence of Ahmad Shah Baba, one of the country's most significant historical landmarks, has progressed 90% so far.

This residence, located in the heart of Kandahar city and built in the Bukhara architectural style, is several centuries old.

The restoration project for this historical site began 14 months ago, funded with 15 million afghani from the Ministry of Information and Culture's budget, and is now in its final stages.

"Ahmad Shah Baba's residence has been fundamentally restored with a budget of 15 million

afghani from the Islamic Emirate's funds, executed by the Ministry of Information and Culture. Currently, 90% of the restoration work is complete and will soon be ready for use," stated Latifullah Fidayi, the project engineer.

Abdul Salam Herawi, one of the project workers, said: "90% of the restoration work on Ahmad Shah Baba's house has been completed in its original and traditional style. I personally have 20 years of experience in restoring historical monuments."

Kandahar, one of Afghanistan's ancient provinces, is home to numerous historical landmarks. Residents of this province have urged the government to prioritize the restoration and preservation of other historical

sites in the area.

"Ghazi Ahmad Shah Baba was a very significant figure for the country. He was a great warrior, and his history and legacy must be given special attention, as these monuments serve as valuable historical documents," stated Mohibullah Agha, a resident of Kandahar.

"Ahmad Shah Baba's house is a historical site and should receive full attention because Ahmad Shah Baba was a great figure who made significant contributions to society," said Hesamuiddin, another resident.

"Other historical sites, such as the Shrine of the Sacred Cloak, Kokaran, the Charsoo Dome, and other historical landmarks, must also be restored, and the government should focus on them," said Abdul Qadir, a resident of Kandahar.

According to the Kandahar Directorate of Information and Culture, in less than three years, other historical sites, including the tomb of Zarghuna Ana, the mausoleum of Mirwais Khan Nika, and Ahmad Shahi Pool in Spin Boldak district, have also been restored by the caretaker government.

Avoid home remedies for children with pneumonia, doctor advised

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): A pediatric specialist in north Nimroz has described respiratory diseases, especially pneumonia, as dangerous and urges families to take their children to a health center immediately if such symptoms appear, instead of treating them with home remedies.

The doctor says although medicine has advanced and health centers have been established in various parts of the province, families still treat their sick children with herbal remedies and home-based methods, which can sometimes be dangerous for the patients.

Families who prefer home treatments

Ayesha, 35, a mother of five children living in Klokak area of Zaranj city, told the Pajhwok Afghan News: "There is no clinic in our village, the hospital is far away, and we cannot afford transportation, doctor's fee, and medicines.

When my children get pneumonia, I have no choice but to take them to the local herbalist, who gives them herbal infusions, rubs their bodies with Vicks several times, and massages them until they recover."

Meanwhile, Naz Bibi, another woman who also uses traditional medicine in addition to pharmaceutical treatments, said: "I took my six-month-old grandson, who had pneumonia, to a herbalist for treatment. He prepared herbal remedies, and my grandchildren recovered quickly. If I had taken him to a doctor, it would have cost at least one thousand afghanis and we don't have that much money."

Pediatric specialist: Home remedies can sometimes prove dangerous

Dr. Farhad Hamdard, a pediatric specialist in Nimroz province, told Pajhwok that despite advancements

in medicine, many people in villages and districts still relied on traditional medicines and herbal remedies instead of modern medical treatments. In traditional medicine, the cause of illness in children is not diagnosed, whereas in modern medicine, the type of pneumonia, the amount of phlegm, and the child's breathing are precisely examined, and appropriate medication is prescribed accordingly.

He emphasized that diagnosis plays a key role in treating any illness and no patient should be treated without a proper diagnosis.

He added, "If a correct diagnosis is made before the treatment stage, herbal remedies may have some benefits, but not as much as modern medical treatments." According to him, some respiratory diseases that are in the early stages and are mild can be treated

with herbal remedies, but treating pneumonia with herbal medicine is difficult.

He explained, "Mild cases of bronchial tightness can improve with herbal medicine, but pneumonia cannot be treated with herbal medicine. Some children have been brought to me who had simple pneumonia, but after being treated with herbal remedies, their condition worsened. Similarly, some children suffering from diarrhea have been taken to a home herbalist, and after receiving herbal medicine, their condition deteriorated."

