

PM felicitates cricket team

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has congratulated Pakistan Men's cricket team on remarkable win against West Indies in the first test of the two-test match rubber at Multan Cricket stadium, Multan. The Men in Green beat the Windies by 127 runs in three days of the first test match and gained an unassailable 1-0 lead in the test series.



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GAZA: Displaced Palestinians leave parts of Khan Younis as they go back to their homes in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, Sunday.

Hamas gives first hostages to Red Cross
 Ceasefire brings hope in Gaza

GAZA/CAIRO/JERUSAL EM (Reuters): Palestinians poured into the streets to celebrate and return to the rubble of their bombed-out homes on Sunday, and Hamas handed over the first three hostages to the Red Cross under a ceasefire deal that halted fighting in Gaza after a delayed start.

Live television pictures showed three female hostages exiting a vehicle surrounded by armed Hamas men. The hostages got into vehicles of the International Committee of the Red Cross as the crowd of fighters chanted the name of the armed wing of Hamas.

An Israeli official told Reuters the Red Cross said the women were in good health. Earlier, Hamas had identified the first three Israeli hostages who would go free as Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher and Emily Damari.

In the Israeli occupied West Bank, buses were awaiting the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli detention. Hamas said the first group to be freed in exchange for the hostages includes 69 women and 21 teenage boys. The first phase of the truce in the 15-month-old war between Israel and Hamas took effect following a three-hour delay during which Israeli forces pounded the Gaza Strip, killing 13 people, according to Palestinian health authorities.

The truce calls for fighting to stop, aid to be sent in to Gaza and 33 of the 98 Israeli and foreign hostages still held there to go free over the six-week first phase in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

When the shooting stopped, Palestinians burst into the streets, some in celebration, others to visit the graves of relatives.

"I feel like at last I found

some water to drink after getting lost in the desert for 15 months. I feel alive again," Aya, a displaced woman from Gaza City who has been sheltering in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip for over a year, told Reuters via a chat app.

In the north of the territory, where some of the most intense Israeli airstrikes and battles with the militants took place, people picked their way on narrow roads through a devastated landscape of rubble and twisted metal.

Armed Hamas fighters drove through the southern city of Khan Younis with crowds cheering and chanting. Hamas policemen, dressed in blue police uniform, deployed in some areas after months of trying to keep out of sight to avoid Israeli strikes.

People who had gathered to cheer the fighters chanted "Greetings to Al-Qassam Brigades" - the armed wing of Hamas.

"All the resistance factions are staying in spite of (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu," one fighter told Reuters. "This is a ceasefire, a full and comprehensive one God willing, and there will be no return to war in spite of him."

The ceasefire agreement follows months of on-off negotiations brokered by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, and comes into effect on the eve of the inauguration of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who had said there would be "hell to pay" unless hostages were freed before he took office.

Once the first three hostages are returned on Sunday, Israel is expected to release the first Palestinian detainees under the deal. According to Hamas, the 90 Palestinians to go free on Sunday include 69 women and 21 teenage boys.

There is no detailed plan in place to govern Gaza after the war, much less rebuild it. Any return of Hamas to control in Gaza will test the commitment to the truce of Israel, which has said it will resume the war unless the militant group which has run the enclave since 2007 is fully dismantled.

Hardline National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir quit the cabinet on Sunday over the ceasefire, though his party said it would not try to bring down Netanyahu's government. The other most prominent hardliner, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, remained in the government for now but said he would quit if the war ends without Hamas completely destroyed.

Trump's national security adviser-designate, Mike Waltz, said that if Hamas reneges on the agreement, the United States will support Israel "in doing what it has to do."

"Hamas will never govern Gaza. That is completely unacceptable."

The streets in shattered Gaza City in the north of the territory were already busy with groups of people waving the Palestinian flag and filming the scenes on their mobile phones. Several carts loaded with household possessions travelled down a thoroughfare scattered with rubble and debris.

Gaza City resident Ahmed Abu Ayham, 40, sheltering with his family in Khan Younis, said the scene of destruction in his home city was "dreadful", adding that while the ceasefire may have spared lives it was no time for celebrations.

"We are in pain, deep pain and it is time that we hug one another and cry."

Long lines of trucks carrying fuel and aid supplies queued up at border crossings in the hours before the ceasefire was due to take effect.

Deaths in Colombia rebel violence double to 60

BOGOTA (Reuters): The death toll from rebel-related violence in a key drug trafficking region of Colombia has doubled to 60, the government's human rights ombudsman said on Saturday.

The ombudsman's office posted on social media that about 60 people have died violently, 32 were kidnapped and hundreds were displaced due to conflict in recent days between the leftist National Liberation Army (ELN) and the now-demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

President Gustavo Petro last week accused the ELN of committing a war crime in the attacks, and suspended peace talks with the group.

The ELN, in a statement on Saturday, accused a faction of the FARC of having initiated the conflict by killing civilians and committing other aggressions.

The FARC faction did not publicly respond to the allegation. On Friday it said it had begun withdrawing its units to prevent the violence from escalating.

The Catatumbo region is considered strategic for drug trafficking because of its proximity to Venezuela, from where illegal armed groups export cocaine, security sources have said.

Petro's government since 2022 has pursued peace negotiations with leftist guerrillas and criminal gangs founded by former right-wing paramilitaries, in a bid to end Colombia's internal conflict.

Six decades of fighting in the Andean country has killed at least 450,000 people.

The ombudsman's office warned that many social leaders and their families are at risk of being kidnapped or killed for opposing the ELN.

The
 Frontier Post

86 killed in Nigeria

LAGOS (AFP): The death toll from the explosion of a petrol tanker truck in Nigeria that killed people rushing to gather fuel has risen to 86, emergency services said Sunday. "The final death toll from the tanker explosion is 86," said Ibrahim Audu Hussein, spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency in Niger state. The truck carrying 60,000 litres of gasoline exploded after flipping over on a road.

Five khwarij killed
 Security forces foil infiltration attempt on Pak-Afghan border

E.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces killed five khwarij terrorist while successfully thwarted infiltration attempt by a group of khwarij on Saturday night in general area Sambaza, Zhob district.

"On night 18/19 January, movement of a group of khwarij, who were trying to infiltrate through Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was picked up by the security forces in general area Sambaza, Zhob District. Own troops effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate. Resultantly, five Khwarij were sent to hell," said a news release issued by Inter Public Relations

(ISPR).

"Pakistan has consistently been asking Interim Afghan Government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border. Interim Afghan Government is expected to fulfill its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by Khwarij for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan," it further said.

Security Forces of Pakistan remain committed to secure its borders & eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country. PM Shehbaz Sharif highly appreciates security forces for killing five Khawarij terrorists

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday highly

appreciated security forces for carrying out successful action against 'Fitna-al-Khawarij' terrorists in district Zhob at Pak-Afghan Border. The premier paid tribute to the security forces for killing five 'Khwarij' terrorists. Terrorists were trying to enter Pakistan from across the border.

Brave forces of Pakistan were standing like a rock to protect borders, Shehbaz Sharif said and added that entire nation was also standing with the security forces in war against terrorism.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said: "We are fully determined to root out all types of terrorism from the country."

President lauds securi-

ty forces for stopping intrusion at Pak-Afghan border

President Asif Ali Zardari Sunday lauded the security forces for stopping intrusion at Pak-Afghan border in district Zhob.

The President appreciated the security forces for their timely action against the terrorists of Fitna al-Khawarij.

He commended the security forces for eliminating five Khawarij during the operation.

He said the brave security forces of Pakistan were always ready to protect borders of the country.

He reiterated the determination to completely eradicate terrorism and defend borders of the country.

World has seen corrupt face of PTI: Attaullah Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture Attaullah Tarar has said that the entire world has seen the corrupt face of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

He remarked that the judicial verdict has confirmed allegations of corruption against the PTI founder, claiming it as the largest financial scandal in Pakistan's history involving £190 million.

Speaking at the inauguration of developmental projects in Union Council 238, NA-127, Lahore, Tarar said that economic development and public relief remain the government's top priorities. Member of Provincial Assembly Mian Imran Javed, Chairman Ghulam Nabi Toor, Vice Chairman Haji Aslam

Bhatti, and other party workers were present.

Attaullah Tarar asserted that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is a people-centric party dedicated to resolving public issues. "We are tirelessly working to fulfill our election promises," he said. Highlighting the government's efforts, he noted that inflation, which was at 38 per cent last year, has decreased to 3.9 per cent, and foreign investment is steadily increasing.

Referring to the £190 million corruption scandal, he criticised the PTI leadership for approving significant financial misappropriations behind closed doors. "They manipulated funds meant for the state, used religion as a cover, and indulged in personal luxuries, including acquiring expensive properties and

jewellery," he said. He challenged PTI's legal team to refute the allegations and questioned the credibility of the religious education initiatives at the Al-Qadir Trust.

The minister highlighted the global recognition of the PTI founder's corruption. "International media headlines have exposed the former prime minister's fraudulent activities," he stated, adding that the nation must now decide which political party genuinely prioritizes the country's welfare.

He highlighted the positive economic trajectory under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif, and Maryam Nawaz. "The day the PTI chairman was convicted, the stock market soared by 1,000 points, reflecting the business community's confidence in the judicial decision," he added.

Attallah Tarar credited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for steering the country away from default and creating a conducive environment for foreign investment.

The minister assured the residents of his constituency that their pressing concerns, including the persistent gas shortage, would be resolved on a priority basis. He highlighted ongoing efforts to improve infrastructure and public services, emphasizing that development projects would bring long-term benefits to the area. Expressing heartfelt gratitude for the warm reception by local leaders and community members, he reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to transforming the constituency into a model area.

Strict action against miscreants in Kurram decided

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The spokesperson of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, including with senior officials including the Chief Secretary, IGP, and other civil and police officers, convened a high-level meeting to address the ongoing situation in Kurram.

A unanimous decision was made to take stern action against miscreants without any discrimination, according to a government spokesperson. The spokesperson emphasized that the state stands with peace-loving citizens and vowed to bring oppressive elements to justice. "Action against

the miscreants in the affected areas has become inevitable," the spokesperson stated, adding that the peace agreement will be implemented in accordance with the law and Pashtun traditions. In this context, security forces will support police and civil administration in operations against disruptive elements.

The government also expressed concerns that a few miscreants might have infiltrated among the peace-seeking populace. To safeguard peaceful residents, efforts will be made to separate them from disruptive elements before initiating operations. To ensure the well-

being of the displaced, alternative housing arrangements have been provided for the affected residents.

The government has urged both parties involved in the conflict to assist law enforcement agencies by identifying the miscreants in their midst. Over the past three months, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has been striving to restore peace in Kurram through non-violent means.

A peace agreement was brokered through a grand jirga in line with Pashtun traditions. However, certain hostile elements attempted to sabotage the agreement, including launching an attack on the

Deputy Commissioner, leaving him seriously injured.

The spokesperson revealed that these miscreants have also targeted security personnel and relief convoys. Despite such challenges, the government remains committed to eliminating disruptive elements and restoring peace to the region.

The public has been urged to cooperate fully with security forces operating in the affected areas. The spokesperson reiterated the government's dedication to upholding the peace agreement and ensuring the safety of Kurram's residents, who continue to respect and adhere to the agreement.

21 Pakistani nationals rescued off Moroccan coast: FO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Based on verified information, twenty-one Pakistani nationals have been identified among the survivors of a maritime incident near Dakhla, Morocco.

"Through our diplomatic mission in Rabat, immediate assistance has been mobilized for the affected nationals.

The Embassy has arranged essential provisions including food, water, medicine, and clothing. Local authorities in Dakhla are providing shelter and medical care in response to our diplomatic outreach," Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release on Sunday.

Embassy's consular team was currently present in Dakhla to oversee relief operations and coordinate with local authorities.

The government remained in close coordination with relevant authorities in Morocco to ensure comprehensive support for

the affected citizens and finalise repatriation procedures, the spokesperson said, adding "We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of overseas Pakistanis and will continue to monitor the situation closely."

Names of the survivors are listed below.

1. Muddassir Hussain (CNIC: 34202-6131193-3, DOB: 5/3/1993, Passport: ZV6891933)

2. Waseem Khalid (CNIC: 34403-4305069-9, DOB: 15/8/1988, Passport: WQ4110695)

3. Muhammad Khaliq (CNIC: 34603-2353241-1, DOB: 18/1/1980, Passport: HF4102415)

4. Abdul Ghaffar (CNIC: 33203-6590419-1, DOB: 12/12/2000, Passport: CE4184192)

5. Gul Shameer (CNIC: 35404-5022277-3, DOB: 14/9/2003, Passport: UR5152771)

6. Tanveer Ahmed (CNIC: 37302-7926447-9,

DOB: 30/10/1992, Passport: WE1164473)

7. Syed Muhammad Abbas Kazmi (CNIC: 34603-1372157-1, DOB: 24/5/1998, Passport: CR4851572)

8. Ghulam Mustafa (CNIC: 34202-2841954-9, DOB: 26/6/2004, Passport: FE0879541)

9. Syed Badar Mohy ud din (CNIC: 34403-4975003-7, DOB: 25/4/1989, Passport: AG0190032)

10. Imran Iqbal (CNIC: 34202-0847176-5, DOB: 20/2/1990, Passport: GF1331762)

11. Shoaib Zafar (CNIC: 34402-3696128-9, DOB: 30/6/1989, Passport: BP5521285)

12. Ali Hassan (CNIC: 34402-0896750-1, DOB: 15/6/2001, Passport: MT6807502)

13. Syed Mehtab Ul Hassan (CNIC: 34202-6549895-1, DOB: 29/1/2005, Passport: UE6808951)

14. Uzair Basharat (CNIC: 34202-3872445-7, DOB: 27/2/1997, Passport: DP3844452)

15. Mohammad Asif (CNIC: 34301-1767148-7, DOB: 3/6/1975, Passport: DC1881482)

16. Mujahid Ali (CNIC: 35404-4511945-7, DOB: 11/2/1993, Passport: VM1809453)

17. Amir Ali (CNIC: 34101-4462488-1, DOB: 16/7/2003, Passport: ZK1824881)

18. Mohammad Umar Farooqie (CNIC: 34503-0382485-5, DOB: 16/4/2004, Passport: KC8964851)

19. Bilawal Iqbal (CNIC: 37405-7075359-7, DOB: 1/12/1998, Passport: XE1333591)

20. Arsalan (CNIC: 34601-5160483-1, DOB: 5/10/2002, Passport: JX1914831)

21. Irfan Ahmad (CNIC: 34601-5525085-5, DOB: 13/4/1984, Passport: KJ1150853)



NEW YORK: Ducks swim on the Hudson River near Weehawken, New Jersey, past the New York City skyline. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy declared a state of emergency as a winter storm is expected to hit the area.



KARACHI: Activists of National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) hold a protest in favor of their demands outside Karachi Press Club. —INP Photo

Iranian CG hosts lunch in honour of Sindh Assembly

KARACHI (APP): The Consul General of Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Nourian hosted a luncheon in honour of Speaker Sindh Assembly Syed Awais Qadir Shah at the Consulate General of Iran in Karachi.

The occasion was graced by a four-member delegation from the Iranian Parliament's Cultural Commission, who are on an official visit to Karachi. Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah was accompanied by Deputy Speaker Anthony Naveed, Member National Assembly, Mirza

Ikhtiyar Baig and General Secretary PPP Sindh Waqar Mehdi. During the gathering, discussions centered on the mutual cooperation and strengthening of relations between Iran and Pakistan. Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah emphasized the enduring friendship shared by the two neighboring nations.

"Iran and Pakistan share a strong and friendly relationship as neighbors. It is essential for both countries to maintain and enhance these ties for mutual progress, peace,

security, and stability," Shah added.

The discourse also focused into the challenges facing the global Muslim fraternity and the shared responsibilities of both nations in working towards sustainable solutions for unity and security.

Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah extended his gratitude to Consul General Hassan Nourian for the gracious invitation and the warm hospitality.

Consul General thanked the Speaker Provincial Assembly and the delega-

tion for their time and also presented a shield to the Speaker.

The Speaker also invited the Consul General and Iranian delegation to visit the historic Sindh Assembly and attend a session of the provincial legislature, further strengthening bilateral ties and cultural understanding.

This meeting marked a reaffirmation of the enduring partnership between Iran and Pakistan, reflecting a shared commitment to regional cooperation and unity.

Food exporters calls on Governor

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of food exporters from South Punjab met Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at the Governor House, here on Sunday. The delegation, led by Shahid Imran, convener of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (FPCCI) regional committee on food, highlighted the critical role South Punjab's industrialists were playing in enhancing the country's food exports.

He briefed the governor on how the region's exporters were successfully competing in global markets, contributing significantly to Pakistan's economic growth. He emphasized the need for government support in addressing challenges such as energy shortages, outdated infrastructure, and logistical inefficiencies that hinder the export potential of the region.

Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan appreciated the efforts of South Punjab's food exporters and assured them of the government's commitment to fostering a favorable environment for business growth. He acknowledged the region's immense potential in agriculture and food processing, stressing the importance of expanding market access and introducing policies to incentivize exports. The Governor also highlighted upcoming government initiatives aimed at modernizing infrastructure.

Shahrah-e Bhutto playing role in public convenience

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Government Spokesperson Sumeeta Afzal Syed has said that of Karachi and more than 20 thousand vehicles have traveled on Shahrah-e Bhutto in just a few days of its inauguration.

In a statement, she said that the Sindh government is determined to complete the second section of



Shahrah-i Bhutto up to

Quaidabad by March 31. Passengers of Quaid abad, gulshan e hadid, steel town, Thata and Badin will get more convenience from second phase of Shahra e Bhutto.

Sumita Afzal further said that Shahra e Bhutto is an important step towards the fulfillment of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's manifesto for the development of Karachi.

Recruitment process of constables underway

LAHORE (APP): The process of receiving application forms for recruitment to posts of Constable/Women Constable in Lahore Police is underway.

The last date for submitting forms for recruitment of Constables in Lahore Police is January 25, while the last date for submitting forms for Grade-IV posts in Punjab Police is January 20.

Those interested in recruitment can download the recruitment form from the Punjab Police website. SP Headquarters, Ahmed

Zunair Cheema in this connection told APP that candidates could submit forms in District Police Lines Lahore by the due date.

Meanwhile, he said that

14 teams consisting of 78 officers are on duty to submit the forms for the posts of Constables.

The age of the candidate for recruitment of Constable/Women Constable in Lahore Police has been set at 18 to 22 years.

For the recruitment of constables, 50 percent marks in the candidate's matriculation examination have been made mandatory.

The SP Headquarters advised the candidates that to avoid counterfeiters and fraud, visit the information desk at the Police Lines.

Furthermore, a summary by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Usman Anwar has been sent to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for raising

a new 'riot management police' (RMP), consisting of 5,000 personnel to handle mobs.

The summary, moved by Inspector General of Police has been given the green light by the chief minister after the IGP's briefing to the CM on the significance of the force. It is worth mentioning here that the RMP will be headed by a police officer not below the rank of DIG and assisted by a superintendent of police (SP).

It will have eight regional offices, each headed by a regional SP. The RMP would be made operational in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Multan and Sargodha, and its scope would be extended to other major districts at a later stage.

Punjab cities engulfed by fog, motorways closed

LAHORE (APP): Fog continues to rein in various cities of Punjab, while motorways have been closed at several places due to low visibility.

A Motorway police spokesperson told APP that Motorway M-2 from Lahore to Kot Momin is closed, while M-3 from Lahore to Multan is also closed.

He said that traffic entry was prohibited on M-4 from Pindi Bhattian to Multan, entry on Motorway M-5 from Multan to Uch Sharif was closed, Lahore-Sialkot Motorway M-11 was also closed due to fog, and traffic flow was affected on national highways due to low visibility.

Spokesman said that drivers should use front and rear fog lights in their vehicles so that other vehicles could be seen better. Citizens have also been instructed to avoid unnecessary travel.

Meanwhile, in a travel advisory, the Motorway Police urged road users to obtain the latest information from the National Highways and Motorway Police official social media accounts before travelling on motorways across Pakistan.

PHC seals 23 labs, 550 illegal clinics in crackdown

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) has sealed 23 laboratories and diagnostic centres along with 550 illegal treatment facilities over the past four weeks, aimed at improving healthcare services and enforcing regulatory standards.

PHC spokesperson said on Sunday that enforcement teams conducted targeted raids across multiple cities in Punjab, inspecting laboratories and diagnostic centres. Among these, 23 were found operating in violation of PHC regulations and were sealed.