He continued, "Some children from districts are brought to us with their chest rubbed with opium or Vicks. The scent and dry breath from Vicks may clear the nasal passage, but it does not play a role in treatment. In modern medicine, alongside prescribed medication, we recommend

putting Vicks in hot water for the child to inhale the steam. This is a form of prevention, not treatment."

A woman who gives traditional drugs to children

Fatima, a resident of Zaranj city, who treats dozens of sick children daily using traditional medicine, told Pajhwok that traditional medicine has been widely practiced among the people of Nimroz province for a long time.

She adds, "Most people, especially in winter when children get sick more often, come to me because they cannot afford medical treatments. Some people give me 50 afghanis, some 100 rupees, and some do not have money at all. Right now, I treat ten patients daily, and even adults with conditions like blocked veins, sore throats, or severe bronchial tightness come to me."

Jaghato residents urge faster completion of Dam

MAIDAN WARDAK (TOLONews): Residents of Jaghato district in Maidan Wardak province are urging authorities to expedite the construction of Gorbak Dam.

Drought and water scarcity have severely impacted agriculture in the area, causing many people to lose their livelihoods, residents say.

Jaghato, known as one of the fertile regions in Maidan Wardak, is facing a severe crisis due to limited water resources.

"It is highly likely that in one or two years, many people will be forced to migrate due to water shortages. Our drinking water is severely limited, and many are forced to bring water from distant areas. Those with more resources transport water between villages using cars or motorcycles," said Rahmandin, a resident of Jaghato.

"No one has built a dam for us, and no one has paid attention to our problems. Our area is completely mountainous, and we desperately need water. Our

orchards have dried up, wells are insufficient, and the rocky terrain adds to the challenges. All the people of Jaghato are in dire need of this dam," said Gul Agha, another resident.

According to some residents, surveys for the Gorbak Dam have been conducted multiple times, but no practical steps have been taken to build it.

"No one has implemented this project. We opened our homes for them, provided facilities, and even hired guards and cooks, but even during the Republic, this project was not completed. It is still pending. I personally submitted these documents to the district, the province, and the Ministry of Water and Energy," said Abdullah Jan, a resident of Jaghato.

"We urge the authorities to build this dam for us. This project has been under review for several years, teams have visited the area, and inspections have been carried out, but no action has been taken. If this dam is built, all our

problems will be solved. God willing. Wells, agriculture, and everything will improve," said Sayed Rahim, another resident.

Local officials in Maidan Wardak said that surveys for several dams, including the Gorbak Dam, have been completed and construction will begin soon.

Zabet Haris, the head of the governor's office in Maidan Wardak, stated: "Surveys for Gorbak Dam in Sayedabad, Gorbak Dam in Jaghato, Sanglakh Dam in Jalrez district, Saralom Dam in Behsud, and the Ab guzari dam in Chak district have been completed. Their operational plans have been prepared by local engineers. We hope that work on these projects will begin practically soon."

Jaghato is one of the remote districts of Maidan Wardak, where most residents are farmers. Their lives are directly dependent on agricultural production, and the lack of water has had a devastating impact on their livelihoods.

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce reports that over 42,200 kilograms of Afghan saffron, valued at \$29.588 million, were exported to various countries during the first nine months of 1403 (solar year).

Akundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson for the ministry, emphasized that most Afghan saffron exports were made to India, Spain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Australia, and Turkey.

"In the first nine months of (1403 solar year), Afghanistan exported 42,200 kilograms of saffron, worth approximately \$29.588 million, to countries including India, Spain,

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, France, Australia, Turkey, and others," the spokesperson said. Afghan saffron, recognized as one of the country's most valuable agricultural products, enjoys global acclaim.

However, exporters of this product report challenges, including a lack of standardized markets, restrictions on money transfers, and inactive air corridors.

Quadratullah Rehmati, deputy head of the Afghanistan Saffron Union, called for immediate action by the Islamic Emirate to address these issues, stating: "We urge the Islamic Emirate to take swift steps to resolve these challenges so that we can better and

more quickly offer saffron to global markets."

Somaya Siddiqi, another saffron exporter, highlighted the challenges, saying: "Our main issues include banking problems, limited air flights, and visa challenges, especially for countries like India, which is one of Afghanistan's key saffron buyers."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock has announced an increase in saffron production this year.