In Lahore alone, 10 labs, including prominent facilities such as Hassan Colour Doppler and Ultrasound Centre, Fuji Friends Clinical Laboratory, Aman Lab and Digital X-ray Centre, and Hameed Latif Laboratory, were shut down. Additionally, Doctor's Lab on Jail Road had its services suspended after inspectors found expired reagents.

On a broader scale, PHC teams inspected 1,937 treatment centres across 24 districts, sealing 550 illegal facilities. In Lahore, 317 outlets were closed, while other significant actions included shutting down 70 facilities in Faisalabad, 27 each in Rawalpindi and Multan, and 14 in Sargodha. The PHC also reported that 419 illegal centres had already ceased operations, while 845 others have been placed under surveillance for further monitoring.

The PHC spokesperson reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to eradicating quackery and ensuring safe medical practices in Punjab. To date, the PHC has raided over 207,000 treatment centres, sealing 56,841 illegal facilities and eliminating quackery from more than 42,396 centres.

The Commission emphasized its ongoing efforts to protect public health by upholding healthcare standards and combating unauthorized medical practices.

Hazrat Wasif Ali Wasif urs from Jan 23

LAHORE (APP): The three-day 33rd annual Urs celebrations of renowned spiritual scholar Hazrat Wasif Ali Wasif will start from January 23.

The Urs will commence with the ceremonial laying of Chaddar after Asr prayer. Former provincial minister Sardar Nasrullah Khan Dreshak and Diwan Azmat Mahmood, along with devotees, will perform the ritual. This will be followed by a session of Na'at recitation.

On Jan 24, a seminar focusing on the personality and teachings of Hazrat Wasif Ali Wasif will be held at Alhamra. Professor Hasan Askari Kazmi will preside over the seminar. Later in the evening, a Mehfil-e-Sama will be held. On the third day, the Urs will conclude with a special prayer.

CM orders completion of roads, health centers by June 30

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the authorities to complete the construction and rehabilitation of roads and health centers across Punjab by June 30, 2025.

Presiding over a special review meeting on the ongoing development projects of roads and health centers across Punjab, here on Sunday, she emphasized the significance of timely project completion, saying, "Millions of citizens will benefit from the rehabilitation, construction, and repair of roads across Punjab."

The CM stressed the importance of Phase-I of health center construction and rehabilitation, stating, "I will personally inspect and inaugurate the newly constructed Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural

Health Centers (RHCs) in the Province."

She instructed the Planning and Development Department to devise measures for generating additional resources to support these initiatives.

During the meeting, Provincial Secretary Communications & Works Sohail Ashraf presented a detailed briefing on the progress of ongoing projects. He revealed that out of 462 approved projects under the Road Rehabilitation Program, work has started on 455, with over 25 percent completed. Of the 72 schemes under Phase-II, work has begun on 67, with more than 24 percent progress made.

For health centers, 75 percent of the work on 1,236 basic health units across Punjab is complete,

while 54 health centers in various districts have been fully rehabilitated. Construction and rehabilitation of 1,164 health centers are advancing, with 1,211 plastered, 1,143 floored, and 1,004 nearing final stages.

CM Maryam Nawaz stated the construction of farm-to-market roads would boost economic activity and improve rural connectivity. She also noted that the new Maryam Nawaz Health Clinics would bring top-tier health facilities to residents of remote areas, offering them the standards of private urban clinics for the first time.

The chief minister reaffirmed her commitment to enhancing the province's infrastructure and health services, ensuring tangible benefits for citizens in both urban and rural areas.

Mashood says youth brain behind govt initiatives



F.P. Report

KARACHI: "Pakistani Youth are the brains behind whatever initiatives the government needs to take for positive image building and prosperity of Pakistan," Rana Mashood Ahmed Khan, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme, said.

He expressed these remarks while addressing a press conference to youth organizations, Entrepreneurs & National Youth Council Sindh Members and Sportsman at Karachi Sunday. He further said that we would be looking for-

ward to welcoming the youth that were selected purely on merit under the Prime Minister Youth Programme on the vision of Prime Minister.

Quoting the 5th generation war, Mr. Mashood said that the role of media was pivotal to counter the negativity and propaganda that was spread deliberately by some anti state elements. The improving economic indicators and ratings of international agencies for Pakistan show the commitment of the government under the vision of Prime Minister, he further added.

Rana Mashood Ahmed

Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister Youth Programme, was accompanied by Nihal Hashmi, Ex-Senator and Fahad Shafiq, Coordinator Sindh Youth Programme.

Expressing satisfaction over the performance of the government, Rana Mashood apprised that it was a proud moment for Pakistan not only to get Secretariatship in commonwealth but also would host delegation of commonwealth at Islamabad. The doors of Pakistan would be opened to all commonwealth countries in every sector, he further said.

Justice Athar for acknowledging intrinsic value of animal rights

LAHORE (APP): Supreme Court Judge Justice Athar Minallah underscored the importance of recognizing animal rights as an acknowledgment of their intrinsic value.

Speaking at the Pakistan's first International Animal and Environmental Rights Conference (PIAERC) 2025, held at a local hotel, here on Sunday, he explained that rights were fundamentally tied to the protection of inherent value, which applies not only to humans but also to animals, plants, and all forms of life.

Reflecting on his experiences as a student and a jurist, Justice Athar Minallah shared how his education and early life encounters shaped his perspective on justice and equity. He recounted childhood memories of learning about lions in the wild while hearing their roars from cages at the London Zoo, highlighting the contradictions between the natural world and human-imposed captivity. He recounted his academic

journey, including studying Islamic jurisprudence, which emphasized the preservation of all forms of life as a fundamental principle.

Justice Athar Minallah explained that this philosophy was central not only to Islam but also in other major religions such as Judaism and Christianity. This understanding played a pivotal role in developing his jurisprudence on animal rights during his tenure at the Islamabad High Court.

Highlighting global historical injustices, Justice Athar Minallah discussed the dehumanization of people and its parallels to the treatment of animals. He cited cases like Ota Benga, a Congolese teenager exhibited in a zoo in 1906, and Sarah Baartman, a South African woman exploited in the 19th century. These examples, he argued, underscore the need to challenge perceptions and redefine relationships between humans and nonhuman species.

Justice Athar Minallah emphasized that humans

have been the most destructive force in history, destroying habitats and ecosystems, often without regard for the consequences. Quoting Sir David Attenborough, he highlighted the irony of portraying gorillas as symbols of aggression, despite their inherently peaceful nature, while humans have historically been the aggressors.

During his tenure as Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court (2018-2022), Justice Minallah faced the challenge of safeguarding fundamental rights amidst political and constitutional crises. He noted that courts have a critical responsibility to protect the rights of all beings, not just humans, and to ensure justice and equity prevail.

Justice Athar Minallah also called for a transformative shift in societal perspectives to acknowledge the inherent value of all life forms, emphasizing the need for a robust legal and ethical framework to safeguard their rights and ensure their protection.

Sindh Govt striving to promote sports: Nasir

KARACHI (APP): Provincial Minister for Energy, Development and Planning Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Sunday said that the Sindh government was striving to promote sports across the province.

He said this while addressing the closing ceremony of the Sindh Beach Games.

The closing ceremony of the Sindh Beach Games was organized by the Sindh Government Sports Department at the Nishan-e-Pakistan beach in which Sindh Energy Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah participated.

On this occasion, Provincial Minister Syed

Nasir Hussain Shah and Secretary Sports Abdul Aleem Lashari handed over the general trophy to Karachi for winning the first position with 14 medals in the Beach Games, while Hyderabad won the second position with 4 medals and Sukkur won the trophy by winning the third position.

Minister Nasir Shah while talking to media at the closing ceremony, said that the Sindh government was trying to promote sports, there is a lot of talent in the youth of Sindh regarding sports.

Nasir Shah added that the provincial government has started the Sindh Premier League, Sindh

Junior Premier League to promote sports, in which great talent has been seen. Even then, the youth performed well in the Beach Games, those who lost should work harder.

Nasir Shah congratulated the Sindh Sports Minister for organizing sports activities.

On the other hand, more than 500 players from 6 divisions participated in the Sindh Beach Games, which included 8 games.

Medals were distributed among the players who achieved success in throwball, badminton, boxing, handball, volleyball, throwball and other games.



LAHORE: People busy selecting and purchasing second-hand toys from the vendors at weekly Bazaar. —APP Photo

Historic agreement for sustainable peace in Kurram Kohat agreement recognized as landmark pact

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Kohat Agreement is a historic step towards sustainable peace in Kurram. Legal action is underway indiscriminately against anti-peace elements in the region, as affirmed by Commissioner Kohat Division Mutasim Billah Shah and DIG Kohat Region Abbas Majeed Marwat during a joint press conference with Deputy Commissioner Hangu Gohar Zaman Wazir and DPO Khalid Khan.

The officials emphasized that the ongoing operations in Kurram are not against the local population but solely target terrorists. They assured that every effort is being made to prevent a humanitarian crisis in the area, as militants have blended into the local communities. Both sides involved in the peace process are committed to upholding the agreement, and any individual obstructing the convoys is being dealt with accordingly.

Security Operations and Social Media Monitoring

FIA's monitoring operations on social media have resumed to curb the spread of malicious content. More than 20 families have been displaced to Hangu, with monitoring and assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs) ongoing. Facilities are being provided to IDPs, and temporary camps will be established in Hangu starting tomorrow. Provisional arrangements have also been made in Tall.

Efforts for Peace and Progress

Highlighting the significance of the agreement, the officials stated that it is the culmination of significant efforts. The local committee formed under the agreement is fully supporting the government. The 14-point agreement addresses critical issues, including disarmament and the dismantling of bunkers, which were not part of previous agreements.

The Commissioner clarified that no unilateral actions have been taken against any group and stressed that the operation is targeting those who threaten peace. Measures are being taken to address food shortages in Upper Kurram, with the deployment of helicopters by the Pakistan Army to deliver essential supplies. Over 70 helicopter sorties have been conducted, underscoring the commitment of federal and provincial governments, along with security forces, to resolving the issues in Kurram.

Key Points of the Agreement

Under the agreement, local committees will work with the government and ensure compliance. Armed displays and bunkers along the roads will be eliminated.

The security forces successfully facilitated the movement of convoys, including 25 vehicles in the initial phase. Relief efforts include surveys of damaged homes and markets in Bugan Bazaar, with financial assistance already disbursed for funeral expenses.

So far, 28 trucks carrying food and non-food items, as well as 22 trucks of medical supplies, have been sent to the affected areas. The government has allocated over 50 million rupees to assist the displaced and affected individuals.

Unified Efforts for Peace

The Commissioner and DIG reiterated that the government and administration are neutral and committed to peace beyond sectarian divisions. Attempts by anti-peace elements to disrupt the agreement have been addressed, and the government is standing firmly with the oppressed against any oppression.

The press conference concluded with a pledge to maintain unity among security forces, the provincial government, and the administration to safeguard peace in Kurram. Those trying to harm the region's peace and stability will not be allowed to succeed.

95% work on Rs 930.05m Makh Dam completed

PESHAWAR, Jan 19 (APP): In southey districts, millions of acres of barren land, lying useless due to the scarcity of Irrigation water and the only solution to bring this land under cultivation, is the construction of maximum small dams there.

The Regional Information Office on Sunday said by bringing millions of acres of barren land under cultivation, not only these districts but the entire province will get food autarky.

Keeping in view this necessity, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has started work on the construction of dams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Work on such dams was going on rapidly to store water for Irrigation purposes.

The provincial government also approved dams in the districts of Kohat and Karak, among which Khattak Banda Dam, Zamir Gul Dam, Latambar Dam, Chashma Akor Khel Dam and Makh Banda Dam are at the top ones. These dams were near completion.

Makh Banda Dam is being constructed in Karak district. This project is being built using the Earth Core Rockfill Technology with a Height of 131 Feet and Width of 735 Feet, the dam will have the capacity to store a total of 946 Acres Feet of water. The cost of this project is Rs.930.05 million.

This project is almost 95% complete and it will bring 725 Acres of barren land under cultivation.

This mega project will provide water, agriculture and employment opportunities to the people and will mark a new chapter in the development of the area.

KP Sports Fest Autocross competitions conclude



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The KP Sports Fest (Autocross) competitions organized by the Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have come to an end. Hassan won first position in front wheel drive with 46 seconds, Hasnat Ahmed came second with 49 seconds and Haris Khan came third with 50 seconds. More than one hundred vehicles from all over the country participated in the race in six different categories.

Chief guest of the closing ceremony, Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Abdul Nasir, distributed prizes among the winning players. He was accompanied by Director Development Naimatullah, Director Finance Shafaisal, Deputy Director Operation Jamshed Baloch and Administrators Jafar Shah, Fida Muhammad and Hanif Khan.

More than 100 vehicles participated in the unique Autocross Motor Sports Festival held at Qayyum Sports Complex Peshawar and being held for the first time in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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

The youth took extraordinary interest in the Autocross Show 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.

Rising Prices: Dry fruits slipping out of reach of common people

PESHAWAR (APP): In a foggy weather, Muhammad Zakir (58) opens his dry fruits shop in morning at the bustling Firdus bazaar, hoping to attract customers for economic gains during the last days of winter.

As the cold wave gripped Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zakir dressed in traditional attire with Chaddar and Chitali wollen cap, has brought huge stock of almonds, pistachios, cashews, figs, raisins, walnuts, and salted seeds, sourced both locally and from other countries to earn maximum profits in winter but disappointed.

"These days, most of the people just ask about prices of dry fruits and return empty handed due to exorbitant prices, forcing us to wait till late night with a hope to sell out all stock before an end of the winter to avert financial loss," Zakir who associated with dry fruits trade for the last 25 years said while asking co-labourers to offload peanuts bags in his two room shop at Firdus bazaar – the hub of dry fruits business in Peshawar City.

"On the onset of winter season in the past, the traders and businessmen mostly from northern districts of KP and Punjab come here for buying of dry fruits stock," Zakir told APP. He said that eight different almonds and peanuts' varieties were transported by him as winter special offer, adding high-quality almonds imported from Afghanistan, are being sold at Rs 2,600 to Rs 3000 per kilogram.

"Keeping our consumers' demands, seven types of pistachios from Iran were imported but Akbari, Ahmadghai and Doda pistachios have a special taste selling at Rs3,600 per kilogram," Zakir said.

"In KP's sub-zero temperatures, the human body needs warmth, and almonds, cashews, and other dry fruits are helpful for people especially for senior citizens to keep them warm for a longer period of time," Professor Dr Sirzamin Khan, head of medical ward of the Government Hospital Nowshera told APP.

He said dry fruits and walnuts are high in fat, which produces heat in body, and provide energy, protein, vitamins, and essential nutrients, thus making it a winter essential food in Pakistan.

Dr Sirzamin advised people to make dry fruits part of their food during winter to protect themselves and loved ones from winter bites.

Despite its significance, the alarming surge in dry fruit prices in Peshawar, Nowshera and Charsadda districts has raised significant concerns among the citizens, prompting them to call upon the district government to ensure its availability at reasonable rates and take strong action against price hikers and hoarders.

Riaz Khan, a former PST teacher was annoyed over the lackluster approach of the PTI government to regulate its prices besides maintained a close check on daily use items including dry fruits and vegetables, leaving millions of poor people at the mercy of price hikers and hoarders.

He lamented the rising prices of dry fruits in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that adversely affected people as well traders but emphasized their availability at affordable prices due to their disease-preventing properties and ability to keep the body warm and mind fresh.

Another trader, Karim Khan, whose family linked with the dry fruit business for the last 40 years at Chowk Yadgar dry fruits market, expressed worry about lack of sale of dry fruit this winter and demanded special loan packages for the affected traders.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistic (PBS), Pakistan imported more than 31,000 metric tons of dry fruits worth Rs5 billion (\$17.745 million) between July-October 2023 primarily from Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Montenegro and Philippines to cater people's demands.

Professor Dr. Naeem Khattak, former Chairman, Political Economics Department, University of Peshawar said that Pakistan has ranked 99th out of 121 countries facing challenges of food insecurity, malnutrition, stunting and hunger due to population bulge, low agriculture productivity and climate change challenges. He claimed that unfortunately about 26% of annual food production, or around 20 million tons, which is valued at \$4 billion are lost in Pakistan.

Dr Naeem said Pakistan carried highest per capita food waste in the world, at 212 kilograms per person per year which has direct impact on prices of dry fruits. He said the prices of dry fruits and vegetables have increased after the agriculture sector had suffered at USD \$3.7 billion losses due to 2022 flood; adding approximately 14.6 million people need adequate food security and agricultural assistance in our country.

Similarly, about 20 percent of the country's population is undernourished, and nearly 45 percent of children younger than five years of age are stunted due to poverty, socioeconomic imbalances and unemployment.

He said unfortunately due to prevalent culture of extravagance and ostentation, particularly among the elite in Pakistan, where dry fruits is treated as a status symbol rather than a precious commodity and thus wasted massively.

He said it's high time to reassess our priorities and redefine what it means to truly value and respect of dry food. Dr Khattak underscored the need of tripartite agreements among Pakistan, India and Afghanistan to curb the smuggling of the dry fruits.

Muhammad Zahir Shah, KP Minister for Food said that an inclusive mechanism was put in place for monitoring and control of movement of dry fruits in border areas of the province.

He said that an online food price and control system was developed through which the citizens can check the daily prices of essential items and lodge complaints against overcharging vendors or hoarders on which prompt action is being taken.

PMRU is empowered to generate weekly reports regarding the set key performance indicators (KPIs) of price magistrates tasked with ensuring the real-time performance tracking of price magistrates through the KP Inspection Mobile App.

The district price control committees were notified with the powers to conduct price review meetings besides notifying fresh price lists of dry fruits, conventional fruits and vegetables for every district, including the merged areas.



PESHAWAR: Trucks loaded with medicines and other items are ready to be dispatched to Kurram on the directives of Chief Minister.

Transport to hundreds of individuals, delivering medicines KP govt's helicopter service continues for Kurram

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the special instructions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, the provincial government's helicopter service for Kurram continues to operate, providing air transport to hundreds of individuals and delivering medicines worth millions of rupees to the region.

On Sunday, the provincial government's MI-17 helicopter conducted four flights to Kurram, providing air transport to a total of 133 individuals. According to details, the first flight carried 3,000 kilograms of medicines and transported four individuals to Parachinar. The second flight transported 44 individuals from Parachinar to Tall, while the third flight facilitated 34 individuals traveling from Tall to Parachinar. Similarly, the fourth and final flight transported 35 individuals from Parachinar to Peshawar.

Essential Relief Supplies Sent to Kurram

Meanwhile, on the Chief Minister's directives, various relief items to help the affected residents of Kurram combat the harsh winter were dispatched on Sunday. The supplies included 500 tents, 1,000 mattresses, 1,000 blankets, 500 plastic mats, 500 tarpaulin sheets, 100 search lamps, 100 solar lamps, and other essential items.

In a statement, the Chief Minister emphasized that the provincial government is fully aware of the challenges faced by the people of Kurram due to the blockade of land routes. He assured that all available resources are being utilized to minimize these difficulties.

The Chief Minister further stated that the helicopter service will continue until the situation in Kurram normalizes and land routes are restored.

250 blood bags donated by students of Edwards College Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a remarkable display of generosity and compassion, the students of Edwards College Peshawar donated 250 blood bags during the Annual Blood Camp 2025, organized by the Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Center and Blood Services Peshawar. This noble initiative, which took place at the historical Edwardes College Peshawar, was held in collaboration with the H.M. Close Blood Donor Society.

The camp was conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah Muhammadzai, the Incharge of the society, with the active participation of Society President Saad Ahmed Jan, Senior Vice President Muhammad Sami, Hamaad, General Secretary Talha Zia, and other cabinet members and organizers. The enthusiastic participation of the Edwardians made this event a historic achievement, marking 19 years of dedicated service by the Hamza Foundation.

Medical Director HF, Dr. Tariq Khan conducted the Medical Check up of the students, 17 students were medically unfit after detail check up. 250 healthy volunteer donors donated their blood for saving precious lives of 1504 registered patients kids of Hamza Foundation.

In a heartfelt address to the students at the conclusion of the camp, the Principal of Edwards College, Prof. Shujat Ali Khan, praised the students' spirit and commitment to this noble cause, emphasizing the importance of serving humanity. He encouraged the students to continue this tradition of altruism, underscoring that every donation could potentially save three lives. The Principal also acknowledged the tireless welfare efforts of the Hamza Foundation.