According to Misbahuddin Mustaeen, the ministry's spokesperson, approximately 40 metric tons of saffron were harvested from 9,500 hectares of land in 1403.



He added: "Saffron cultivation has expanded to 30 provinces, and this crop has been introduced as an alternative to poppy cultivation."

Saffron has been promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and

Livestock as a replacement for poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. According to some experts, if Afghan saffron farmers are supported, the country can generate significant revenue from selling saffron in global markets.

Use of plastic bags causes diseases, affects environment: Experts

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some doctors and environmental experts have urged families to use cloth and paper bags instead of plastic bags to prevent dangerous diseases and environmental pollution.

With the widespread use of plastic bags globally, environmental experts say that plastic, due to its long resistance to decomposition, is the worst and most dangerous waste for environmental pollution.

"Plastic remains in nature for hundreds of years and causes destruction of animals and plants," Najibullah Sadid, an

environmental expert, told Pajhwok Afghan News that plastic could remain in the soil for up to 450 years without decomposing and even when it decomposes, its residues still cause harm. He said plastic leads to destruction and drying of tree roots, the loss of crop yields, and the death of animals.

Sadid called on the interim government to increase the price of plastic bags to make them unaffordable, encouraging people to switch to cloth bags.

Sayed Mohammad Sulaimankhel, an environmental expert, said that

plastic can cause soil, water, and air pollution, leading to the destruction of ecosystems.

He urged the government to raise awareness about the harmful effects of plastic bags and to control plastic production and consumption.

He also suggested promoting the use of cloth and paper bags and converting it into a culture.

Plastic bags cause cancer, high blood pressure and maternal problems.

Doctors warn that using plastic bags to transfer hot food such as dry bread,

cooked meat, popcorn, soup, chips, and other hot foods leads to various diseases.

Dr. Mohammad Ibrahim Dalili, a specialist in internal medicine, told Pajhwok, "There are toxic substances in plastic that, when exposed to hot food such as bread, soup, chips, popcorn, and other hot foods, release harmful chemicals which transfer to the person consuming them.

As a result, these toxins can cause heart diseases, digestive system cancer, high blood pressure, and reproductive problems in

women."

Dalili urged families to avoid using plastic bags and instead use cloth and paper bags to prevent both dangerous diseases and environmental pollution.

He also called on the government to enforce regulations that would require people to use cloth and paper bags.

Some shopkeepers say plastic bags are commonly used due to their cheap price and widespread availability.

Qadir, a shopkeeper in Kabul, says he uses around 150 to 200 plastic bags

daily, as customers demand that even small items be packaged in plastic bags, leading to high consumption of plastic.

Mohammad Farid, a shopkeeper with over 30 years of experience, says he uses about 100 plastic bags a day and is forced to give plastic bags for everything he sells because there is no alternative, and people do not prefer cloth bags.

What should govt organs do to prevent use of plastic bags?

The National Environmental Protection Agency says that in recent years, it

has banned the import of plastic bags and licensed plastic manufacturers, requiring them to gradually reduce their production.

Eng. Toofan Jibrani, the head of pollution control at the National Environmental Protection Agency, added that the agency has also been educating the public at a smaller scale to promote environmental awareness and encourage citizens to limit their use of plastic bags.

On the other hand, Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of the Kabul Municipality, said that their

office runs monthly programs to raise awareness about the benefits of using cloth bags and making it a part of the city's culture.

The United Nations has previously stated that over 400 million tons of plastic are produced worldwide annually, half of which is designed for single-use only.

The United Nations added that after a single use, these plastics are either discarded or incinerated, polluting human health, biodiversity, and ecosystems from the highest mountains to the oceans.

Two Supreme Court judges shot dead in Tehran

TEHRAN (Reuters): Two Iranian Supreme Court judges were shot dead in Tehran on Saturday and another judge was wounded, the judiciary's Mizan news website reported.

It said the attacker killed himself after opening fire at the judges outside the Supreme Court. Iranian media said a bodyguard of one of judges was also wounded. The motive for the assassination was unclear. The judiciary identified the judges who were killed as ayatollahs Mohammad Moghiseh and Ali Razini, who worked on cases "fighting crimes against national security, espionage and terrorism".