Mr. Ijaz Ali Khan, the Founder Chairman of Hamza Foundation, expressed his gratitude to the Principal, the blood donation team, and the dedicated volunteers. He thanked everyone involved for their contribution to alleviating the suffering of those in need of blood transfusions.

To mark the occasion, Mr. Ateeq ur Rehman, RMO and Mr. Ibrarullah RMO of the Hamza Foundation, presented commemorative HF shields to Principal Prof. Shujat Ali Khan and Blood Incharge Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah as a token of appreciation for their support and collaboration.

This successful blood donation drive stands as a testament to the deep-rooted spirit of giving at Edwards College Peshawar and its unwavering commitment to humanity.

Governor expresses concern over attack on female journalist

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, expressed deep concern over the alleged attempted murder of a female journalist and her sisters here on Sunday.

He has directed police officials to report on the incident.

In a statement, Governor Kundi condemned the assault on Rani Andaleeb, a journalist affiliated with TNN, along with her sisters Salma Jahangir and Naheed Jahangir Assistant Media Manager Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar.

He called the incident an "intolerable act of violence" and emphasized that the investigation should be carried out promptly.

He also urged that the individuals responsible for the attack be held accountable and given the appropriate punishment.

In his condolence message, Governor Kundi prayed for the deceased's forgiveness, elevation of his status, and strength for the grieving family.

Meanwhile, the Khyber Union of Journalists (KhUJ) has strongly condemned the brutal attack on TNN-affiliated female journalist Rani Andaleeb and her sisters, calling for immediate legal action against the perpetrators. In a statement issued from the KhUJ office, President Kashifuddin Syed, General Secretary Irshad Ali, Senior Vice President Imran Ayaz, Vice President Shehzad Ahmad, and other members expressed their outrage over the incident. The attack occurred when Rani Andaleeb and her sisters, Salma Jahangir and Naheed Jahangir (Assistant Media Manager, LRH), were returning home from a family gathering. Near Kohat Road at Ramdas Chowk, their rickshaw was deliberately rammed by a car, forcing it to the side of the road.



In brief

Lady bank manager dies

ABBOTTABAD (APP): In a road mishap in Abbottabad on Sunday, an Alto car fell into a deep ravine, resulting in the death of a woman. Police said, the incident occurred near Soori Bridge in the jurisdiction of Thana Bagnotar. A woman, resident of Lower Kehyal and manager of a private bank by profession, succumbed to her injuries after being taken to the hospital. Upon receiving the information, the rescue medical team immediately reached the site and transferred the injured to the hospital where the woman passed away from her wounds.

Blast near police van

BANNU (APP): Unknown miscreants on Sunday detonated an IED near a police van in Bannu, however fortunately the police personnel remained unhurt in the incident. According to police, the incident took place within the jurisdiction of the Cantt police station, where a police mobile vehicle was on its routine patrol when targeted with a remote-controlled explosive device. No casualties resulted from the blast. After the incident, the police cordoned off the area and initiated a search operation. Police van was partially damaged in the blast.

Substandard meat confiscated

LODHRAN (APP): In a significant operation, Jallah Arain police thwarted an attempt to supply nine maunds of unhygienic meat, ensuring public safety. According to the police spokesperson, a mini Mazda truck, loaded with dead buffalo, was intercepted near 383/W, where two suspects, Abdul Rehman and Arsalan, were arrested. A veterinary doctor examined the meat and confirmed it was unfit for consumption. The suspects had planned to supply the contaminated meat to local hotels and food stalls. Station House Officer (SHO) Jallah Arain Imran Umar stated that the seized unhygienic meat would be destroyed and a case had been registered against the suspects, while further investigation was underway. District Police Officer (DPO) Kamran Mumtaz said that endangering citizens health was an unacceptable crime.

Symposium on eye diseases

F.P. Report

LARKANA: A one-day awareness symposium on "eye diseases and eye transplantation in children" was organized by the Department of Ophthalmology under the management of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU) Larkana, at Chandka MEDICAL College Larkana, which was presided over by Vice Chancellor Professor Nusrat Shah. Eye specialists from all over the country participated in the symposium. In his presidential speech at the symposium, the Vice Chancellor said that we are soon signing an agreement with the Vision for Education Foundation, with which eye specialists will come here and train doctors. Our eye specialists or young doctors will be financially supported by the university to study anywhere in the world and we are also starting eye transplantation soon. He added that our people are reluctant to donate their organs, which requires awareness. He added that I have made a will that my Finally, my organs that can be donated should be donated and my statement should be kept on record.

PTI lawmaker inaugurates road project in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The chairman district development advisory committee MPA from PK 17 Ubaid ur Rehman has said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has approved funds for several roads in his constituency and work on them will start soon. He was addressing a function after inaugurating a road project in village council Badalzo Munda as chief guest here on Sunday.

The project will cost Rs 14.2 million. The lawmaker said that 416 kanals of land had been allocated for Dir University, for which Rs 100 million had been approved and the project would be completed by the PTI government in the province.

He said that there was

no fact that the Dir University project had been dropped from the ADP. The lawmaker claimed that the Dir University would soon be established.

Ubaid said that he did not believe in mere slogans but wanted to resolve public issues.

The lawmaker said that previous MPAs from the area had nothing for PK 17 and all of their projects had been incomplete. He said that it was the PTI government that would serve the public. He said that developments would be visible on the ground in this government.

Criticizing the federal government, he said that false and baseless cases had been registered against the PTI founder Imran Khan and other

party leaders and workers. He said that the PTI founder would make no deal for his release with the government.

He said that Rs 150 million had been approved for the Munda-Samarbagh Road, and construction work would start on it by the end of February. The lawmaker claimed the government had allocated Rs 40 million for the Shalkandi link road.

During the inauguration ceremony, he assured the residents of the area that the main roads in PK-17 as well as the link roads of the suburban areas would also be constructed with quality work.

He said that he was well aware of all the problems of the area and would take no rest unless those problems were solved.

Balochistan receives rain, first winter snowfall

QUETTA (APP): Respective areas of Balochistan received rain and winter of first snowfall on late Saturday which turned weather pleasant and cold.

Some of people went to Dasht and Luckpass areas in their vehicles and bikes to enjoy snowfall weather.

Levies force and concerned departments personnel deployed main national highways to cope situation of closure roads owing to snowfalls and rain in the areas so that maintain

smooth of traffic and people would not suffer difficulties during traveling.

The Met Office has forecast mainly cloudy, rain, wind and snowfall weather for Balochistan, areas including Quetta, Mastung, Zairat, Killa Saifullah, Zhob, Surfah, Kalat, Harnai, and including its surrounding areas during next 24 hours.

The Met Office reported that snowfall (cm) was recorded in respective areas including Ziarat (cm 2.5), Quetta City (cm 2.0), RMC

(cm 2.5), Sariab (cm 1.5).

While rainfall (mm) has been recorded in Dalbandin (mm 24.0), Chaman (mm 17.75), Pishin (mm 16.5), Quetta (City (mm 13.0), Samungli (mm 10.0), Sariab (mm 7.6) and RMC (07.2), Nokkundi (07.0), Muslim Bagh (05.5), Kalat (04.0) and Panjgur (01.0). The Met office reported that the minimum temperature in Zhob was recorded at - 1.0 minus degrees centigrade, 1.35 degrees centigrade in Quetta on Sunday.

Int'l Conference on obesity, metabolic held

HYDERABAD (APP): An international conference on obesity and metabolism aimed to educate the public and medical professionals about their latest treatments and its adverse effects was held here on Sunday at local hotel. The conference was organized by the Director of Clinical Sciences of the Asian Institute of Medical Sciences, nationally renowned gastroenterologist Prof. Dr. Sadiq Memon, with the support of Feroze Sons Pharmaceutical Company.

Health experts shed light on the various aspects of obesity and its modern management and identified it as 13 life-threatening diseases, including heart disease, hypertensive kidney disease, and liver disease, and was called the mother of diseases.

Professor Dr. Sadiq Memon said that the death rate is increasing due to

obesity and the obesity disease in children is increasing to an alarming level. If the campaign to eliminate obesity is not carried out on an emergency basis, obesity will increase in the country in the next few years, he added. The chief guest of the conference was Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Memon, Chancellor University of Modern Sciences, Tando Muhammad Khan, while Prof. Dr. Gulshan, Vice-Chancellor People's University of Medical and Health Sciences Shaheed Benazirabad also participated in the conference.

Professor Dr. Waseem Jafari spoke in detail about obesity and fatty liver disease. Dr. Nadeem Naeem highlighted the pharmacological management of obesity. Prof. Dr. Basit gave a detailed discussion regarding the management of metabolic syndrome.

Dr. Farooq Khan from Dubai informed about

endoscopic management of obesity through video links while Dr. Syed Imran Abbas gave a comprehensive presentation on surgical management of obesity through video links.

Expert panels were formed for various sessions in the conference, including Prof. Dr. Bekha Ram Devrajani, Prof. Dr. Noor Muhammad Memon, Prof. Dr. Santosh, Prof. Dr. Asif Ali Barni, Prof. Dr. Akbar Memon, Prof. Dr. Qadir Khan, Prof. Dr. Akram. Bajwa, Prof. Dr. Arshad, Prof. Dr. Naveed, Prof. Dr. Ghani Soomro, Dr. Nand Lal Serrano, Dr. Saadat Jaskani, Dr. Rizwan Awan and Prof. Dr. Aamir Iqbal also spoke in a various Expert panel sessions.

At the end, the participants appreciated the great initiative taken by the Asian Institute of Medical Sciences and wished to organize more such events in the future.

‘Apni Chatt Apna Ghar, a revolutionary program’

Hafiz Muhammad Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razaq has said that "Apni Chatt Apna Ghar Programme" is revolutionary and people welfare program and under this program markup free loans given to people for construction their own houses through transparent balloting while with the completion of this program now dream of the people to live in their own homes has been materialized.

He expressed these views while visiting newly constructed homes under Apni Chatt Apna Ghar Program. ADCR Tanveer Yaseen was also accompanied by him. DC checked quality of material used in completion of homes constructed under "Apni Chat Apna Ghar Programme".

He said that "Apni Chatt Apna Ghar Programme" was unmatched, people friendly program in the history of Punjab and Pakistan.

He said that construction of new home was very difficult in prevailing situation but the Chief Minister of the Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif was made easy to build own homes to launch this program.

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Madam Nazia Shahzadi has said that it needs to work as team for implementing on different initiatives to provide quality education and impart technical skills to students to excel in the modern world.

She expressed these views while addressing a meeting of officers and schools' heads held to review performance of schools, introduction of Matric Teck in government and Science, Technology, engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) Education in the schools.

She said that the Punjab government was expand scheme of study from science and arts to Matric Computer Science, Matric Health Science, Matric Agriculture Science, Matric Fashion Designing and Information and Communication subjects.

Madam Nazia Shahzadi urged the officers and heads of the schools to focus on JASHAN-A-STEAM to come up on expectations of the Secretary Schools Education, Punjab government and the nation.

We all have to work with commitment and dedication to make STEAM a reality for all and to enable our students to face challenges of the modern world, she added.

She further said that people could get enrolled their children in 9th class in view of aptitude of their children according to new scheme of study in government schools.

Dist admin launches operation against illegal encroachment

The district administration launched a vigorous campaign to remove illegal encroachments across the district in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Dr. Lubna Nazir.

The operation focused on removing permanent encroachments including extended concrete structures, unauthorized iron sheds, and other illegal structures in public spaces. She emphasized the establishment of Anti-Encroachment Wings in all three tehsils, each supervised by the respective Assistant Commissioners.

The DC reaffirmed that the operations were being conducted impartially with immediate action on public complaints. Major markets and roads across the district were being cleared to enhance convenience and mobility for the public.



HYDERABAD: A beautiful view of birds flying on the pond at Jamshoro Road.

Gas explosion injures family in Nowshera

F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: An explosion caused by accumulated gas inside a house in Nowshera district on Sunday resulted in severe injuries to the parents and children.

According to rescue sources, the incident occurred in the Badarshi Isa Khel area of Nowshera, where a gas leak inside the house led to a massive explosion.

As a result, the parents and children suffered severe burns.

The explosion caused a fire that engulfed the entire room.

Upon receiving the information, rescue teams quickly arrived at the scene and shifted the injured to the hospital.

Condolence reference held

F.P. Report

KARAK: The Sadiq Pashto Abdi Jirga Teri arranged a condolence reference on the death of Professor Tanveer and the first anniversary of Akmal Asad Abadi at Al-Sadiq Public High School Teri district Karak under the chairmanship of Prof. Aziz Qureshi on Sunday.

The Condolence Reference beside others was also attended by the Patron in Chief of the Jirga Naseer Ustad, Vice President Sarwar Mahmood Khattak, General Secretary Ifitikhar Sharar, Atif Hussain Anokhi, Adnan Parhar, Samiur Rahman, Tehsil Naib Nazim Rehman Gul Tariq, Syed Akbar Hashmi, Abdul Momin, Mohammad Munir and Manoor Khan Manoor.

The participants highlighted various aspects of the deceased's life and paid rich tributes to their literary and other services in detail.

At the end, Fatiha was offered for the departed souls of the deceased.

40.07% of BISP payments completed

SARGODHA (APP): Payments process of Benazir Income Support Program under the recent released tranche of December 2024 has reached 40.07 % completion in Sargodha District.

Deputy Director BISP Sargodha Madam Raazia Asim informed APP on Sunday that a total of 63,019 deserving beneficiaries out of 157,268 so far received their payments including out of total 12,700 registered women beneficiaries in Bhulwal, 3056 beneficiaries have been taken Rs 10,500 each, whereas 10,861 out of 38404 in Bhera, 3,129 out of 20,651 in Kotmomin, 10,189 out of 12,430 in Sahiwal, 27,344 out of 68,537 in Sargodha, 7,962 out of 16,309 in Shah purr and 7,535 out of 15,780 beneficiaries in Sillanwali.

She assured that the remaining beneficiaries would get their payments soon. She also informed that 11 camp site were set up across the district and it's tehsils to facilitate the distribution.

South Punjab's hand embroidery weaves bridal dreams

MULTAN (APP): Dress enhances the wearer's appearance to exude confidence and grace by leaving an indelible impression on others, especially during festivities.

It is a silent but powerful expression of one's identity and emotions. The colours, textures, and intricate designs often speak volumes about the personality of individual and cultural heritage. Among these, embroidered dresses hold a unique charm and blending tradition with elegance.

Embroidery is a decorative art form that involves stitching patterns onto fabric using a needle and thread. This intricate craft not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of clothes but it also serves as a medium for cultural expression and storytelling.

In South Punjab, embroidery holds a significant place in the local heritage as it reflects the region's rich traditions and vibrant community life, said a well-known embroidery artisan Arshid Ali while speaking to APP. He started learning embroidery work in 1990 at the city's popular economic hub Hussain Agahi, and at that time he was student of Class 6th.

In South Punjab, Arshid maintained that embroidery was more than just a craft. It is a vital part of the cultural identity. The designs often tell stories of the local environment, traditions, and the daily lives of the people.

Each stitch is a testament to the skills passed down through generations by making it a living history of the region. Arshid remarked that embroidery styles in South Punjab are diverse with a variety of techniques and patterns.

From the intricate mirror work to the bold geometric designs, each style has its own unique characteristics that represent the local culture. This diversity not only highlights the creativity of the artisans but also the influence of various cultural interactions over time.

He said that many families rely on this craft for their livelihood, and it provides opportunities for women to engage in income-generating activities. The demand for embroidered textiles, both locally and internationally, has helped sustain this traditional art form.

He added that tehsils Alipur and Jatoe, (District Muzaffargarh) were hub of embroidery work. To a query about impact of machine embroidery on hand embroidery, he stated that machine embroidery lacked aesthetic appeal however hand-embroidery had too much demand across the globe. To a query women artisan, he stated that women were expert at small "frame".

However, male artisans work on big "frames", locally called as "Adda". Embroidery work was done on Shirts, "Kurta", Multani Chunri, Chikankari, Lehenga, Sherwani, Anarkali Frock, Gharara, Sharara, Shawls, Cushions, Maxi, and some others.

About cost of best embroidery attire, another artisan Muhammad Akram stated that many brand used to sell their quality attire against Rs 800,000 however such copy dress could be prepared against only Rs 250,000 to Rs 300,000. He added that it was nearly 60 percent cheaper if compared to best fancy dresses of popular brands. To a query about an average of income of an artisan, Akram stated that the average income ranges from Rs 1000 to Rs 1800.

Muhammad Sabir, another artisan who used to work near Kalma Chowk, stated that the prices of different material used for embroidery including thread, naqshi, dabka, kora, tila etc were too costly. The prices, unfortunately increased by 200 percent, he lamented. About marketing of the clothes, he stated that he received many orders as he was in contact with many shopkeepers in Rawalpindi, Sargodha and some other cities.

Responding to a query about online marketing, he stated that the artisan lacked know-how of online marketing as they were not expert in information technology. He however urged government to ensure training for skilled workers in grabbing orders and delivering clothes through online facility.

Responding to issues, he hinted that government should register experts who had prepared hundreds of skilled workers and provide them financial assistance. Another craftsman Atta Muhammad who belonged to tehsil Jatoe stated that these two tehsil were popular in producing the intricate bridal dresses.

The bridal dresses prepared by the local craftsmen perfectly display the skills of the local people. Atta Muhammad remarked that almost every fancy take one month's effort of an expert craftsman. The price of the bridal dress ranges from Rs 50,000 to Rs 500,000 depending upon quality of work.

He added that the demand for machine embroidery was steadily declining as customers gravitate toward the finesse and unparalleled quality of hand embroidery. "A single embroidered dress speaks volumes of the care and precision invested in it," he remarked.

When asked about learning the craft, he remarked that six months of focused training were typically enough for a hardworking learner to master the skill. "However, a careful approach is vital, especially when working on expensive fabrics," he added.

Most of their clientele hails from Karachi and other major cities. Winter is season of marriages and the demand of the hand embroidery increased manifold. However, summer months bring a decline in demand, with business activity dropping to just 20% of its usual pace. Despite these challenges, Alipur and Jatoe continue to shine as the heartland of this cherished art form, preserving a legacy that blends tradition and beauty, he added.



QUETTA: People enjoying the season's first snowfall on Lakpass Mountain.



Yoon supporters storm South Korea court after detention extended

SEOUL (Aljazeera): A South Korean court has extended President Yoon Suk-yeol's detention for up to 20 days, leading to violent protests by hundreds of angry supporters who stormed the court building, smashed windows, and broke in.

Shortly after the court's decision was announced at about 3am on Sunday (18:00 GMT on Saturday), his supporters swarmed the building, overwhelming riot police trying to keep them at bay. Yoon last week became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested as he faces allegations of insurrection related to his stunning, short-lived December 3 declaration of martial law that has plunged the country into political turmoil.

Footage showed protesters blasting fire extinguishers at lines of police guarding the front entrance, before they flooded inside, destroying office equipment and furniture.

Yoon and his lawyers appeared before the court's judge during a hearing on Saturday and argued for his release. His arrest could mark the beginning of an extended period in custody for him, lasting months or more.

He faces potential rebellion charges linked to his declaration of martial law on December 3, which set off the country's most serious political crisis since its democratisation in the late 1980s.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with the police and the military, can now extend his detention to 20 days, during which they will transfer the case to public prosecutors for indictment.

Yoon's lawyers could also file a petition to challenge the court's arrest warrant.

The leader is expected to continue to be held in a solitary cell at the Seoul Detention Centre.

"President Yoon Suk Yeol and our legal team will never give up," lawyers representing Yoon, who called the criminal probe invalid, said in a statement.

"We will do our best in all future judicial procedures to correct the wrong," the lawyers said, adding that the violence at the court was an "unfortunate" incident.

Yoon's conservative People Power Party (PPP) called the court's decision a "great pity".

"There's a question whether repercussions of detaining a sitting president were sufficiently considered," the party said in a statement.

But the main opposition Democratic Party called the court's approval of the warrant a "cornerstone" for rebuilding order and said "riots" by "far-right" groups would only deepen the national crisis.

Support for the PPP collapsed after his martial law declaration, which he rescinded hours later in the face of a unanimous vote in parliament rejecting it. Lawmakers impeached Yoon on December 14, suspending his presidential powers.



KUALA LUMPUR: Foreign ministers from Association of Southeast Asian Nations members hold informal talks in Langkawi Island, Malaysia.

Syrian defense minister rejects Kurdish proposal for its own military bloc

DAMASCUS (Reuters): Syria's new defense minister said on Sunday it would not be right for US-backed Kurdish fighters based in the country's northeast to retain their own bloc within the broader integrated Syrian armed forces.

Speaking to Reuters at the Defense Ministry in Damascus, Murhaf Abu Qasra said the leadership of the Kurdish fighters, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), was procrastinating in its handling of the complex issue.

The SDF, which has carved out a semi-autonomous zone through 14 years of civil war, has been in talks with the new administration in Damascus led by former rebels who toppled President Bashar Assad on Dec. 8.

SDF commander Mazloum Abdi has said one of their central demands is a decentralized administration, saying in an interview with Saudi Arabia's Asharq News channel last week that the SDF was open to integrating with the Defense Ministry but as "a military bloc," and without dissolving.

Abu Qasra rejected that proposal on Sunday.

"We say that they would enter the Defense Ministry within the hierarchy of the Defense Ministry, and be distributed in a military way — we have no issue there," said Abu Qasra, who was appointed defense minister on Dec. 21.

"But for them to remain a military bloc within the Defense Ministry, such a bloc within a big institution is not right."

One of the minister's priorities since taking office has been integrating Syria's myriad anti-Assad factions into a unified command structure.

But doing so with the SDF has proved challenging. The US considers the group a key ally against Daesh militants, but neighboring Türkiye regards it as a national security threat.

Abu Qasra said he had met the SDF's leaders but accused them of "procrastinating" in talks over their integration, and said incorporating them in the Defense Ministry like other ex-rebel factions was "a right of the Syrian state."

Abu Qasra was appointed to the transitional government about two weeks after Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, the Islamist group to which he belongs, led the offensive that ousted Assad.

He said he hoped to finish the integration process, including appointing some senior military figures, by March 1, when the transitional government's time in power is set to end.

Asked how he responded to criticism that a transitional council should not make such appointments or carry out such sweeping changes of the military infrastructure, he said "security issues" had prompted the new state to prioritize the matter.

"We are in a race against time and every day makes a difference," he said.

The new administration was also criticized over its decision to give some foreigners, including Egyptians and Jordanians, ranks in the new military.

Abu Qasra acknowledged the decision had created a firestorm but said he was not aware of any requests to extradite any of the foreign fighters.

Pope Francis calls for Gaza ceasefire to be 'immediately respected'



VATICAN CITY (AFP): Pope Francis called Sunday for a ceasefire in Gaza to be "immediately respected," as he thanked mediators and urged a boost in humanitarian aid as well as the return of hostages.

"I express gratitude to all the mediators," the Argentine pontiff said shortly after the start of a truce between Israel and Hamas began.

"Thanks to all the parties involved in this important outcome. I hope that, as agreed, it will be immediately respected by the parties and that all the hostages will finally be able to go home to hug their loved ones again," he said.

"I pray so much for them, and their families. I also hope that humanitarian aid will even more quickly reach... the people of Gaza, who have so many urgent needs," Francis said.

"Both Israelis and Palestinians need clear signs of hope. I hope that the political authorities of both, with the help of the international community, can reach the right two-state solution."

"May everyone say yes to dialogue, yes to reconciliation, yes to peace," he added.

A total of 33 hostages taken by militants during Hamas's Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel are scheduled to be returned from Gaza during an initial 42-day truce.

Under the deal, hundreds of Palestinian prisoners are to be released from Israeli jails.

The truce is intended to pave the way for an end to more than 15 months of war sparked by Hamas's attack, the deadline in Israeli history.

It follows a deal struck by mediators Qatar, the United States and Egypt after months of negotiations, and takes effect on the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration as US president.

Wuhan keen to shake off pandemic label five years on

WUHAN (AFP): Built in just days as Covid-19 cases spiked in Wuhan in early 2020, the Huoshenshan Hospital was once celebrated as a symbol of the Chinese city's fight against the virus that first emerged there.

The hospital now stands empty, hidden behind more recently built walls — faded like most traces of the pandemic as locals move on and officials discourage discussion of it.

On January 23, 2020, with the then-unknown virus spreading, Wuhan sealed itself off for 76 days, ushering in China's zero-Covid era of strict travel and health controls and foreshadowing the global disruption yet to come.

Today, the city's bustling shopping districts and gridlocked traffic are a far cry from the empty streets and crammed emergency rooms that marked the world's first Covid lockdown.

"People are moving forward, these memories are getting fuzzier and fuzzier," Jack He, a 20-year-old university student and Wuhan local, told AFP.

He was in high school when the lockdown was imposed, and he spent much of his sophomore year taking online classes from home.

"We still feel like those few years were especially tough... but a new life has started," He said.

Official silence

At the former site of the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, where scientists believe the virus may have crossed over from animals to humans, a light blue wall has been built to shield the market's closed-down stalls from view.

When AFP visited, workers were putting up Chinese New Year decorations on the windows of the market's second floor, where a warren of opticians' shops still operates.

There is nothing to mark the location's significance — in fact, there are no major memorials to the lives lost to the virus anywhere in the city.

Official commemorations of Wuhan's lockdown ordeal focus on the heroism of doctors and the efficiency with which the city responded to the outbreak, despite international criticism of the local government's censorship of early cases in December 2019.

The market's old produce stalls have been moved to a new development outside the city centre, where it was clear that the city was still on edge about its reputation as the cradle of the pandemic.

Over a dozen vendors at the aptly named New Huanan Seafood Market refused to speak about the market's past.

The owner of one stall told AFP on condition of anonymity that "business here is not what it was before".

Another worker said the market's managers had sent security camera footage of AFP journalists out to a mass WeChat group of stall owners and warned them against speaking to the reporters.

At least one black car followed AFP journalists across the city, including to the new market.

'City of heroes'

One of the few remaining public commemorations of the lockdown is next door to the abandoned Huoshenshan hospital — an unassuming petrol station that doubles as an "anti-Covid-19 pandemic educational base".

One wall of the station was dedicated to a timeline of the lockdown, complete with discoloured photographs of President Xi Jinping visiting Wuhan in March 2020.

An employee told AFP that a small building behind the facility's convenience store housed another exhibit, but it was only open "when leaders come to visit".

But days before the fifth anniversary of the lockdown, those memories seemed far away, the city now a hive of activity.

Locals thronged the Shanhaiguan Road breakfast market, munching on bowls of noodles and deep-fried pastries.

In the upmarket Chuhe Hanjie shopping street, people walked dogs and promenaded in designer outfits while others queued to pick up bubble tea orders.

Chen Ziyi, a 40-year-old Wuhan local, said she believed the city's increased prominence has actually had a positive impact, with more tourists visiting.

"Now everyone pays more attention to Wuhan," she said. "They say Wuhan is the city of heroes."



UK family visa applicants from war-torn countries caught in bureaucratic limbo

LONDON (Arab News): Refugees trying to escape Gaza, Sudan and Afghanistan and join family members in the UK are in limbo between government bureaucracy and a lack of biometric processing facilities.

As part of the family reunification visa application process, applicants must submit biometric information, usually including a fingerprint, at centers in the countries from which they apply.

But such centers often either do not exist in war-torn areas or the facilities are not available to gather the information. This means applicants must either complete the biometric processing once in the UK or be excused from the biometric process entirely.

Figures published by The Guardian on Saturday, however, show that just a handful of these deferrals or exemptions have been granted by the UK.

As of May 2024, 114 people had requested to have their applications "pre-determined" by delaying the submission of biometric data until reaching the UK. Another 84 people had requested to be excused from providing biometric information altogether. By February 2024, just eight predetermination cases and one excusal had been authorized.

The highest number of the requests came from Palestinians and those in Afghanistan and Sudan, where visa application centers have been forced to close due to conflict.

Members of parliament and charities have accused the Home Office of blocking people such in areas from joining their families in the UK. They compared it to the situation in Ukraine, where people can apply for family reunification visas in the UK without submitting biometrics beforehand.

"The UK rightly welcomed Ukrainian refugees fleeing war. Why can't the same compassion be shown to people from Gaza and elsewhere?" a coalition of independent MPs, including former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, told The Guardian.

Nick Beales, head of campaigns at the charity RAMFEL, which helps vulnerable migrants access justice, said: "This disclosure proves that it was actually impossible for people in conflict zones, such as Sudan and Gaza, to apply for visas even when they had clear family ties in the UK."

A Home Office spokesperson told The Guardian they understood applicants may face challenging circumstances to reach a visa application center to submit biometrics, saying: "That is why individuals have the option to submit a biometric deferral request, which is assessed on its own merits, and exceptional circumstances are considered."

German ambassador warns of Trump plan to redefine constitutional order

BERLIN (Reuters): Germany's ambassador to the United States has warned that the incoming Trump administration will rob US law enforcement and the media of their independence and hand big tech companies "co-governing power," according to a confidential document seen by Reuters.

The briefing document, dated Jan. 14 and signed by Ambassador Andreas Michaelis, describes Donald Trump's agenda for his second White House term as one of "maximum disruption" that will bring about "a redefinition of the constitutional order — maximum concentration of power with the president at the expense of Congress and the federal states."

"Basic democratic principles and checks and balances will be largely undermined, the legislature, law enforcement and media will be robbed of their independence and misused as a political arm, Big Tech will be given co-governing power," it says.

Trump's transition team had no immediate comment on the ambassador's assessment.

The German foreign ministry said US voters chose Trump in a democratic election, and it would "work closely with the new US administration in the interests of Germany and Europe."

The outgoing government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz has largely refrained from direct public criticism of Trump since the election, but the ambassador's confidential assessment offers a blunt view from a senior German official.

Ambassadors are not replaced automatically with the formation of a new government, unless a change is deemed necessary for diplomatic or other reasons.

The document cites the judiciary, and especially the US Supreme Court, as central to Trump's attempts to further his agenda, but says that despite the court's recent decision to expand presidential powers, "even the biggest critics assume that it will prevent the worst from happening."

Michaelis sees control of the Justice Department and FBI as key to Trump reaching his political and personal goals, including mass deportations, retribution against perceived enemies and legal impunity.

He says Trump has broad legal options to force his agenda on the states, saying "even military deployment within the country for police activities would be possible in the event of declared 'insurrection' and 'invasion'."

The 1878 Posse Comitatus Act bars the federal military from participating in domestic law enforcement, with some exceptions.

Michaelis also foresees a "redefinition of the First Amendment," saying Trump and billionaire X owner Elon Musk are already taking actions against critics and non-cooperating media companies.

"One is using lawsuits, threatening criminal prosecution and license revocation, the other is having algorithms manipulated and accounts blocked," he says in the document.

Musk's repeated endorsement of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) ahead of the Feb. 23 national election has drawn ire in Berlin, but the government has stopped short of unanimously leaving his platform.

Berlin endured a particularly difficult relationship with the United States during the first Trump administration, facing costly tariffs and criticism over its failure to meet the NATO target on defense expenditure.



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LA fires scorch largest area in California in 40 years

TWO wildfires still burning in Los Angeles have torched more urban area than any other fire in the state since at least the mid-1980s, an Associated Press analysis shows. The Eaton and Palisades fires that erupted last week have collectively burned almost 4 square miles of highly dense parts of Los Angeles, more than double the urban acreage consumed by the region's Woolsey Fire in 2018, according to the AP's analysis of data from the Silvis Lab at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Experts say several factors could lead to wildfires reaching cities more often. Urban areas continue to sprawl into wildland. Climate change is raising global temperatures that lead to more severe weather, including drought, especially in the western United States.

"If these conditions get worse or more frequent in the future, it wouldn't be surprising, in my opinion, if there were more events that threaten densely populated places," said Franz Schug, a researcher studying the boundaries between the wildland and urban areas at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The Eaton and Palisades fires' rampage through Los Angeles has killed at least 27 people, destroyed more than 12,000 structures and put more than 80,000 under evacuation orders. The fires are likely to be among the most destructive in California history, according to the state agency CalFire.

The Woolsey Fire eventually grew to about twice the current size of the Eaton and Palisades fires but most of the area it burned was uninhabited. Silvis, and AP, defined urban areas as those that are "high density," where the land has at least 3 housing units for every acre, calculated with US Census data.

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 burned about 3.3 square miles of the downtown area of the city, according to the Chicago Architecture Center. San Francisco's Great Fire of 1906 destroyed 4 square miles of the city, according to the Museum of the City of San Francisco. Besides burning the most urban area, the Eaton and Palisades fires are the largest ever for California in January. Alexandra Syphard, a senior research scientist at the Conservation Biology Institute, said their timing and path through the city "may have no precedent in history."

Authorities haven't determined a cause for the major blazes in California. But experts have noted the extreme weather that created more favourable conditions: heavy rain that drove vegetation growth, then extreme drought that turned much of that vegetation into good fire fuel. Scientists say such extreme weather events are a hallmark of climate change.

Then there's the human element. Across California, about 1.4 million homes were built in areas where residential areas and vegetation intermingle between 1990 and 2020, a 40% increase, the Silvis Lab found.

Fires that begin close to populated areas are often caused by people, and their proximity to people means they are usually extinguished sooner. As David Helmers, a data scientist and geographer at the Silvis Lab, put it, "Humans tend to ignite fires, but they also fight fires."

But that wasn't the case with the Eaton and Palisades fires, which were whipped by fierce Santa Ana winds to overwhelm fire crews.

The 2017 Tubbs Fire in northern California's wine country came under similar high winds. That blaze, sparked by a residential electrical system, tore through suburban areas of Santa Rosa, killing 22 people and destroying more than 5,600 homes, businesses and other structures. Overnight, the rubble of the Coffey Park neighbourhood became a symbol for how quickly a wildfire can reach a populated area.

Some 53 years prior, another fire - the Hanly Fire - burned through almost the exact same area. Winds helped it spread with furious speed. But with little development at the time, nobody died and only 100 homes were lost.

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Biden's Ukraine disaster was decades in the making

Leonid Ragozin

President Joe Biden is about to wrap up what many perceive as a disastrous presidency. His departure from the White House could potentially mark a turning point in both the Russia-Ukraine conflict and in the three decades of poorly thought-out Western policies which resulted in the alienation of Russia and the collapse of its democratic project. But that hinges on the incoming President Donald Trump's ability not to repeat the mistakes of his predecessors.

It is Russian President Vladimir Putin who decided to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, but the ground for this conflict was prepared by US securocrats in the 1990s. Back then, Russia had just emerged from the dissolution of the USSR much weaker and disoriented, while the Russian leadership, idealistic and inept as it was at the time, worked on the assumption that full-blown integration with the West was inevitable.

Decisions made at that time triggered confrontation between Russia and the West which arrived at its logical climax during Biden's presidency.

The problem was never the eastward expansion of NATO - a security pact created to confront the Soviet Union - and the European Union per se, but Russia's exclusion from this process.

Crucially, this approach set Ukraine on the course of Euro-Atlantic integration while Russia was kept out of it - creating a rift between two nations closely linked to each other by history, economic and interpersonal relations. It also precipitated Russia's securitisation and backsliding on democracy under Putin.

This outcome was never pre-destined and it took relentless efforts by American securocrats to bring it about.

One of the lost chances for a different path was the Partnership for Peace programme, officially launched by the Clinton administration in 1994. It was designed to balance the desire of former Warsaw Pact countries to join NATO and the crucial goal of keeping Russia on board - as a major nuclear power and a new democracy with a clearly pro-Western government.

Russia joined it but, as the American historian Mary Sarotte writes in her book Not One Inch, this useful framework was derailed at its inception by a small number of securocrats in Washington.

She specifically talks about "the pro-expansion troika", consisting of Daniel Fried, Alexander Vershbow, and Richard Holbrooke, who pushed for an aggressive expansion of NATO, disregarding protests from Moscow.

Sarotte also mentions John Herbst as the author of a later report on unofficial promises of NATO's non-expansion made to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev which, as she suggests, shaped the US policy of ignoring Russia's complaints about NATO expanding all the way to its borders for decades to come.

The unreflective arrogance and triumphalism

that these securocrats embody can also be seen in Biden himself who back then was a prominent member of Congress. In a 1997 video, he mocked Moscow's protests against NATO expansion by saying that Russia would have to embrace China and Iran if it kept being intransigent. He clearly assumed it to be an absurd and unrealistic scenario back then - believing, perhaps, that Russia had no choice but to stay in the Western orbit. But it turned out exactly along the lines of what he thought was a smart joke.

In his hawkish politics on Russia, Biden found a willing partner in the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. It is

in the White House, Zelenskyy ordered a clamp-down on Putin's Ukrainian ally Viktor Medvedchuk, while simultaneously launching loud campaigns for Ukraine's NATO membership, the return of Crimea, as well as for the derailling of the Russo-German Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. Two factors may have played into Zelenskyy's decisions. Azerbaijan's victory over Russian-backed Armenian forces in the fall of 2020, achieved largely thanks to Turkish Bayraktar drones, gave hopes that high-tech warfare against Russia could be successful. The other factor was that in December 2020, polls showed Medvedchuk's

The Ukrainian president had been elected on the promise that he would end the simmering conflict that began with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. He met with Putin in Paris in December 2019 and the two agreed to a ceasefire in the Donbas region, which both sides had largely respected, reducing the number of deaths to near zero. But once Biden set foot in the White House, Zelenskyy ordered a clamp-down on Putin's Ukrainian ally Viktor Medvedchuk, while simultaneously launching loud campaigns for Ukraine's NATO membership, the return of Crimea, as well as for the derailling of the Russo-German Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. Two factors may have played into Zelenskyy's decisions. Azerbaijan's victory over Russian-backed Armenian forces in the fall of 2020, achieved largely thanks to Turkish Bayraktar drones, gave hopes that high-tech warfare against Russia could be successful. The other factor was that in December 2020, polls showed Medvedchuk's party ahead of Zelenskyy's. Just a few days after Biden's inauguration, Zelenskyy gave an interview to American outlet Axios in which he famously asked his US counterpart: "Why Ukraine is still not in NATO?" This was followed by an op-ed with the same question in the title by Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, published by Atlantic Council - a think tank that gets much of its funding from the US government and Pentagon contractors.

hardly a coincidence that Zelenskyy's massive U-turn on relations with Russia started as Biden took office.

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shaped US policies towards Russia in the 1990s also egged on the Biden administration to adopt aggressive policies that contributed to making the invasion happen.

On March 5, Fried, Vershbow and Herbst, along with three others, published a report in the Atlantic Council with a list of recommendations for the Biden administration with regard to Ukraine and Russia. These boiled down to pressuring Putin by escalating on every front - from offering NATO membership plan to Ukraine to derailling Nord Stream 2 and "enhancing security" in the Black Sea.

Three weeks after that publication, Putin began deploying troops on the Ukrainian border, embarking on 11 months of hair-raising brinkmanship. This period saw the British warship HMS Defender entering what Russia had declared its territorial waters off the coast of occupied Crimea in June, the US starting secret supplies of weapons to Ukraine in September and finally the US and Ukraine announcing a strategic partnership in November - a move that amounted to casus belli in the eyes of Kremlin hawks.

It was around that time that Putin began preparing for the invasion in earnest before eventually triggering it in February 2022. The resulting war is now approaching its third anniversary.

Despite massive Western backing, Ukraine suffered terrible losses and gained nothing from challenging Putin to a fight. The war has brought Ukraine to the brink, causing a massive refugee crisis, economic collapse, social disintegration and ever-growing death toll.

If peace in Ukraine is achieved this year, it will likely be along the lines of the failed Istanbul agreements of 2022, which envisioned an Austria-styled neutral Ukraine with limits on the size of its army. Russia will likely insist on keeping much of the territory that it gained as punishment for Ukrainian intransigence. This will technically constitute a defeat for Ukraine, but it will be a clear win for the Ukrainian people, who have borne the brunt of this war, as well as for the rest of the world.

It will also be a major defeat for the securocratic class which has been pushing for a new standoff with Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The aggressive pursuit of expansion at the expense of Russia has clearly failed as a strategy. It is time for Western policymakers to do some soul-searching on how to reverse the situation and start a slow drift back towards rapprochement with Moscow.

This is not about absolving Putin's government from accountability for the crime of aggression as well as war crimes committed by Russian troops. It is about removing conditions which caused Russia's transformation into a militarised dictatorship and ending a conflict which will keep propping up Putin's regime for as long as it lasts.

Saudi Arabia takes a more proactive leadership role

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

Saudi Arabia has emerged as a central player in efforts to address some of the most pressing regional issues affecting the Middle East, which signals a profound shift in its foreign policy approach.