The motive behind their killing was not immediately clear, but Mizan said the assailant was not involved in any cases before the Supreme Court, without providing further details on the attacker's identity. Authorities said an investigation into the incident was launched, Mizan added.

Razini, 71, held several important positions in Iran's judiciary and was previously targeted in a 1998 assassination attempt by assailants "who planted a magnetic bomb in his vehicle", according to Mizan. Though attacks targeting judges are rare, Iran has seen a number of shootings targeting high-profile

figures over the past years.

In October, a Muslim preacher was shot dead in the southern city of Kazeroun after leading Friday prayers. In April 2023, a powerful cleric identified as Abbas Ali Soleimani was also shot dead at a bank in the northern province of Mazandaran.

And in August 2005, renowned Iranian judge Hassan Moghaddas was murdered by two gunmen who climbed into his car in the middle of a busy business district in Tehran. Two men convicted over his killing were publicly executed by hanging two years later.

Pak Navy ship conducts joint sailing with Italian Navy Ship

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Sail Training Ship RAH NAWARD successfully conducted joint sailing operations with Italian Navy Sail Ship AMERIGO VESPUCCI in the Gulf of Oman. The exercise was part of RAH NAWARD's overseas deployment to Oman, aimed at fostering goodwill and providing practical training to cadets from Pakistan Naval Academy.

This collaborative exercise with Italian Navy Sail Ship AMERIGO VESPUCCI offered valuable opportunities for cadets to enhance their skills in joint sailing operations. While International Tall Ship Regattas are more common, such coordinated maneuvers between Tall Ships are rarely witnessed. The planning and execution of this exercise conducted while both ships were on their respective national tasking, exemplifies the high level of coordination and professionalism shared between the two navies.

The joint sailing operations not only provided a unique learning platform for cadets but also showcased the distinct sailing techniques of two iconic Tall Ships from different regions. This interaction underscores the enduring collaboration and growing interoperability between the Pakistan Navy and global naval forces.

Electricity provision to remote areas top priority

F.P. Report

DG KHAN: Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari reaffirmed Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) government's commitment to public welfare, saying provision of electricity to remote areas was top priority.

He made these remarks while addressing the residents of Sakhi Sarwar, a suburban area of Dera Ghazi Khan, during a visit. Accompanied by Punjab Assembly Member Sardar Awais Khan Leghari, senior PML-N leader Haji Malik Irshad Hussain, and other notables, the minister said the PML-N government was dedicated to improving the living standard of the common man through practical measures. "We are working tirelessly to steer the country out of economic challenges and provide an affordable electricity to all. Resolving public issues is our utmost priority," he added.

The minister inspected the cleanliness campaign under the Suthra Punjab initiative and expressed concern over inadequate sanitation condition in the area. He directed the local administration to address the issue immediately and ensure proper waste management.

At Sakhi Sarwar Civil Hospital, the federal minister interacted with patients, inquired about the medical services being provided, and expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of staff, essential facilities, and non-functional equipment. He sought a detailed report and called for immediate steps to address the shortcomings. "The number of doctors is alarmingly low. Increasing medical staff is essential to ensure quality healthcare for the people," he remarked.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy sail training ship Raj Naward conducting joint sailing operations with Italian Navy sail ship Amerigo Vespucci in Gulf of Oman.

PHC suspends IT allowance to Secretariat's employees

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhal suspended the payment of IT Professional Allowance to employees of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretariat and other departments, and has sought a response from the provincial government.

The petition filed by employees of the Peshawar High Court's IT section. The petitioners' counsel, Rooh ul Amin advocate argued that despite other departments' employees receiving IT Professional Allowance, the high court employees had been denied this allowance since 2021.

The counsel stated that the high court employees are entitled to receive the IT Professional Allowance, as they possess the required qualifications and experience in the field of information technology. However, the provincial government has withheld this allowance from them, citing that they receive other allowances.

The provincial government's stance is that high court employees receive various other allowances, including judicial allowances, making them ineligible for the IT Professional Allowance. However, the counsel pointed out that employ-

ees of other departments, including the secretariat, receive both the IT Professional Allowance and other allowances, highlighting discriminatory treatment against high court employees.

The counsel argued that the withholding of the IT Professional Allowance from high court employees is unjustified and discriminatory. He requested the court to direct the provincial government to release the allowance to the high court employees.