Under the leadership of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom is no longer content to operate in the shadows of American diplomacy or maintain a reactive posture. Instead, it is taking proactive steps to redefine its role as a much-needed stabilizing force in the region.

This new approach is particularly evident in recent engagements with Lebanon and post-Assad Syria, with Riyadh positioning itself as a key guarantor of peace and normalization, and as a broker for regional stability.

One of the clearest examples of an evolving Saudi foreign policy is its leadership in Gulf states' rapprochement with Syria. After more than a decade of civil war, the country remains fractured and

national partners.

While Saudi Arabia's renewed engagement in Lebanon is still unfolding, its proactive role is already helping to reshape the political calculus in Beirut. By reasserting its influence, Riyadh hopes to foster a more balanced political environment that is conducive to stability and economic recovery.

The Kingdom's active roles in Syria and Lebanon are emblematic of a broader shift in its regional strategy. Under King Salman and the crown prince, the nation has moved away from its historically cautious and reactive foreign policy to embrace a more assertive and dynamic approach.

This shift reflects both recognition of changing geopolitical realities and a desire to position Saudi Arabia as a leader in the Arab world.

One of the key drivers of this transformation is the Saudi Vision 2030 project, which represents an ambitious blueprint for economic diversification and modernization. A stable and

For years, Riyadh distanced itself, frustrated by the outsized influence of Hezbollah. However, Lebanon's deepening political and economic crises — exacerbated by a prolonged presidential vacuum that was finally resolved this month — prompted the Saudis to reengage. This renewed interaction has been instrumental in shaping the political landscape as Lebanon elects a new president and hopes to implement much-needed reforms. The Saudi involvement has been particularly evident in the form of behind-the-scenes diplomacy intended to help build consensus among Lebanon's fractured political factions. Riyadh's influence was also felt through its support for a French initiative to resolve the political deadlock in the country, signaling a willingness to work collaboratively with international partners.

unstable. The fall of Bashar Assad's regime has given way to a new government led by Ahmad Al-Sharaa, which is now in full control and playing its cards very carefully.

Recognizing the need for pragmatic engagement with the new authorities, Saudi Arabia has spearheaded efforts to bring Syria back into the Arab League fold, a move that reflects a strategic pivot from isolation to integration.

This shift is not without controversy. Critics argue that reengagement with Syria risks legitimization of a nation still grappling with the aftermath of conflict and external influence. However, the Saudi calculus is clear: The continued isolation of Syria will do little to alleviate the suffering of its people.

By leading the Gulf states in the process of normalizing ties with Damascus, Riyadh aims to bring the reconstruction of Syria under the purview of Arab states rather than of external powers.

The Kingdom's leadership role in this underscores its commitment to fostering a new regional order in which Arab states take the lead in efforts to resolve their own crises.

In Lebanon, too, Saudi Arabia has reemerged as a significant player in the country's political dynamics. For years, Riyadh distanced itself, frustrated by the outsized influence of Hezbollah.

However, Lebanon's deepening political and economic crises — exacerbated by a prolonged presidential vacuum that was finally resolved this month — prompted the Saudis to reengage. This renewed interaction has been instrumental in shaping the political landscape as Lebanon elects a new president and hopes to implement much-needed reforms.

The Saudi involvement has been particularly evident in the form of behind-the-scenes diplomacy intended to help build consensus among Lebanon's fractured political factions. Riyadh's influence was also felt through its support for a French initiative to resolve the political deadlock in the country, signaling a willingness to work collaboratively with inter-

prosperous Middle East is crucial for the success of this vision, because regional instability poses significant risks to Saudi Arabia's economic ambitions. By taking a leading role in efforts to resolve regional conflicts, Riyadh seeks to create a more conducive environment for economic growth and investment.

Another factor in these developments is the recalibration of US policy regarding the Middle East. As Washington's focus pivots toward Asia and it adopts a more hands-off approach to the region, Saudi Arabia has recognized the need to fill the vacuum of regional leadership. This has led the Kingdom to adopt a more independent and self-reliant foreign policy, characterized by pragmatic engagement with former adversaries and greater willingness to take calculated risks.

While such a proactive regional role offers significant opportunities, it also comes with challenges. In Syria, the path to normalization is fraught with complexities, including the return of refugees and the reconstruction of a war-torn country.

In Lebanon, Riyadh's efforts to counter the influence of Hezbollah is likely to face resistance, given the entrenched position of the group within Lebanese politics.

Balancing these competing priorities will require careful and skillful diplomacy, as well as a willingness to adapt to evolving circumstances.

Saudi Arabia's increasing leadership role in efforts to address pressing regional issues marks a significant turning point in its foreign policy. By taking proactive roles in Syria and Lebanon, the Kingdom is demonstrating its commitment to fostering regional stability and charting a new course for the Arab world.

While challenges remain, Saudi Arabia's bold approach offers a promising framework for addressing the complex and inter-related crises that have long plagued the Middle East. If successful, the Saudi leadership could pave the way for a more stable and prosperous region, with Riyadh firmly at its helm.

How a weak opposition kept Netanyahu in power

The phrase — “When the cannons are heard, the muses are silent. When the cannons are silent, the muses are heard” — is attributed to a Soviet Culture Ministry official and was immortalized by Truman Capote in his non-fiction book, “The Muses Are Heard,” in which he laments the fact that governments cannot be criticized during wartime.

Ironically, it is during times of crisis and conflict that the voice of the opposition is needed, more than at any other time, to scrutinize government activities relating to the most acute issues of national interest, including those of life and death, and possibly the very survival of the country. The pressing need is for an opposition voice that is both constructively critical and responsible. Over the past two years, the Israeli opposition has been composed of a number of parties who have not covered themselves in glory, neither before the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas nor after.

There are elements within the opposition — including its head, Yair Lapid from the Yesh Atid party, and one or two from what remains of the Israeli Labor Party, such as Naama Lazimi and Gilad Kariv — who did set an example for others on how to function as a proactive opposition. They did so, first by strongly contesting the government’s assault on the nation’s democratic system and then by making it clear, until the intervention by incoming US President Donald Trump, that the government was leading the country into a never-ending war in Gaza, whether for ideological reasons or other purposes, in order to remain in power and, in the case of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to derail his corruption trial.

An opposition has the “cumbersome” dual task of overseeing the policies and behavior of a government while establishing itself as

a credible alternative. For too long the opposition in the Knesset, much as elsewhere in Israeli society, allowed the prime minister to completely control the national agenda and how it was conducted. It fell into the right-wing, populist demagoguery trap, which is even more venomous during times of war, thereby enabling the government to accuse it of lack of patriotism, naivety, being pro-Palestinian, ready to risk the security of the country for their lofty “peacenik” ideals, and serving foreign interests. Pushed into a defensive stance in such circumstances, an opposition therefore feels the need to react to such smears instead of going on the attack.

Members of the current right-wing coalition government in Israel operate on the premise that if one repeats a lie often enough, the people will end up believing it. They have used this strategy effectively against the opposition, not well enough to completely silence it but sufficiently well to cow it into self-censorship to the point that it has become less critical and effective than it should be in such crucial times.

In the nine months before the war began, when hundreds of thousands of Israelis regularly took to the streets in protest against the judicial coup being carried out by the government through legislation designed to damage democratic pillars and weaken the judiciary, one might have expected the opposition in the Knesset, in all its shades, to be at the forefront of the demonstrations, standing alongside civil society organizations to lead them and shield them as police violence against protesters became more prevalent.

A handful of opposition members did this but most expressed support from a safe distance; failing to back, for example, widespread strikes organized by unions, or announcing they would no longer volunteer to serve in the military, something they were under no legal obligation to do anyway.

Israelis such as these declared that they were not prepared to serve a government that was leading the country toward authoritarianism. Yet in the immediate aftermath of the Oct. 7 attacks, those who were military volunteers rushed to serve, despite having been labeled traitors by many of their fellow Israelis, including some members of the Cabinet.

Meanwhile, the decision by certain prominent figures within the opposition, first and foremost former Defense Minister Benny

Gantz, to rush into accepting a government role probably saved Netanyahu’s premiership and his government from collapse. No doubt part of their motivation for doing so stemmed from a genuine desire to serve their country in one of its darkest moments, and to mitigate the influence of far-right figures within the government, including those who suggested the entire population of Gaza was responsible for the events of Oct. 7, and who wanted to reoccupy Gaza and build settlements there.

However, there was also an aspect to their decision that is persistent in Israeli politics, which fails to grasp the crucial role of the opposition in preventing irresponsible acts by the government: Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot could have remained outside the administration and shared their vast experience when requested, while at the same time remaining free to forcefully highlight the lack of strategy, let alone morality, evident in the manner in which authorities were conducting the war in Gaza.

Another case in point that illustrates an opposition afraid of its own shadow came when most of its members, with the exception of those who represent Palestinian citizens of Israel, abstained from a vote on provocative legislation brought to the Knesset by the governing coalition: a bill to indefinitely preclude the establishment of a Palestinian state, despite its backers’ previous support for a two-state solution.

The abstention was an act of irresponsible political cowardice, in its tacit support for the sabotage of any future peace agreement with the Palestinians. This was precisely the type of situation in which a responsible opposition that wishes to fashion itself as a genuine alternative, both in substance and style, should have taken a brave stand and voted against such a bill.

To make matters worse, Gideon Sa’ar, leader of a small opposition faction within the Knesset whose long-running toxic feud with the Netanyahu is well documented, could not resist a recent offer from the Israeli prime minister to join the government as its new foreign minister, something that might enable him to crawl his way back into the Likud party with the faint hope of one day replacing Netanyahu; such cynicism, mixed with delusion, from someone who once declared he would never serve in a Netanyahu government.

That the government has let down the country and its people hardly needs further elaboration. But the inability of opposition members — whether those already in the Knesset or emergent figures yet to be elected — to oppose the actions of the administration is as powerful a testimony to their own failings as it is to Netanyahu’s manipulative survival instincts.

Common wisdom has it that elections are won from the center ground. But there are times at which the electorate should be presented with a clear, distinctive and courageous alternative choice, and Israel is desperately in need of such an opposition to restore trust and hope in the people. However, such a muscular opposition has yet to emerge.

Refugee scapegoating is North Africa’s troubling ‘new’ trend

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Why has North Africa, with its complex history and fragile political fabric, turned to the scapegoating of refugees and migrants amid its own crises?

This trend, far from being an isolated occurrence, is part of a broader, more alarming phenomenon in which the sub-region has been transformed into a veritable crossroads for sub-Saharan African migrants attempting to reach Europe.

Meanwhile, stringent European border externalization policies have pressured countries such as Tunisia to act as immigration “gatekeepers,” straining their already limited resources.

The result is a morally corrosive narrative framing these vulnerable individuals not as victims seeking refuge but as convenient scapegoats for internal socioeconomic and political failures. This diversion of blame not only exacerbates human suffering but also obfuscates systemic issues within these North African nations.

Investigation of this trend further unearths deeper questions: What compels these governments to channel public frustration toward displaced peoples, and how does this shift in policy and perception align with historical patterns of societal manipulation by political elites in crisis?

Across North Africa, the erosion of support for refugees is more than just an echo of the anti-immigrant sentiment seen in other parts of the world; it is the result of calculated political maneuvering by regimes grappling with uncontrollable economic and social distress.

Attention to systemic failures, from corruption to democratic erosion, is deftly redirected toward refugees as scapegoats. This redirection is epitomized by oppressive policies and hostile politics that exploit public discontent while ignoring the root causes of socioeconomic instability.

The economic grievances that fuel this blame game are palpable. The high unemployment rates, deteriorating public services, and rampant corruption that siphons off national wealth are conveniently masked by vilifying the displaced.

However, this subterfuge does nothing to address the underlying structural failings. By shifting blame to refugees, regimes sidestep genuine accountability, which stifles any impetus for substantial reforms. Instead, this blame game tends to exacerbate the socioeconomic conditions it claims to alleviate. The policies engender not only societal divisions but also disregard the inadequacies in social contracts that promise economic stability and progress.

Consequently, blaming the desperate and vulnerable is simply a diversion that neither resolves fundamental issues nor inspires long-term solutions but rather perpetuates a cycle of blame and avoidance, devoid of constructive outcomes.

The alignment with historical practices of societal manipulation is unmistakable in its strategy and execution. Authorities, faced with erosion of trust in public institutions and mounting discontent, tap into pre-existing biases and amplify

of interventionism.

However, the influx of European funds has emboldened these regimes to pursue “security first” policies, ultimately turning migrants into convenient culprits for domestic woes. Rather than diminishing the migration-related pressures, this practice engenders a vicious cycle: public discontent with the presence of refugees or migrants invokes harsher domestic policies, which in turn trigger even more significant migration and deepen the socioeconomic fractures both within and beyond North Africa.

As a result, the mirage of immediate frontier security diverts attention from the imperative need for comprehensive, inclusive policies that could tackle the

The demand from European leaders for immediate, tangible results forces Brussels to continually funnel funds to North African governments, ignoring endemic abuses and pervasive corruption, merely to project a facade of interventionism. However, the influx of European funds has emboldened these regimes to pursue “security first” policies, ultimately turning migrants into convenient culprits for domestic woes. Rather than diminishing the migration-related pressures, this practice engenders a vicious cycle: public discontent with the presence of refugees or migrants invokes harsher domestic policies, which in turn trigger even more significant migration and deepen the socioeconomic fractures both within and beyond North Africa. As a result, the mirage of immediate frontier security diverts attention from the imperative need for comprehensive, inclusive policies that could tackle the foundational socioeconomic disparities that drive irregular migration.

example, funds intended for migratory control have been siphoned off by a kleptocratic elite, exacerbating local corruption and further destabilizing the region.

Such externalization efforts by Europe are motivated by a desire to mitigate domestic political crises caused by irregular migration, a strategy that offers a short-term palliative but fails to address the systemic issues at the heart of these movements.

This coupling of financial aid with turning a blind eye to human rights abuses not only sustains existing provincial calamities but also spreads xenophobic rhetoric that inevitably seeps into local policies, as observed in the rising public dissatisfaction with migrants in urban coastal regions of North Africa.

Meanwhile, growing anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe, illustrated by the increased support for political parties with rigid anti-immigration stances, constrains Europe’s maneuverability, making long-term solutions seem politically prohibitive.

The demand from European leaders for immediate, tangible results forces Brussels to continually funnel funds to North African governments, ignoring endemic abuses and pervasive corruption, merely to project a facade

Ocean currents are the lifeblood of marine ecosystems

Water is the essence of life, and its movement across the oceans, driven by powerful currents, connects marine ecosystems. Ocean currents, both on the surface and in deep waters, influence countless species and regulate the planet’s climate.

For Saudi Arabia, with its unique marine ecosystems along the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf, understanding and protecting ocean currents is a critical mission led by the National Center for Wildlife, or NCW.

Ocean currents, often called the “conveyor belts” of the sea, transport heat, nutrients and oxygen, while connecting marine populations. Surface currents are mainly driven by wind, while deep ocean currents are shaped by differences in water density due to temperature and salinity variations.

These currents play a crucial role in shaping marine ecosystems, supporting biodiversity and maintaining the delicate balance of life beneath the waves.

For example, juvenile sea turtles in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea rely on

ocean currents during their early-life stages. Hatchlings drift with these currents for the first few months, gaining protection and determining the foraging areas that they will return to as adults.

Similarly, coral reefs — among the most biodiverse habitats — depend on ocean currents to distribute

Mohammed Qurban

can disrupt migration routes for species such as whales and eels, hinder the flow of essential nutrients and alter the range of coral reefs. For example, warming waters from shifting currents in Western Australia have been linked to widespread coral bleaching and seagrass loss.

These impacts ripple through the marine food chain, affecting everything from plankton to apex predators such as sharks.

The National Center for Wildlife recognizes the crucial role of ocean currents in sustaining marine life

and maintaining ecological balance. In the Red Sea, one of the world’s most biologically significant marine regions, the NCW studies and protects the connectivity of marine populations influenced by these currents.

In collaboration with regional partners, the NCW is leading efforts to rehabilitate key habitats, such as turtle nesting sites and coral reefs, which are vital to the health of ocean currents.

Additionally, the NCW is leading efforts to address the impacts of climate change on marine biodiversity. By closely monitoring changes in ocean circulation patterns, the NCW is developing strategies to mitigate disruptions to species migration, larval dispersal and habitat health.

These initiatives enhance the resilience of Saudi Arabia’s marine ecosystems and align with global biodiversity conservation goals, including the 30x30 pledge to protect 30 percent of the planet’s land and oceans by 2030.

Ocean currents offer important lessons, reflecting the interconnectedness of our actions and their consequences. By understanding and protecting these currents, we help to ensure the survival of species, the stability of ecosystems and the resilience of our planet in a changing climate.

As the steward of its natural heritage, Saudi Arabia has a responsibility to protect its marine ecosystems and the global systems they support. The NCW is committed to advancing research, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering international collaboration to preserve the lifeblood of our oceans for future generations.

Tomorrow’s wild depends on our will today.

‘Wokeism’ fading as America turns new page

Dalia Al-Aqidi

Social movements are strong drivers of change, occurring when people join together to fight unfair systems, call for equality and push for improvements. These movements often grow out of long-standing problems in society and play a significant role in shaping culture and politics. They are powerful expressions of collective action born from the desire to address challenges and they have the potential to drive profound cultural and political change. However, these movements can also spark controversy, division or consequences.

While many movements are celebrated for their transformative impact, not all social movements are inherently positive. Some may advance divisive ideologies or fail to achieve their intended goals, highlighting the complexity of collective activism.

The US has long been a

cradle for such movements, serving as a focal point for both inspirational and contentious causes. Among the many movements that have emerged from the US, Black Lives Matter and Me Too illustrate this dual nature.

The global impact of American social movements can be attributed to the US’ cultural dominance, technological influence and tradition of activism. Social movements from the US often gain international traction because the issues they address can also be applied to other Western societies.

Sometimes, movements can polarize societies, misrepresent nuanced issues or even be co-opted for agendas that deviate from their original intent. Black Lives Matter, initially established to combat systemic racism and police brutality in the US, has not been without its controversies. While it

brought crucial attention to issues of racial injustice, some factions within the movement have been criticized for promoting divisive rhetoric or exacerbating tensions during protests. Additionally, allegations of fraud and financial mismanagement among its leadership have raised questions about the movement’s transparency and accountability, leading to concerns about whether its actions align with its stated mission.

“Wokeism” is a cultural and social movement that focuses on raising awareness about social injustices, especially those connected to race, gender and inequality. Over the past decade, particularly after the nationwide protests sparked by George Floyd’s death in 2020, ideas of diversity, equity and inclusion, known as DEI, have gained significant traction across America. These principles

have become central to many progressive and far-left movements, often serving as tools for political and electoral gain.

DEI advocates aimed to create fair and inclusive environments, not only in workplaces but also in educational institutions and public spaces. These policies encourage the active participation of people from diverse backgrounds, including genders, races, abilities, sexual orientations and other identity markers. Many organizations have adopted measures to bring DEI principles to life. These include bias awareness training, mentorship programs for underrepresented groups and transparent hiring or promotion practices designed to create equal opportunities.

While these efforts have sparked progress, they have also generated debate about their effectiveness and whether they always achieve their intended outcomes. These policies have not stood the test of time in the US. Despite their rapid spread, the nation is now seeing a growing backlash, with many people questioning their effectiveness and questioning their impact on society.

Since the Supreme Court’s landmark decision on affirmative action in 2023, which declared race-based admissions in colleges and universities unconstitutional, there has been a sharp increase in lawsuits challenging DEI programs. This ruling sent shockwaves across various sectors, prompting a broader reevaluation of such initiatives.

Many DEI programs have failed because they prioritize identity over

qualifications, often resulting in mismatched roles and underperformance. A striking critique came from Harvard itself, a prominent advocate of these policies. Last year, the Harvard Business Review published a revealing article stating that DEI training is largely ineffective. The article questioned the value of these programs, suggesting that they do little to create meaningful change or improve workplace dynamics. The inefficiency of DEI programs is costly, with US companies spending billions annually on initiatives that lack impact. This raises serious concerns about wasted resources and calls for a closer look at how these policies are implemented and their effectiveness.

The decline of DEI initiatives and identity politics is becoming increasingly evident. Companies are stepping back from prac-

tices once seen as central to promoting diversity. Meta, for example, recently ended its fact-checking program, which had silenced conservative voices on its platforms for years. This move reflects a broader shift away from “woke” policies, with a growing list of corporations scaling back such efforts.