The finance secretary informed the court that a committee had been formed to resolve the issue of IT Professional Allowance for high court employees. However, the counsel questioned whether this committee was specific to high court employees or applied to other departments as well.

The court observed that if the finance department had withheld the allowance from high court employees citing their receipt of judicial and other allowances, the same logic should apply to employees of other departments receiving similar allowances.

The court ruled that the payment of IT Professional Allowance to employees of other departments, including the secretariat, should also be suspended until further review. The court directed the relevant authorities to submit their responses

regarding the matter.

Court seeks updated report on Regi Model Town affectees: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmad has sought a detailed report from Commissioner's Peshawar and the Secretary Local Government on the next hearing regarding the petition filed by the affectees of Regi Lalma Model Town.

The writ petition filed by Sirajul Haq Yousafzai and others while the counsel Ayaz Khan advocate appeared before the court. He informed the court that the affectees of Regi Lalma Model Town had been allotted plots, but they had not been handed over possession yet. He further informed the court that the court had previously issued decisions and even a jirga was held, but the possession was still not handed over.

The counsel requested the court to direct the authorities to hand over possession of the plots to the affectees immediately. During the hearing, it was also informed that a committee headed by the Commissioner's Peshawar had been constituted to look into the matter. PHC directed the Commissioner's Peshawar and the Secretary of Local Government to submit an updated report on the matter within 14 days.

South Korea's President attends court hearing on extending detention

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol attended a court hearing on Saturday to fight a request by investigators to extend his detention on accusations of insurrection.

Yoon on Wednesday became the country's first sitting president to be arrested, in a criminal probe related to his short-lived declaration of martial law on Dec. 3. Investigators requested a detention warrant on Friday to extend their custody of Yoon for up to 20 days. He has been refusing to talk to investigators and has been held in Seoul Detention Centre since his arrest.

After the hearing, Yoon returned to Seoul Detention Centre to await the court's decision, which is expected on Saturday or Sunday. The hearing at Seoul Western District Court

lasted nearly five hours. Yoon spoke for about 40 minutes during the hearing, Yonhap said, citing Yoon's lawyer.

"(Yoon) sincerely explained and answered questions on factual relationships, evidence and legal principles... We will quietly wait for the court to decide," said Yoon's lawyer, Yoon Kab-keun, after the hearing. Yoon had decided to attend the hearing "to restore his honour by directly explaining the legitimacy of emergency martial law and that insurrection is not established", his lawyer said earlier on Saturday.

TV channels showed a convoy of around a dozen cars and police motorbikes escorting Yoon from the detention centre to the court, as well as back to the detention centre. Since police broke up a crowd of Yoon's

supporters blocking the court gate in the morning, thousands of supporters surrounded the court after the hearing began at around 2 p.m. (0500 GMT) behind a police barricade chanting "release the president". "There are so many supporters of President Yoon Suk Yeol around the court, who still believe in the rule of law and are defending the president," said Lee Se-ban, a 30-year-old man.

Multiple people were arrested by police for trying to break into the court grounds, including a young man who tried to escape, according to a Reuters witness. Insurrection, the crime alleged against Yoon by the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials, is one of the few that an incumbent South Korean president does not have immunity from.

India police volunteer convicted of rape, murder of junior doctor in Kolkata

NEW DELHI (Reuters): An Indian police volunteer was convicted on Saturday of the rape and murder of a junior doctor at a hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata, in the speedy trial of a crime that sparked national outrage over a lack of safety for women.

The woman's body was found in a classroom at the state-run R G Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9. Other doctors stayed off work for weeks to demand justice for her and

better security at public hospitals. Defendant Sanjay Roy said in November he was "completely innocent" and was being framed.

Roy's lawyers could not immediately be reached for comment on the verdict. They had argued there were glaring discrepancies in the investigation and forensic examination reports. Judge Anirban Das said the sentence, to be announced on Monday, would range from life in prison to the death penalty.

The parents of the victim, who cannot be named under Indian law, expressed dissatisfaction with the probe, saying the crime could not have been committed by just one person. "Our daughter could not have met such a horrific end by a single man," her father said. "We will remain in pain and agony until all the culprits are punished." India's federal police, who investigated the case, described the crime as "rarest of rare" during the trial and sought the death penalty for Roy.

Defamation suit against Shaukat Yousafzai adjourned

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Sessions Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar Liaqat Ali has adjourned hearing of a defamation case filed against former provincial minister Shaukat Yousafzai.

The case was filed by Awami National Party (ANP) leader Asfandiyar Wali Khan, who alleged that Yousafzai had accused him of receiving dollars from the United States during a media talk. However, Shaukat Yousafzai claimed that the allegations were made in response to Asfandiyar Wali Khan's statement that "a deal is being made on the heads of Pashtuns."

During the hearing, Shaukat Yousafzai and his

lawyer, Mozzam Butt appeared before the court, while Asfandiyar Wali Khan's lawyer, Tariq Afghan was absent initially. However, Tariq Afghan later appeared and informed the court that they were ready to argue the case.

The former minister stated that he could not appear in court earlier as the verdict announced after 9th May 2023 vandalism and that his opponents were making excuses for not appearing in court.

ANP's Asfandiyar Wali Khan had filed a defamation case against Shaukat Yousafzai, alleging that he had leveled baseless allegations against him. Shaukat Yousafzai claimed that the allegations were made in

response to Asfandiyar Wali Khan's statement.

In a press talk, the former minister stated that the decision of the court would be respected, but he also criticized the government's policies. He claimed that the government was not paying attention to the real issues facing the country and was instead focusing on political revenge.

Yousafzai also criticized the government's handling of the economy and claimed that the recent increase in petroleum prices was a result of the government's failed policies. He stated that the government was not providing any relief to the people and was instead increasing the prices of essential commodities.

‘Talks can’t run through multiple doors at once’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government's spokesperson for the negotiation committee, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, has disapproved of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) meeting with the top military leadership amid a dialogue process with it, saying that the negotiations cannot be conducted simultaneously through multiple channels.

"There is no point in peeking through small doors and windows now. If the door they had been striving to open for a year is now open, then they should abandon these minor efforts," the senator said on Saturday, while referring to a recent meeting between PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Chief

of Army Staff General Asim Munir.

Siddiqui revealed that he was aware of the details and conversations held during the meeting. He said that Gohar had expressed optimism over the direct dialogue initiated at the highest military level, describing it as a "positive development". "Barrister Gohar reportedly stated that both backdoor and front-door processes for negotiations will continue. However, negotiations cannot be conducted simultaneously through multiple channels," he added.

Senator Siddiqui also noted that PTI founder Imran Khan and Aleema Khan had both welcomed the party chairman's meeting with the army chief. It may be noted that the for-

mer ruling party is currently in talks with the federal government on its demands, which include the release of its founder, Imran, and other PTI leaders and supporters in jail.

The party finally presented its demands to the government's negotiation committee in writing, seeking probes into the May 9, 2023, and November 26, 2024 events, as well as the release of "political prisoners", in a third round of parleys held on on January 16. Later that day, Gohar revealed that he and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur had recently held a meeting with COAS Munir in Peshawar, where they presented all matters and demands of the party directly to the army chief.

Remand of Police Lines’ blast facilitators approved

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A special Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) on Saturday approved 15 days physical remand of the facilitators of the Peshawar Police Lines bombing and handed them over to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD).

The CTD had requested a 30-day remand from the court of facilitators of the one of the deadliest blast in

Peshawar.

According to details the facilitators involved in the bombing were presented before the Anti-Terrorism Court in Peshawar. During the proceedings, the investigating officer informed the court that the accused, Inayat-ur-Rehman, Abdul Sabir, and Usman Khan, were charged with facilitating the Police Lines bombing.

The accused are residents of various areas of

Peshawar.

The investigation officer argued that further interrogation was necessary to uncover additional information about their accomplices and the case. Therefore, the court was requested to approve a 30-day physical remand. Subsequently, the Anti-Terrorism Court granted a 15-day physical remand and handed over the three facilitators to the CTD.

How Trump aims to dismantle the ‘deep state’ and assert control

WASHINGTON (Reuters): President-elect Donald Trump is poised to seize greater control of the federal government than any modern president before him when he takes office on Monday, charging ahead with plans to dismantle what he and his allies call the "deep state," according to two sources familiar with transition discussions.