Over the past two years, large companies have responded to public and shareholder pressure by cutting back on DEI programs. This trend began in 2024 and gained momentum in the new year. As more organizations move away from these practices, the era of censorship and identity-based policies seems to be fading, giving rise to new approaches prioritizing merit and inclusivity without controversy.

American “wokeism” has reached a tipping point, fading both socially and politically. The once-domi-

nant ideology has lost its grip, with even Democrats now pointing to their party’s “woke” wing as a key factor in their political setbacks. The 2024 election, in which swing voters decisively chose Donald Trump over Kamala Harris, highlighted the growing rejection of identity politics and divisive narratives.

This shift carries lessons for the rest of the Western world. Europe, in particular, should take note of the consequences of embracing similar ideologies, which risk alienating broad swaths of the electorate.

As the US turns away from “woke” policies, it paves the way for a renewed focus on unity, merit and commonsense solutions to shared challenges. The decline of “wokeism” marks the dawn of a more balanced and inclusive future, offering hope for healthier political and social discourse.



SMEs integral part of supply chain: PFC CEO

LAHORE (APP): Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a pivotal role in Pakistan's economy, serving as an essential part of the supply chain for key export industries such as textiles, food processing, and engineering. This was stated by Mian Kashif Ashfaq, Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC), during a discussion with a delegation of industrialists led by Muhammad Farhan Munir Arain, Coordinator to the Federal Tax Ombudsman, here on Sunday.

He highlighted that manufacturing-based Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) currently receive only 5.3 percent of the banking sector's lending to the entire manufacturing industry and a nominal 11.5 percent in the construction

sector.

He emphasized the need to significantly increase these figures to enhance exports and productivity in line with global standards, as seen in the USA and other Western countries.

He further pointed out that manufacturing and construction were Pakistan's two largest employment-generating sectors, underscoring their critical role in economic development.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq stressed that while the expansion of e-commerce and IT-enabled services (IT-ES) offers new opportunities, sustainable economic growth can only be achieved if the manufacturing sector grows simultaneously.

Promoting manufacturing-based Small and Me-

dium Enterprises (SMEs) was vital for this growth.

He warned that if this was not prioritized, the manufacturing sector might shift toward trading, leaving a significant gap in the supply chain of key industries.

He also called for SMEs to adopt advanced technology to improve product quality and compete in global markets on par with international standards. Citing SMEDA, he noted that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contribute 40 percent to Pakistan's GDP and 25 percent to export revenues, a figure that must be increased to match the success stories of countries like France, Italy, Japan, China, and the UK.

Leader of the delegation, Muhammad Farhan Munir,

emphasized that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) connected to both the manufacturing and construction sectors must not be deprived of adequate financing, as this could exacerbate unemployment.

He urged State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to ease financing conditions further by addressing issues such as the lack of acceptable security and high financing costs.

He also called on the Bank of Pakistan to ensure that banks proactively invest in reaching underserved classes of borrowers, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises.

"This is essential to unlocking the true potential of SMEs and addressing the chronic unemployment challenges in the country," he said.



RAWALPINDI: Vendors displaying seasonal fruit 'oranges' to attract customers at Pirwadhai.

PR making new freight wagons

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan Railways is manufacturing new freight wagons with the assistance of a Chinese company to enhance transportation capacity across the country.

The latest initiative, under Special Investment Facilitation Council, is making significant strides towards reducing reliance on imports and promoting direct foreign investment.

After the successful delivery of two hundred wagons, Pakistan Railways has begun the production of an additional six hundred and twenty wagons locally. This project will create four hundred and fifty new jobs and special attention is being paid towards training young technicians in this specialized field.

The assembly of one hundred and fifteen Flat wagons in Lahore has been completed with the help of Chinese investment, and they are expected to be deployed in April.

The manufacturing of one hundred and fifteen advanced wagons in Risalpur, deployed at Karachi Port, will further enhance the freight capacity of Pakistan's rail network.

Meeting reviews cargo flights

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The officials of Air Sial reviewed situation to launch flight operation from Bahawalpur International Airport including cargo service for the Bahawalpur Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

A meeting was held at the Bahawalpur Chamber of Commerce & Industry that was also attended by Chairman, Air Sial Pakistan, Fazal Jeelani and Chairman, Al-Noor Group and Director Air Sial, Mahar Muhammad Ashraf.

The meeting reviewed feasibility, available structure at the Bahawalpur International Airport and other facilities to launch flight operation by the Air Sial including cargo service for industrialists and business community who are also the members of Bahawalpur Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

The representatives of Air Sial Pakistan said that their company was ready to start flight operation from Bahawalpur International Airport if required facilities were provided to the company from the authorities concerned.

Pakistan to launch Panda Bond by June

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb says Pakistan plans to launch Panda Bond by June this year with an aim to enhance country's presence in China's capital markets.

In an interview with Hong Kong's TVB News Channel, he said through the issuance of the Panda Bond, Pakistan intends to raise approximately two hundred million US dollars from Chinese investors.

The Minister emphasized that this step is part of a broader strategy to transition Pakistan's economy towards export-driven growth, with a focus on achieving sustainability in the country's balance of payments.

He also highlighted the critical importance of the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Muhammad Aurangzeb said that second phase of

CPEC would attract more Chinese companies and also open avenues for increased investments.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb extended invitation to Hong Kong to send delegations to explore trade and financial opportunities in Pakistan.

The Finance Minister opined that Hong Kong could serve as a strategic hub for joint ventures between Chinese and Pakistani companies.

Saudi Arabia's real estate price index rises 3.6%

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia's property sector maintained its growth trajectory in the fourth quarter of 2024, with the Kingdom's real estate price index increasing by 3.6 percent year on year, official data showed.

According to the General Authority for Statistics, the growth was primarily driven by the residential real estate sector, which recorded a 3.1 percent rise compared to the same period in 2023.

The Real Estate Price Index, a key statistical tool, measures changes in property prices in Saudi Arabia based on transaction data across the Kingdom.

Developing the real estate sector is a core objective of Vision 2030, which aims to position Saudi Arabia as a global hub for tourism and business.

According to the Real Estate General Authority, the Kingdom's property market is projected to reach

\$69.51 billion in 2024 and \$101.62 billion by 2029, with a compound annual growth rate of 8 percent.

"Data indicates that real estate prices in the residential sector experienced varying increases in the fourth quarter of 2024 compared to the same quarter of the previous year. The residential sector recorded an overall increase of 3.1 percent, with a weighting of 72.6 percent in the index," said GASTAT. The rise was largely attributed to a 2.5 percent increase in residential land plot prices, which account for 45.7 percent of the index. Apartment prices rose by 2.9 percent, while villa prices saw a sharper uptick of 6.5 percent.

However, prices for residential floors registered a slight decline of 0.7 percent year on year in the fourth quarter of 2024.

The commercial real estate sector experienced a 5 percent year-on-year price increase, primarily

driven by a 5.2 percent rise in commercial land plot prices. Building prices also grew by 5.1 percent, while prices for galleries and shops declined by 1.7%.

Property prices rose by 2.8 percent during the quarter compared to the same period in 2023 in the agricultural sector.

In the Riyadh region, real estate prices rose by 10.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, while property expenses in Najran and Tabuk increased by 4.6 percent and 1.1 percent, respectively, during the same period. Real estate prices in Makkah declined by 0.6 percent, and property expenses in the Eastern Province dropped by 4.6 percent.

GASTAT also reported that property prices in Al-aha and Asir experienced significant declines of 16.7 percent and 7.3% in the fourth quarter compared to the same period in 2023.



RAWALPINDI: A vendor cleaning fish for customers as demand increased during winter season.

Ahsan emphasizes need for collective efforts to stabilize country's economy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Member of the Central Core Committee of United Business Group (PCCI), Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, emphasized the need for collective efforts to stabilize Pakistan's economy and promote local industries.

He expressed these views during his visit to the Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where he congratulated the newly elected President of the Chakwal Chamber, Aamir Najeeb Bhutta, and other office bearers.

On this occasion, former President of the Chakwal Chamber and Chief Coordinator Khawaja Arif hosted a luncheon at his residence in honor of the delegation.

He stated that the establishment of an industrial estate in Chakwal would be a game-changer for the

region. To complete this project promptly, Islamabad, Chakwal, Talagang, and other regional chambers must adopt a joint strategy.

Ahsan Bakhtawari, along with UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, former President of Chakwal Chamber Waqar Bakhtawari, and President of Talagang Chamber Malik Shabbir Awan, presented bouquets and congratulated Aamir Najeeb Bhutta, Senior Vice President Sheikh Riaz Ahmed Farooqi, Vice President Khalid Mirza, and other office bearers of the Chakwal Chamber.

The newly elected President, Aamir Najeeb Bhutta, stated that establishing the industrial estate is one of his top priorities, and he would utilize all resources to make

it a reality.

He appreciated the support of other chambers and the business community in this regard.

In his speech, Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the importance of the Chakwal Industrial Estate project, stating that it would give a new direction to the economy of not just Chakwal but the entire region.

Waqar Zafar Bakhtawari noted that Chakwal has always been a hub of business activities, and the establishment of the industrial estate will provide employment opportunities to locals and open new avenues for the business community.

President of the Talagang Chamber of Commerce, Malik Shabbir Awan, assured his full support for the completion of the project and stressed that

the government and local chambers must ensure the provision of funds and resources for its successful implementation.

Group Leader of Chakwal Chamber, Qazi Muhammad Akbar, emphasized that the industrial estate would bring an industrial revolution to the region.

He pledged to expedite efforts for the construction of the Chakwal Chamber building and to work with all relevant institutions to complete the project.

All speakers unanimously agreed on the need for regional chambers to collaborate to make the industrial estate project a success.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the local business community also pledged their full support for the success of this initiative.

PIAF to take all associations on board to finalize budget proposals



F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has decided to take all trade and industry associations on board for the preparation of budget proposals.

The decision in this regard was taken at a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF), which was held under the chairmanship of PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol, with special participation of Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Patron-in-Chief and Vice President of the Saarc Chamber, Mian Anjum Nisar.

The meeting was attended by Lahore Chamber President Mian Abu Zar Shad, Senior Vice Chairman of PIAF

Nasrullah Moghal, Vice Chairman of PIAF Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry, former Chairman of PIAF Mohammad Ali Mian, and Executive Committee members of PIAF and Lahore Chamber including Tanveer Ahmad Sheikh, Irfan Ahmad Qureshi, Abdul Majid, Shabaan Akhtar, Ahad Amin Malik, Rana Mohammad Nisar, Aamir Ali, Umar Sarfraz, Ahsen Shahid, Mian Muneeb Munnoo, Ali Imran, Firdous Nisar, and Amina Randhawa.

The PIAF chairman said that an effort would be made to give the government a set of suggestions that would help turn the upcoming budget business friendly.

He said that the business community understands that government was utilising its best abilities to overcome the economic chal-

lenges but, at the same, the private sector considers itself duty-bound to tell the government of hitches.

He said that the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has evolved two-pronged strategy to prepare proposals for the upcoming budget.

The meeting also discussed the performance of PIAF and Lahore Chamber, along with other matters.

The meeting expressed satisfaction with the performance of the PPP alliance.

On this occasion, Faheemur Rehman Saigol stated that in order to maintain our mandate, we must further improve our performance for the upcoming elections.

PIAF stands with the business community during difficult times and stays in touch with its members throughout the year, coordi-

nating with relevant authorities to resolve issues.

Mian Anjum Nisar mentioned that all stakeholders should prepare budget proposals in a timely manner and follow up with the relevant departments for success.

He expressed deep concern over the country's deteriorating economic situation and urged members to develop practical suggestions and action plans to address the country's fundamental issues.

Financial decision-makers should formulate policies that promote industrial progress and financial prosperity, which would lead to increased local production and exports.

For this purpose, affordable natural energy should be included in the priorities. The growth of trade and industrial activities, along with improvements in the energy sector, will drive the national economy's growth rate.

On this occasion, Lahore Chamber President Mian Abu Zar Shad, former President of Lahore Chamber, and former Chairman of Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF), Mohammad Ali Mian, also addressed the meeting.

CA surplus fine but \$1.7b trade deficit in December still challenge

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has said that third consecutive month's current account surplus is fine but challenges remain as the trade deficit is widening, with imports surpassing \$5 billion, enhancing risk for external account stability.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar warned that rising energy prices or a slowdown in remittances could strain the country's external finances.

Anjum Nisar said that export earnings rose to \$3 billion in December 2024, a 10% year-on-year (YoY) increase, exceeding the monthly average of \$2.6 bil-

lion over the past year. Meanwhile, imports averaged \$4.7 billion, resulting in a \$1.7 billion trade deficit for the month.

However, SBP reported a trade deficit \$719 million lower than the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). This discrepancy highlights the differing accounting methods used SBP employs a cash-based approach, while PBS uses accrual-based accounting, which includes deferred payment settlements. For IHFY25, the trade deficit figures reported by SBP and PBS remain close, at \$11.5 billion and \$11.2 billion, respectively.

Anjum Nisar said that the financial account recorded a deficit in December 2024 due to debt repayments to banks. However, fresh loans of \$733 million and foreign

direct investment (FDI) inflows of \$199 million provided partial support. As a result, the overall balance of payments (BoP) showed a minor deficit of \$73 million for December.

Despite external debt repayments, the cumulative BoP surplus for IHFY25 stands at \$1.7 billion, reflecting resilience, they wrote. This surplus stabilised SBP's foreign exchange reserves at \$11.7 billion, with import cover improving to 2.8 months, the highest in nearly three years.

He said that this positive trend is attributed to improved exports, robust remittances driven by mass human resource migration, moderate international commodity prices, and reduced non-essential imports due to declining purchasing power.

For the first half of fiscal year 2024-2025 (IHFY25), the cumulative CA surplus reached \$1.2 billion, a sharp contrast to the \$1.4 million deficit recorded in the same period last year. Export revenues climbed to \$3 billion in December, marking a 10% year-on-year growth and surpassing the monthly average of \$2.6 billion over the past year.

The continuous surplus in the current account for October, November, and December 2024 reflects the right direction of economic policies, he stated. The positive indicators reflect growing trust in the government's economic policies, he said, adding that programmes like "Uraan" will further strengthen the economy.

He attributed the surplus to robust remittance inflows, which outpaced the

trade deficit, along with a relatively lower services deficit. Revised figures, however, disrupted the streak of monthly surpluses, with the State Bank of Pakistan reporting deficits of \$59 million for August and \$21 million for September 2024. Despite these adjustments, the cumulative

Pakistan recorded a net FDI inflow of \$170 million in December 2024, down from \$219 million in November. However, net FDI inflows for IHFY25 grew by 20% YoY to \$1.3 billion, compared to \$1.1 billion in the same period last fiscal year.

For fiscal year 2024-2025 (FY25), the SBP projects a CA balance with in 0%-1% of GDP. JS Global noted that this target is achievable, supported by

a balanced trade deficit and steady remittance inflows.

Experts attributed the improved CA surplus to better exports, strong remittances, moderate global commodity prices, and curtailed non-essential imports due to reduced purchasing power. He noted, however, that the trade deficit widened in December as imports surpassed \$5 billion, underscoring challenges in sustaining external stability.

Pakistan's reliance on remittances and global demand for its exports remains a key vulnerability, they remarked. He cautioned that rising energy prices or declining remittances could affect future performance.

The surplus has helped bolster foreign exchange reserves, stabilise the rupee,

and enhance investor confidence. Sustaining this momentum will require strategic export diversification, maintaining remittance inflows, and managing imports effectively. Addressing structural vulnerabilities will be crucial for ensuring long-term economic resilience, Najib added.

They said that the federal cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, approved revised agreements with 14 Independent Power Producers (IPPs), a move expected to reduce electricity prices by Rs10-11 per unit.

The renegotiated contracts are set to save Rs802 billion by reducing the profits and costs of the IPPs, with an additional Rs35 billion to be deduct-

ed from excess profits earned in previous years.

Court Notice

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III matta / judicial Magistrate II. Matta swat. case # 211/1. Institution 22/11/23. Next Hearing date 07/02/2025. Abdul Qayyum etc.VS Zahir shah etc. Notice to defendant Heair defendant #. 2/1) Adil 2/3) Abdullah. 2/3) Amjid.2/4) Hussain. 2/5) Habib shah. 2/6) Ali shah. 2/7) Laiq shah sons. 2/8) Mst.Behen. 2/9) Tayyeba. 2/10) Akhtar bibi daughters. Mst. Bibi Ayesha r/o Baidara tehsil matta swat. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 07/02/2025. at 8.30 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.



In brief

Hatton holds off Hillier

DUBAI (Agencies): England's Tyrrell Hatton held his nerve at the final hole to edge out Daniel Hillier to win the Dubai Desert Classic by one shot. Hatton went to the 18th two shots ahead of Hillier but the New Zealander, who led by one shot going into Sunday, birdied it to leave the Englishman with a tricky par putt to win. The 33-year-old did just that to finish with a three-under 69 and a 15-under total to secure his eighth DP Tour title and move to the top of the Race To Dubai rankings. "I was nervous on the back nine and it was a bit scruffy at the last," he told Sky Sports. "But it feels amazing. I said earlier in the week that this is an event you would love to have on your CV so to add my name to list of amazing champions is a dream come true." Both Hatton and Hillier dropped a shot at their opening hole, but the Englishman quickly recovered with a birdie at the next and picked up shots at the fifth and sixth to edge ahead. Hillier gave himself a chance with birdies at the 10th and 11th to move to one behind but a dropped shot at the next and a birdie at the 16th from Hatton left the Ryder Cup player in control. Hillier's one-under 71 left him on 14 under, one clear of England's Laurie Canter with Northern Ireland's four-time winner Rory McIlroy another shot back after putting in a late charge with five birdies on the back nine for a closing 66.

Brignone wins WC super-G

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO (AFP): Federica Brignone continued her superb season by winning Sunday's super-G at Cortina d'Ampezzo to extend her World Cup lead, as comeback queen Lindsey Vonn crashed out. Veteran Brignone, already the oldest woman to win a World Cup race at the age of 34, claimed the honours with a time of one minute and 21.64 seconds, 0.58sec ahead of reigning overall and discipline champion Lara Gut-Behrami. Brignone made sure that Italy claimed a Cortina double this weekend after Sofia Goggia won Saturday's downhill with her fourth victory of the season. Her win was also her first ever on the Olimpia delle Tofane piste which will host women's alpine events at the Winter Olympics next year. "I like this more spring-like snow because I can slide down the piste more and every mistake gets punished," said Brignone. "All I can do is keep skiing like I have been doing, with a clear head. I just want to put in my best performances and today I managed to do that." Vonn has posted some impressive results since coming out of a near six-year retirement aged 40 after a partial right knee replacement in April, but had a poor weekend on one of her favourite courses. 'Good learning experience' The 2010 Olympic downhill champion, who has 20 podium finishes including 12 wins in Cortina, slid off course after finishing 20th in the downhill on Saturday. "I think this weekend was a good learning experience for me, I haven't really trained downhill or super-G with this kind of speed yet, so I need a little bit more time," said Vonn. "I really need to train more, understand that I've only had a few months, and a few days of training, and I can't expect always to have a perfect day." Vonn added that she plans to next ski in the downhill and super-G at Garmisch next weekend, with a giant slalom being held in Kronplatz on Tuesday as the athletes prepare for next month's World C'ships in Saalbach-Hinterglemm.

Pakistan beat West Indies by 127 runs in first test

MULTAN (APP): In a thrilling encounter, Pakistan secured a commanding 127-run victory over the West Indies in the first Test match in Multan, taking a 1-0 lead in the two-match series. Chasing a target of 251, the West Indies were bowled out for just 123 runs, due to a stellar performance by Pakistan's spinners. Sajid Khan was the star of the show with five wickets, while Abrar Ahmed and Noman Ali claimed four and one wickets, respectively. For the visitors, Alick Athanaze stood tall with a resilient 55 runs, but his efforts were not enough to save his team from defeat. Resuming their second innings at 109/3, Pakistan struggled to build momentum. Saud Shakeel departed early without adding to his overnight score, falling

for just two runs. Wickets tumbled quickly as Mohammad Rizwan (2), Kamran Ghulam (27), and Salman Ali Agha (14) failed to contribute significantly. Pakistan were eventually dismissed for 157 runs, setting a 251-run target for the visitors.

West Indies spinner Jomel Warrican wreaked havoc, taking an impressive seven wickets, while Gudakesh Motie picked up one while two Pakistani players were run out.

The West Indies began their chase under pressure, losing their first wicket at just 16 runs when skipper Kraigg Brathwaite was dismissed by Sajid Khan. Wickets continued to fall at regular intervals as the visitors struggled to handle the Pakistani spin attack. Keacy Carty (6), Kavem Hodge

(0), and Justin Greaves (9) failed to make an impact, while Tevin Imlach (14) and Kevin Sinclair (10) offered brief resistance.

Gudakesh Motie and Jomel Warrican were both dismissed without scoring, leaving Alick Athanaze as the lone fighter with his valiant 55-run effort.

Earlier in the match, Pakistan managed 230 runs in their first innings, with West Indies collapsing for just 137 in response. The early lead proved crucial as the hosts dominated the second innings.

With this convincing win, Pakistan showcased their dominance, particularly through their spinners. The victory also gives them momentum heading into the second Test of the series, as they look to secure a clean sweep.

Bangladesh seeks arrest of MP cricketer

DHAKA (AFP): A Bangladeshi court issued an arrest warrant on Sunday for cricket star Shakib Al Hasan for bounced cheques totalling more than \$300,000, in the latest blow for the ousted lawmaker. "The court has previously summoned Shakib but he did not appear at the court," said Mohammed Shahibur Rahman from the IFIC Bank, which filed the case. "Now, the court has issued the warrant," he said. Shakib is a former lawmaker from the party of autocratic ex-leader Sheikh Hasina, who was overthrown by revolution and fled by helicopter to India in August 2024.



His links to Hasina made him a target of public anger and he was among dozens facing murder investigations for a deadly police crackdown on protesters during the uprising. He has not been charged over those allegations. Shakib was playing in a

domestic Twenty20 cricket competition in Canada when Hasina's government collapsed and has not returned to Bangladesh since.

The left-arm allrounder has played 71 Tests, 247 one-day internationals and 129 Twenty20s for Bangladesh, taking a combined 712 wickets.

However, he was left out of the 15-man squad for the one-day international tournament in the Champions Trophy in Pakistan and Dubai next month.

Najmul Hossain Shanto will captain the side, with Bangladesh placed in Group A alongside India, Pakistan and New Zealand.

Pakistan to host two Asian Golf Tournament in 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Golf Federation (PGF) announced on Sunday it will host two Asian Development Tour (ADT) golf championships at Rumanza Golf & Country Club in Multan this September.

According to a press release, the last ADT event in Pakistan was held in Lahore in October 2019, marking a successful chapter in the nation's golfing history.

The PGF is eager to continue promoting professional golf by hosting another ADT event in Multan, showcasing Pakistan's potential as a top destination for international golf tournaments.

In an exciting addition, Pakistan will host two more ADT events in September 2025: the CNS ADT Open Golf Championship and the Pakistan ADT Open Golf Championship.

These tournaments reflect the country's growing presence in the global

golf scene and its commitment to providing opportunities for professional players.

The Pakistan Golf Federation (PGF) expresses its sincere thanks to Rumanza Golf & Country Club and DHA Multan for their generous support in sponsoring the championship. Their contributions are vital in making this prestigious event happen and in promoting golf as a sport in Pakistan.

PGF President said "We are thrilled to bring the Asian Development Tour back to Pakistan. Hosting multiple ADT events shows our commitment to developing professional golf here", adding "We aim to position Pakistan as a leading golf destination while giving local talent a chance to compete on the international stage. We appreciate the Asian Tour's partnership and thank Rumanza Golf & Country Club and DHA Multan for their exceptional support."



MULTAN: Pakistan's Sajid Khan receiving Player of the Match award during the third day of the first Test cricket match between Pakistan and West Indies at the Multan Cricket Stadium. —APP Photo

West Indies to bounce back in next match: Brathwaite

MULTAN (APP): West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite shared his thoughts on the challenging conditions his team faced during the first Test against Pakistan, which resulted in a 127-run defeat for the visitors.

Addressing a press conference after the match, Brathwaite attributed the loss to the spinning nature of the pitch, which heavily favored the hosts. He acknowledged that Pakistan made full use of the home advantage by preparing a pitch that posed difficulties for the visiting batters.

The West Indies skipper admitted that his team's performance could have been better, particularly in the first innings where their bowling lacked precision.

He felt that restricting Pakistan to a lower total in their opening innings would have put his side in a stronger position. However, he also pointed out that Pakistan's second-innings batting was not dominant, which created opportunities for the West Indies, though they were unable to capitalize on them.

Brathwaite praised the efforts of Jomel Warrican, whose exceptional seven-wicket haul in Pakistan's second innings was a bright spot for the visitors. He expressed confidence in Warrican's abilities, hoping the spinner would deliver another strong performance in the upcoming match. Reflecting on the lessons learned, Brathwaite sounded optimistic about his team's chances in the second Test, expressing determination to stage a comeback and level the series.

He also took a moment to appreciate the Multan crowd for their enthusiasm and sportsmanship. Brathwaite remarked that the fans supported both teams and their passion for cricket was inspiring.

As the focus shifts to the second Test, Brathwaite was confident that the West Indies can bounce back and put up a much-improved performance against a formidable Pakistan side.

Djokovic to play Alcaraz in q-finals at Australian Open

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Irrepressible 10-time champion Novak Djokovic has set up a blockbuster Australian Open quarterfinal with Carlos Alcaraz after downing Czech Jiri Lehecka.

The 37-year-old Serb, who is gunning for a record 25th Grand Slam title, beat the 24th seed 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) on Rod Laver Arena on Sunday. It sent him into the last eight at Melbourne Park for the 15th time, a record he now shares with Roger Federer and one ahead of Rafael Nadal and John Newcombe.

The win also extended his own all-time mark to 61 for most quarterfinal appearances at majors, three ahead of the Swiss great.

His reward is a showdown on Tuesday with third seed Carlos Alcaraz, who is already a four-time Slam winner aged 21 but has never gone beyond the Australian Open quarterfinals.

The Spaniard set up the clash after Briton Jack Draper retired during their last-16 match when losing 7-5, 6-1. "Being in a quarterfinal, I'm going to approach the match the same as I did

in the previous matches against him, and let's see," said Alcaraz of Djokovic.

"When we are seeing him playing, he seems like he's young again, so ... It's unbelievable. He's in a really good shape." But Alcaraz added: "I'm just ready and I know what I have to do in quarterfinals."

Djokovic and Alcaraz have played each other seven times, with the Serb leading 4-3, including a victory in their last clash in the Paris Olympics final.

They have crossed paths at Grand Slams three times, twice in the Wimbledon decider with the Spaniard winning on both occasions. But they have never played at Melbourne Park, where Djokovic has achieved his greatest success.

Djokovic dominates while Alcaraz gets an early pass

Lehecka won the lead-up Brisbane International event, where Djokovic lost in the quarterfinals, but he was never seriously in the reckoning on the big stage.

Djokovic quickly put pressure on his serve and achieved a break in the eighth game of set one

when the Czech sent down a double fault. Another break on Lehecka's opening serve set the tone for set two, with Djokovic dominating from the baseline.

The young Czech changed tactics in a closer set three, pushing Djokovic to the net more while picking up his serving intensity.

It went to a tiebreak where the Serb produced some stunning shots to seal the win. Against Draper, Alcaraz was well on top when the Briton pulled the pin on a sweltering afternoon because of "multiple areas really in pain".

The 15th seed Draper needed five sets to win his first three Melbourne matches, rallying from behind in all of them to stay in the tournament, and it finally caught up with him.

"It's not the way I wanted to win. But obviously, I'm happy to play another quarterfinal here in Australia," said Alcaraz. "Physically, I'm feeling great. So coming into the second week of a Grand Slam, it is important to feel well physically because right now the matches are even tougher."

Onana howler helps Brighton to win at Man Utd



LONDON (Agencies): Brighton capitalised on a disastrous mistake from Manchester United goalkeeper Andre Onana to condemn their hosts to a fourth defeat in five Premier League home games and leave Ruben Amorim's side rooted in the bottom half of the table.

The visitors were already leading thanks to goals from Yankuba Minteh and Kauro Mitoma when Onana came sliding out to collect a low Yasin Ayari cross.

It seemed an easy enough take but somehow Onana managed to grab the ball, then release it. Substitute Georginio Rutter could not believe his luck as he turned the ball into an empty net, with Onana left exasperated at his inexplicable failure. It was hardly the way United's players would have wanted to mark the death of legendary striker Denis Law, but they deserved nothing more.

With world darts champion and lifelong United fan Luke Littler watching on, Brighton struck after just five minutes as Mitoma scorched away before presenting Minteh with the inviting finish. Then, after Bruno Fernandes had pulled United level with a 23rd-minute penalty, Minteh turned provider on the hour as he chipped a cross to the far post and Mitoma won a duel with Noussair Mazraoui to turn the ball into the net from less than a yard.

By that point, Brighton had already had a Joao Pedro effort ruled out by VAR because of a foul in the build-up on Diogo Dalot. It was the Seagulls' sixth win in seven meetings with United, while Manchester City are the only club to have emulated their achievement of winning three games on the trot at Old Trafford in the Premier League era.

Islam Makhachev retains lightweight belt against Renato Moicano at UFC 311

CALIFORNIA (Agencies): Islam Makhachev has successfully defended his lightweight championship belt following 10th-ranked Renato Moicano's first-round submission at UFC 311.

The Russian mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter took four minutes and five seconds to claim his 15th straight victory at the Intuit Dome in Inglewood, California on Saturday.

Makhachev, who holds a record of 27 wins and one loss, was quick to administer a D'Arce choke on his Brazilian opponent after taking him down quickly.

The 33-year-old Makhachev has the most title fight wins in the division with five and has accomplished what no

other fighter in his division has ever done – successfully defending his belt four times. It was his 13th win by submission.

"I like this belt," said Makhachev, the UFC's top-ranked pound-for-pound fighter and the most decorated lightweight ever. "If somebody wants this belt, come to the cage."

Moicano was a last-minute replacement for top-ranked challenger Arman Tsarukyan, who pulled out of the bout on Friday because "of significant back pain" related to an injury.

The 35-year-old Moicano, from Brazil, came in with nine victories in his past 10 fights, but proved to be no match for Makhachev, whose grappling has been unmatched



as he continues to prove why he is one of the best in the world.

Moicano was harsher on himself and said Makhachev

was the better fighter. He worries, however, that it may have been his one shot at championship glory.

"That wasn't a one-day

notice," Moicano said after the fight. "That was a life's notice. I'm very sad. I spent my whole life for this moment and tapped in the

first round."

Makhachev said he does not have a preference for his next opponent.

In an epic, action-filled bantamweight title match, champion Merab Dvalishvili was successful in his first title defence as he extended his winning streak to 12 while handing second-ranked contender Umar Nurmagomedov the first loss of his career.

The pace of the match saw both fighters dominate at different times in the fight, with Dvalishvili closing strong after two of the three judges had Nurmagomedov leading after the first two rounds.

Nurmagomedov said he felt he had broken his left hand, and could not use it after the first round.

In a light heavyweight match, former champion and second-ranked Jiri Prochazka used a flurry of punches in the third round to overwhelm third-ranked Jamahal Hill, prompting a stoppage at three minutes for a total knockout (TKO).

In the heavyweight division, sixth-ranked Jailton Almeida used a flurry of right hands to hurt seventh-ranked Sergei Spivac late in the first round and used a ground-and-pound attack to finish the match with a TKO at the 4:53 mark.

Reinier de Ridder wasted no time in taking down Kevin Holland roughly 10 seconds into their middleweight bout and finished him off with a rear-naked chokehold at 3:31 of the first round.



In brief

34,000 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 34,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 39,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1477.84 feet and was 78.84 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 14,100 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1136.00 feet, which was 86.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,900 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 24,600, 22,900, 3,500 and 44500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,000 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 4,900 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Two gang members held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested two members of a criminal gang on Sunday, recovering a stolen motorcycle, batteries, and theft tools during an operation led by the Aabpara police station. A police spokesperson told APP that the Aabpara police station team arrested two accused involved in numerous theft and bike lifting activities. The arrested accused were identified as Asif Habib and Bilal Sadiq. He said the police team also recovered a stolen bike, motorcycle batteries and theft tools from their possession. During the preliminary investigation, the accused also confessed to being involved in numerous criminal activities in the jurisdiction of Aabpara police station. Moreover, cases have been registered against them and further investigation is underway. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Syed Ali Raza said that Islamabad Police are continuously working to eliminate the crime from the capital. Additionally, officers are directed for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and to take all possible measures to protect the life and property of the citizens.

Notorious bike lifter held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Bhara Kahu Police team on Sunday apprehended a wanted member of a notorious bike lifter gang and recovered five stolen motorcycles. A public relation officer told APP that the Bhara Kahu police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a notorious bike lifter gang involved in numerous bikes lifting activities in various areas of Bhara Kahu police station. He said the accused was identified as Asif Shah. Police team also recovered five stolen motorcycles from his possession. The cases have already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Syed Ali Raza also directed officers for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and to take all possible measures to protect the life and property of the citizens. DIG further said that no criminal element will be allowed to disturb the peace of the people.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani giving degrees and medals to the students during degree awarding ceremony 2025 of Iqra University at Jinnah Convention center.

Youth skills must to tackle country's challenges effectively: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on Sunday said that youth are Pakistan's future, and their skills must be harnessed to tackle the country's challenges effectively.

Addressing the 25th Convocation of Iqra University at the Jinnah Convention Centre, he said, "Education serves as the cornerstone of any nation's development and prosperity. The youth are the future of Pakistan, and by channeling their talents in the right direction, the country can effectively address its challenges."

Gilani highlighted the importance of education in shaping Pakistan's future and called on universities to play a pivotal role in equipping students for the demands of a rapidly evolving global landscape.

"The world around us is changing fast. Technological advances such as AI, Machine Learning, Genomics, Internet of Things, Blockchain, and Quantum Computing necessitate our students to develop their faculties to match the new job market requirements," said Gilani.

He emphasized the importance of cognitive, socio-emotional, and digital learning skills to ensure employability in this new era. Gilani remarked on the transformation of Pakistan's economic structure: "As we transition to a knowledge economy, we see a shift from traditional growth factors to building human and intellectual capital for a sustainable increase in GDP. The predominant source of influence in the modern world stems from information, intelligence, and insight rather than physical power or natural resources."

Drawing inspiration from renowned futurist Alvin Toffler, Gilani said, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." He urged educational institutions to be proactive in fostering critical thinking, innovation, and leadership in students, thereby contributing to Pakistan's economic and social growth.

Gilani also emphasized the need for collaboration between the gov-

ernment, academia, and parliament to ensure that Pakistan's youth are equipped with the tools to thrive. "We must work together – the academia, the parliament, and the government – to ensure excellence and innovation in education," he said.

He remembered the services of the People's Party in providing admissions to schools and colleges for Muslims living in India.

He further mentioned the improvement in the quality of education provided at Bahauddin Zakaria University and said that hundreds of students were sent on fully funded scholarships abroad through Bahauddin Zakaria University.

Gilani quoted Pakistan's founder, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who famously said, "Pakistan is proud of her youth, particularly the students who have always been in the forefront in the hour of trial and need."

You are the nation's leaders of tomorrow and you must fully equip yourself by discipline, education and training for the arduous task lying ahead of you."

PTI leaders pointing fingers at others are themselves corrupt: Barrister Daniyal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Daniyal Chaudhary slammed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for promoting chaos and hate politics in the country.

Talking in an exclusive interview with a private news channel, he accused the PTI party of being hypocritical as those pointing fingers at others are themselves proven to be corrupt added that more revelations about PTI's wrongdoing will be exposed in the future.

He further made some serious allegations against PTI, claiming that during their tenure, they prioritized filling their own pockets over serving the people.

He also accused PTI of harassing the general public and the business community, with Shahzad Akbar being singled out for allegedly harassing businessmen.

Responding to a query, he said PML-N has been instrumental in rescuing Pakistan from crises, including isolation and stalled projects like CPEC.

When PML-N took the

reins, Pakistan was facing significant challenges but through their efforts, the country has begun to revive and reclaim its standing.

Notably, CPEC, a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, has gained momentum under PML-N's leadership. This comprehensive project aims to enhance regional connectivity, promote economic growth, and improve the lives of people in Pakistan and beyond, he added.

"We are proudly claiming that PML-N is taking the country towards progress," Daniyal Chaudhary added.

Syedaal calls for unity to ensure progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan on Sunday emphasized the importance of setting aside political differences to ensure Pakistan's economic and social progress.

During meetings with tribal leaders, elders, and representatives from various communities of Balochistan, he stressed the need for collective action and unity.

"This is not the time for division but for unity and consensus to address challenges and provide relief to the common man," he remarked.

Syedaal Khan said that the country is at a critical juncture, requiring wise

and forward-thinking decisions to secure a prosperous future. He highlighted the role of all stakeholders in driving national development and prosperity.

"Facing national, regional, and global challenges demands a constructive approach that transcends political affiliations," he said.

The Deputy Chairman praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's economic and financial reforms, noting their positive impact, which he said has started to manifest. He also underscored the Senate's crucial role as a representative body of all provinces in addressing the country's

economic challenges.

Highlighting the government's efforts for Balochistan, Syedaal Khan commended initiatives aimed at creating employment opportunities and empowering the province's youth.

He encouraged young people to channel their energy and talents toward contributing to Pakistan's economic and social development, ensuring a holistic approach to national progress.

The meetings concluded with a unified call for collaboration and solidarity to overcome challenges and pave the way for a brighter and more prosperous future for Pakistan.



RAWALPINDI: Children enjoy sliding in a local park. —APP Photo

HEC chairman highlights achievements

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Mukhtar Ahmed Sunday revealed that Pakistan has achieved a major milestone in higher education, with the highest turnout of women in universities since 2002, surpassing many countries.

He said that the government was committed to providing more opportunities and scholarships for girls and students in remote areas, further bridging the gap in access to education.

In an exclusive interview with PTV news, Dr Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman of HEC shared that women's higher education in Pakistan has reached new heights.

Back in 2002, the enrollment of women was just 30 to 32%, but now it has increased to 48 to 58%, which is a significant jump and a testament to our efforts to promote women's education, he added. This growth is even more impressive when compared to other countries, and I am proud to say that Pakistan is leading the way in this regard, he mentioned.

"I am delighted to share that the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has made significant strides in promoting women's education in Pakistan", he said.

As part of our efforts to empower women and bridge the gender gap in higher education, we have allocated almost 50% of our scholarships to female students, he noted.

This initiative is designed to provide equal opportunities to women and encourage them to pursue higher education, thereby contributing to the country's socio-economic development, he added.

Our scholarship programs, including the Overseas Scholarship Scheme, the Indigenous Scholarship Scheme and the Need-Based Scholarship Scheme have been tailored to support talented and deserving female students from all over Pakistan, he mentioned.

With the government's support, the Higher Education Commission is working tirelessly to create a more inclusive and equitable education system, providing opportunities for students from all backgrounds to pursue higher education, Chairman added.

Our commission is committed to sustaining this progress through our policy-making efforts and continuing to empower women leaders in higher education across Pakistan, he said.

As the Chairman of HEC, I am dedicated to empowering Pakistan through higher education, and I believe that this growth in women's enrollment is a major step towards achieving that goal, he added.

"I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the present government and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for successfully hosting an international conference on girls' educa-

tion", he said.

This landmark event has not only showcased Pakistan's commitment to promoting girls' education but has also brought the global community together to address the challenges and opportunities in this critical area, he added.

The conference has been a resounding success and I am proud to see Pakistan taking a leadership role in advocating for girls' education worldwide, Chairman mentioned.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's vision and dedication to this cause are truly commendable and I am confident that this conference will have a lasting impact on the lives of girls and women around the world, he expressed confidence.

As the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission, I am committed to supporting the government's efforts to promote girls' education and empower women through education, he added.

Responding to a query about scholarships for students from FATA and Balochistan, he stated that the Higher Education Commission (HEC) is giving special attention to these regions. "We are establishing girls' campuses in remote areas to provide easier access to education, he said, adding, moreover, we are committed to providing equal opportunities for scholarships to students from these areas, not only within Pakistan but also abroad".

Tarar for promoting EVs, green mass transit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar has called for enforcement of stringent policy measures to mitigate heat-trapping vehicular emissions to tackle smog, which has become a grave health nuisance.

Chairing a recent 10th meeting of National Climate Change Policy Implementation Committee (NCCPIC) held here, he noted that smog has emerged a serious environmental and public health concern, affecting millions of lives every year in the country, causing billions in the economic losses, disrupting road and air traffic.