The effort could get underway as early as Trump's first day as president, according to one of the sources, with an executive order aimed at stripping job protections from an estimated 50,000 career federal employees, allowing their replacement by handpicked loyalist appointees. The Trump administration will also push to fill the thousands of political appointments across government as soon as possible, another source told Reuters.

The goal is to inject political loyalists deep into the workings of government, perhaps more so than any other recent president. In a harbinger of what may lie ahead, Trump's team has requested the resignation of three senior career diplomats who oversee the US State Department's workforce

and internal coordination, Reuters reported this week. Trump allies blame bureaucrats they deem disloyal for thwarting his agenda during his first term in the White House by slow-walking initiatives in the Justice Department, the Department of Education and other agencies.

Nearly a dozen of Trump's top appointees for his second term have been given an explicit mandate to shake up the federal workforce or expressed support for those plans, according to personnel announcements and media interviews reviewed by Reuters.

Russell Vought, nominated by Trump to return as director of the Office of Management and Budget, played a central role in crafting an earlier version of the reclassification order, known as Schedule F, as Trump was leaving office in 2020. The revived executive order on Schedule F would allow agency officials to reclassify positions from career posts to political appointments, one of the sources familiar with transition planning said.

That would enable the agencies to fire career employees without cause

and replace them. Vought will be aided during Trump's second term by Sergio Gor, who was nominated to head the White House personnel office. Others tasked with eradicating the "deep state" include Attorney General nominee Pam Bondi, the possible next FBI director, Kash Patel, Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio, national security adviser, Mike Waltz, education nominee Linda McMahon, and Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, who will head up Trump's government efficiency effort, the Reuters review found.

When asked, Trump's transition team would not provide details on a timeline for the planned shakeup, which could take months due to federal rule-making procedures. "The Trump Administration will have a place for people serving in government who are committed to defending the rights of the American people, putting America first, and ensuring the best use of working men and women's tax dollars," said spokesperson Brian Hughes.

Critics and the unions that represent federal workers say there is no such thing as a "deep state," and that

Trump and his allies are trafficking in a conspiracy theory to justify an executive-branch power grab. James Eisenmann, a lawyer and expert on federal workforce policy, said in an interview that Trump is mistaken that most government employees harbor an ideological agenda and noted that under current law, underperforming or insubordinate workers can be fired.

Schedule F, he said, would create a culture of silence and fear that could affect job performance. "People are going to be afraid to speak up or even suggest something helpful out of fear of getting fired," Eisenmann said. "When people are afraid, it's not easy to get them to do stuff." Steve Lenkart, executive director of the National Federation of Federal Workers, said in an interview that the new classification was aimed at creating "a secret police" within the federal government.

"The incoming administration admits they will use Schedule F to subject professional employees to professional or to political loyalty tests and will get rid of the undesirables," he said. Hughes, the Trump

transition spokesperson, did not respond to questions about what role individual nominees would play in carrying out Trump's agenda, or to the "secret police" allegation.

During Senate confirmation hearings on Wednesday, Vought and Bondi expressed support for the policies behind Schedule F. Vought testified that he believes portions of the federal government have been "weaponized." He declined to answer questions about whether he had advised Trump to conduct mass firings, but said reclassifying career employees would ensure the president has individuals in a policy-making role "who are responding to his views, his agenda."

Bondi, during her hearing, said Special Counsel Jack Smith's probe of Trump was evidence of partisanship within the Justice Department. She vowed not to use the department to target people based on their politics, but dodged direct questions about investigating Trump's political adversaries. The Biden Justice Department has long denied that it pursued criminal cases against Trump for political reasons. It did not

respond to a request for comment on Friday.

The process of identifying members of the federal bureaucracy whose views could be at odds with the incoming administration has already begun. In December, the American Accountability Foundation, which operates with support from the conservative Heritage Foundation, sent a letter to Pentagon nominee Pete Hegseth naming 20 leaders across the US military whom it deemed to be overly focused on diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Outgoing Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has defended such efforts, saying the diverse military reflects the diversity of the United States. The Pentagon referred a request for comment to the Trump transition team. The American Accountability Foundation also published a "Top 10 Targets" list on its website of career employees at the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department it claims are resistant to increased border-security efforts. There are more names to come, said Yitz Friedman, a spokesperson for the group.