However, it was imperative that immediate and impactful actions were taken by all relevant government organisations to reduce the sources of smog and air pollution. During the meeting, Secretary MoCC&EC Aisha Humera Moriani presented detailed overview of the progress on the implementation of the National Climate Change policy 2021 and the status/outcomes of federal and provincial climate action plans framed in the light of the climate change policy 2021, which outlines the strategic direction for coping with adverse impacts of climate change across various sectors.

"As of 2025, the climate change and environmental coordination ministry in close partnership with provincial governments and other stakeholders has made notable strides in both policy implementation and practical interventions to combat climate change, in line with the global climate goals set under the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," MoCC&EC Secretary Aisha Humera Moriani informed the meeting.

Spelling out various policy measures, she explained that for renewable energy base expansion in the country efforts have already been ramped up to transition to renewable energy sources, with significant investments in solar, wind, and hydropower projects.

The government's push to achieve a 30 percent share of renewables in the

energy mix by 2030 is well on track, with new projects coming online and policy frameworks encouraging public-private partnership for implementation of various green initiatives, she added. The MoCC&EC secretary also briefed the meeting chair about the status of National Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy-2019.

She highlighted manufacturing and use of EVs, particularly two-wheelers and three-wheelers, in the country was already picking up the pace as government was providing attractive incentives, including tax exemptions and reduced customs duties for EV manufacturers and importers to mitigate transport sector's growing carbon emissions.

"All-out efforts are being made by the ministry in partnership with relevant federal and provincial stakeholders to promote EVs as part of the present government's commitment to reducing the environmental impact of transportation, promoting renewable energy, and fostering a cleaner, more sustainable future for the country," Aisha Humera Moriani informed the meeting.

During the meeting, representatives of various relevant federal and provincial organisations including ministry of industries & production, ministry of energy, national highway and motorway police, federal and provincial environmental protection agencies, provincial transport and mass transit departments/authorities unanimously agreed that adoption of mandatory vehicle emission standards was inevitable to control aggravating air quality issue.

While agreeing to the enforcement of the mandatory vehicle emission standards in the country, the law minister Azam Nazeer Tarar said, "A nationwide enforcement of stringent emissions standards for all vehicles, including stricter compliance monitoring and regular vehicle inspections to ensure conformity with Euro-5 or higher standards is inevitable to improve the country's air quality, mitigate heat-trapping carbon emissions and tackle recurring smog issue."

Earlier, during the meeting, the Director General

(Oil) at the Petroleum Division, Imran Ahmed informed the meeting chair that Pakistan consumes annually a total of 13.2 million tons of fuel consisting of 7.1 million tons of petrol and 6.1 million tons of diesel.

Both the imported and locally produced petrol meet Euro-5 standards, the official said, adding that while the imported diesel complies with Euro-5 standards, the local diesel production struggles to meet Euro-2 standards, one key contributor of bad air quality in the country.

"It is for this reason that, despite the relatively small number of diesel-run vehicles in the country, there are higher emissions of sulfur oxides (SOx) and other pollutants from the diesel-run vehicles using the sub-standard diesel that degrade ambient air particularly in urban areas of the country," the director general (Oil), Ministry of Energy, remarked during his presentation to the NCCPIC meeting.

Revealing details about the existing fuel quality and standards in the country, the senior official said that Euro-5 fuel being consumed in the transport sector accounts for just 40 percent while the 60 percent of the fuel consumed Euro-2 and Euro-3 standard. This situation underscores the urgent need for upgradation of local fuel refineries to align with regional fuel standards and to manage petroleum resources more effectively, he highlighted.

Highlighting the need for increasing the Euro-5 standard quality fuel in the country, the law minister Azam Nazeer Tarar urged the petroleum ministry representatives that all-out efforts must be made to increase Euro-5 fuel all over the present government's commitment towards reducing urban air pollution, with significant reductions in vehicular emissions.

Euro 5 fuel is a fuel quality standard that reduces harmful emissions from vehicles and has lower levels of sulfur, benzene, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons. This not only help reduce harmful emissions from vehicles but also is crucial for tackling air pollution.

DIG Islamabad holds Khulli Katcheri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Islamabad, Syed Ali Raza, held a Khulli Katcheri (open court) on Sunday at his office to address citizens' grievances and issued immediate directives for their resolution.

A Public Relations Officer told APP that during the Khulli Katcheri, DIG Raza emphasized that citizens can also register their complaints through the "IGP Complaint Cell 1715."

DIG Raza noted that

Inspector General of Police (IGP), Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, has instructed all senior police officers to organize open courts across the district. In line with these directives, all zonal SPs are conducting open courts in their respective zones to ensure citizens' concerns are heard and resolved.

DIG Raza added that the Islamabad Police are dedicated to reaching out to the public and resolving their issues effectively. "Every citizen of Islamabad is encouraged to openly share their grievances at these forums," he stated, reiterating the police's resolve to address citizens' problems at their doorstep through this public engagement campaign.

Police arrest four kite sellers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi are making efforts to control kite flying and managed to arrest four kite sellers on recovery of over 552 kites and kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Sunday. He informed, that Waris Khan police arrested three kite sellers namely Attique ur Rehman, Dawood Akhtar and Wajahat and recovered 527 kites and five kite flying string rolls. Sadiqabad police also rounded up a kite seller, Musa and recovered 25 kite from his possession. Separate cases have been registered against the accused and further investigations are under process. Superintendent of Police, Rawal directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers.

Avalanche kills two

KABUL (Amu TV): Two young men died after being caught in an avalanche while traveling in the northeastern province of Badakhshan, a Taliban official said. Ehsanullah Kamgar, a spokesperson for the Taliban's police command in Badakhshan, identified the victims as Abdul Hai, 22, and Saifullah, 18. The men, both residents of Jaru Payan village in Khowahan District, were undertaking a two-day journey from their home to the village of Safid Sangaan when the avalanche struck.

32 Afghan refugees arrested

KABUL (Khaama Press): Turkey's Coast Guard has reported the arrest of 32 Afghan refugees, including 9 children, at the shores of the Ayvacik region in Canakkale. The Coast Guard Command stated that these migrants were attempting to leave Turkey "illegally" and were identified and detained. Turkish media, quoting the Coast Guard Command in the northern Aegean Sea, reported that a group of refugees was spotted while traveling in a rubber boat in the region.

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

Blood donations save lives of patients

N A N G A R H A R (TOLONews): Around 26,000 people have donated blood at Nangarhar Regional Hospital over the past year.

Officials from the province's Public Health Directorate have stated that the donated blood has been used to treat 13,000 patients suffering from thalassemia.

Noorzad Khan Hemat, head of the blood bank at Nangarhar Regional Hospital, said: "So far, we have distributed blood to 13,400 thalassemia patients. Depending on each patient's condition, we collect 250, 400, or even 500 cc of blood from donors."

Sediqullah Rahimi, a doctor in Nangarhar, stated: "Donating blood helps prevent high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, and strokes."

Meanwhile, several thalassemia patients in the province have called on other citizens to assist them by donating blood.

Arafat, who has long struggled with a lack of blood, says he is forced to visit the hospital every two weeks to replenish his blood supply. He warns that if blood is not provided on time, his life is at risk.

Speaking to TOLONews about his illness, Arafat said: "I am suffering a lot. My body is weak, my entire body aches and even blood flows from my mouth. I am facing many challenges."

"I have anemia. Please give me blood and save my life. I need blood, and I come here twice a week to get it," said Omar Khan, another patient.

On the other hand, volunteers who visited Nangarhar Regional Hospital have urged other young people to help save patients' lives by donating blood.

"When I entered the regional hospital, I saw more than 20 women holding blood request forms, desperately in need of blood. A small amount of our blood can save their lives," said Sabghatullah Hotak, a resident of Nangarhar.

According to doctors, individuals under 18, those suffering from hepatitis B or C, AIDS, tuberculosis, cancer, and other infectious diseases, and people over 60 years old cannot donate blood.

Taliban urge Red Cross to expand humanitarian aid



KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban's foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, called for increased humanitarian assistance during a meeting in Kabul with Alexander Matheou, the head of the Asia-Pacific region for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), according to a statement from the Taliban-run foreign ministry.

Muttaqi emphasized the importance of directing aid to Afghanistan's remote regions and urged the expansion of healthcare services, particularly for children with congenital heart conditions. He also encouraged the IFRC to strengthen its healthcare and relief infrastructure across the country's provinces.

During the meeting, both sides stressed the need for enhanced humanitarian cooperation, especially in funding and equipping Afghanistan's strained healthcare sector.

Preserving ancient art of painting designs on tiles

HERAT (TOLONews): The art of calligraphy and forming designs on ceramic tiles, with a history spanning nearly a thousand years in Herat, continues to hold a special place in the historical sites of this province, particularly on the outer walls of the Great Mosque.

Designing and writing on tiles is among the artistic features visible in Herat's historical monuments. This practice, which is considered part of Islamic culture and art, uses various scripts, especially Kufic script, to add an enduring aesthetic to Herat's architecture.

Ali Mohammad Sabouri, one of the most prominent artists of this practice in Herat, is 60 years old and has devoted over 40 years of his life to this craft. He writes on traditional tiles using different calligraphic styles.

Sabouri says about this art: "The art of inscription has existed since ancient times. Particularly during the Ghurid and Timurid periods, the complex Thuluth script was used in special locations."

Herat's calligrapher believes this art is a part of cultural identity and Islamic heritage and must be preserved and passed down to future generations.

Naveed Ahmad Heravi, another practitioner, said: "This art has been passed



down to us from the past and must be protected as a heritage and transmitted in the best possible way to future generations."

Despite the long and rich history of such writing and design in Herat, only two inscription writers are currently active in the province. Local officials are working to keep this art alive and create opportunities for its teaching to the younger generation.

"In our historical monuments, only two active practitioners remain. They repair the inscriptions you see on the Great Mosque whenever they are damaged," Raziqullah Rezvani, the director of protection of historical monuments at the Herat Department of Information and Culture, told TOLONews.

The art has been preserved in Herat since the Ghurid and Timurid eras and is found on the walls of the Great Mosque and other historical monuments of Herat. Despite challenges, this art remains an inseparable part of the historical and cultural identity of this city.

Paktia exports to worth \$75m

KABUL (TOLONews): Local officials in Paktia province say that exports worth \$75 million have been made to Pakistan through the Dand-e Patan crossing in the current solar year.

According to officials, various goods, including fresh and dried fruits, vegetables, coal, medicinal herbs, and other items, were exported to Pakistan during this period.

Mohammad Azim Azimi, the head of industry and commerce in Paktia, said: "Fortunately, exports worth 75 million USD have been made through the Dand-e Patan route in Paktia province. These include various goods such as fruits, legumes, coal, medicinal herbs, and vegetables."

Meanwhile, officials at the Paktia Chamber of Commerce and Investment say that making the Dand-e Patan route a transit corridor and providing more facilities will increase the level of exports through this crossing.

Haseebullah Gardezi, the head of the Paktia Chamber of Commerce and Investment, stated: "Export and import statistics on this route have increased. The demand of all traders in Paktia is to make this route a transit corridor."

Khwajaudin Kalewal, the head of the Paktia Traders' Union, said: "The only challenge we are currently facing is obtaining visas, which we cannot acquire easily to sell our goods."

Afghan Post sees revenue increased

KABUL (TOLONews): Zabihullah Omar, the head of business development at Afghan Post, stated that the company's gross revenue has reached nearly 900 million afghani this year.

Speaking to TOLONews, Omar said that to provide better services to citizens, they have launched door-to-door delivery services in Kabul. The head of business development at Afghan Post further said: "Last year, our gross revenue was close to 600 million afghani. This year, Afghan Post's gross revenue has reached nearly 900 million afghani, which shows an increase compared to last year."

According to Omar, the company's services have expanded since the Islamic Emirate regained power in the country, with around 25 new offices established in Kabul and other provinces this year alone.

Afghan Post is a government postal service company that facilitates the transfer of documents and goods for citizens within and outside Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, some citizens have welcomed Afghan Post's new services and called on the company's officials to establish more offices to facilitate the transfer of their essential documents.

Saeed Yaqoob, one of Afghan Post's clients, said: "This is a very good development that they deliver birth certificates and other essential documents directly to homes. They should also create more convenience in this regard."

Hanifullah, another client, said: "This process should not only be limited to Kabul but also extend to other provinces, so we can complete our tasks quickly and reduce our challenges."

‘No excuse for ban on women, girls education’

KHOST (Amu TV): Abbas Stanekzai, the Taliban's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, has sharply criticized the Taliban ban on women and girls education, saying that there is no excuse to continue the ban and that it has no basis in Islam teachings.

Speaking at a gathering in Khost province, Stanekzai emphasized that women's access to education was supported during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. He referenced historical examples to argue against the restrictions imposed by the Taliban.

"We ask the leaders of the Emirate to open the gates of education," he said. "There is no excuse or justification for keeping them closed. During the time of the Prophet, the doors of education were open to both men and women. Half of our religious knowledge comes to us through Hazrat Aisha (may God be pleased with her). She was a scholar, a teacher, and an advisor to both men and women. She answered questions and solved problems because



she was a learned woman," Stanekzai further highlighted the contributions of female companions of the Prophet who were educators and mentors to male scholars, challenging the current Taliban policies as contrary to Islamic teachings.

Stanekzai expressed frustration with the Taliban's sweeping bans on women and girls, describing the restrictions as unjust and un-Islamic.

"Unfortunately, today, everything is closed to women in our country," he

said. "Schools are closed, universities are closed, hospitals are closed. Women are barred from going to doctors and even from entering mosques. Where in Sharia does this align? Are we more just than the Rightly Guided Caliphs? If this is being done to prevent 'fitnah' [moral corruption], then God, who is all-knowing, would have commanded such restrictions for the 20th century. Religion was sent to endure until the Day of Judgment, not to adapt to cultural

interpretations of honor." Stanekzai condemned the Taliban's approach as driven by cultural notions of honor rather than Islamic principles, asserting, "If you call this 'honor,' fine, it's Afghan honor. But it is not Islamic honor."

The Taliban has barred girls from attending schools beyond sixth grade and women from universities. Women are also prohibited from working for non-governmental organizations, further limiting their participation in public life.

Taliban ask Iran to share list of Afghan prisoners

KABUL (Amu TV): A Taliban judicial delegation led by Abdul Malik Haqqani, the deputy chief justice of the Taliban's Supreme Court, has requested that Iran share a list of Afghan prisoners, particularly those sentenced to death.

The request was made during a meeting with Kазem Gharibabadi, Iran's deputy judiciary chief, during Haqqani's visit to Tehran, according to a statement issued by the Taliban's Supreme Court on Sunday.

Haqqani called for leniency toward Afghan prisoners facing execution, citing Islamic principles. "Execution is a discretionary punishment, and Islam provides prosecutors with the authority to exercise discretion in such cases. We request Iranian authorities, in the spirit of Islamic brotherhood, to replace execution with alternative measures," he said.

The Taliban also urged Iranian officials to ensure that Afghan migrants in Iran are granted the right to work and education "in accordance with Sharia."

The meeting reportedly focused on strengthening judicial cooperation between the two countries. Discussions included potential alternatives to execution for Afghan prisoners and improving the rights of Afghan migrants living in Iran.

According to the Taliban's statement, Gharibabadi assured the delegation that 1,500 Afghan prisoners would soon be transferred back to Afghanistan.

He also emphasized that efforts would be made to treat Afghan citizens with dignity.

Iranian officials have not publicly commented on the meeting.

The request comes amid a noticeable increase in the execution of Afghan citizens in Iran in recent months.

The rise in executions has heightened tensions, particularly as migration from Afghanistan to Iran has surged following the Taliban's return to power in August 2021.

At the same time, the number of Afghan migrants leaving Iran has also increased, reflecting growing economic and social challenges faced by refugees in the country.

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200 Afghans transferred to US

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United States Embassy in Manila, Philippines, announced that nearly 200 Afghan citizens have been transferred to the United States after completing their special immigration visa process in the country. The embassy stated on Sunday that these refugees were in the Philippines as part of an agreement between Manila and Washington.

Kanishka Gangopadhyay, a spokesperson for the United States of America Embassy in Manila, confirmed that the Afghan refugees left the Philippines last week in several groups, traveling by commercial flights after completing their immigration applications for resettlement in the United States of America.

Kabir acknowledges accepting Taliban leader's directive

KABUL (Amu TV): Abdul Kabir, the Taliban's newly appointed acting minister for refugees and repatriation, has confirmed that he accepted the directive from the Taliban's supreme leader to leave his role as deputy political leader and assume his new position. His statement comes after 10 days of silence following his appointment.

Kabir's remarks were made on his first day in office amid reports of internal tensions between the Kandahari faction of the Taliban and the Haqqani network over the leadership change.

Photos released by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation show Kabir conducting his work from the Sapidar Palace, where he previously operated as the Taliban's deputy political leader. Amu TV's analysis of the images confirms that his recent meetings and speeches took place at the same location.

In his speech, Kabir acknowledged the delay in

his transition and reiterated his commitment to following the orders of the Taliban's supreme leader. "I obeyed my superior in both matters: the transfer from the political deputyship and the acceptance of responsibility as acting minister for refugees. I will fulfill my duties accordingly," he said.

The Ministry of Refugees had been led for three years by Khalil Haqqani, the uncle of Taliban Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani. However, Khalil Haqqani was killed in December in a suicide bombing claimed by ISIS-K.

After his death, sources report that the Haqqani network considered the ministry part of its share in the Taliban's power structure and sought to have a family member, potentially Khalil's son, succeed him. Abdul Kabir, meanwhile, reportedly sought to retain his previous role as deputy political leader in addition to his new appointment.

The disagreement esca-



lated into an eight-day standoff between the Kandahari faction and the Haqqani network. Analysts see Kabir's appointment as a move by the Taliban's leadership to curtail the Haqqani network's influence.

Zia Badakhsh, a researcher, noted, "The Haqqani network wanted one of Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani's family members, particularly his son, to take the post. But the Taliban leader appointed someone from outside the Haqqani family and Loy Paktia to reduce the network's influ-

ence and weaken Sirajuddin Haqqani." The position of deputy political leader has been significant in overseeing local and governmental appointments in the past three years. However, with Kabir's departure, the future of the role remains unclear.

Sources told Amu that two possibilities are under consideration: either the position will be eliminated entirely, or a new appointee will be selected who can work with Sirajuddin Haqqani without facing opposition.

Ghor female beggars seek assistance from govt, charities

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Some female breadwinners in the capital of western Ghor province, who have resorted to begging to support their children, are asking for assistance from the caretaker government and charitable organizations.

The last four decades of conflict in the country have caused poverty, hardships, unemployment, and migration. These challenges have also left millions of widows and orphans, forcing many women to become breadwinners for their families.

A woman breadwinner

in Ghor: I beg out of necessity

Fatima, a 52-year-old resident of Ferozkoh, the provincial capital, laments poverty and hardships she faces, stating that despair and helplessness have overshadowed her and her family's lives.

With tears rolling down her cheeks and her voice choked with emotion, Fatima shared that she lost her only son, the family's breadwinner, years ago due to past conflicts. Now, she is solely responsible for supporting her six-member

family.

She explained: "I beg out of necessity. To keep my grandchildren alive, I walk a long distance from the village to the provincial capital on foot to find a piece of bread for my late son's orphans. It's winter, and we have nothing to eat or heat our home with. We have not received aid from the government or organizations so far."

Fatima recalled that she had stored 100 kilograms of barley flour for the winter. She urged the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

(IEA) and aid organizations to provide her with food and fuel so that her grandchildren would not face the dangers of cold and hunger during this harsh winter.

Another Woman's Struggle: Gul Barg's Story

Fatima is not the only one struggling to support her family. Gul Barg, a 45-year-old woman, is another breadwinner begging in the streets of Ferozkoh during this harsh winter.

She explained that her family lives in a house with no windows or doors and nothing for heating in the

freezing cold. Unlike Fatima, Gul Barg has grown-up sons.

However, when asked why she has shouldered the responsibility of supporting her family, she said: "My two grown sons have become addicts. I have no one else. I am the breadwinner for my 10-member family. Every day, I beg for money in the city and bring home food in the evening."

She called on the interim government to assist her in treating her addicted sons. Gul Barg also appealed to charitable organizations

and aid agencies to provide food and fuel for her and other needy families.

A Pajhwok Afghan News reporter interviewed several women beggars in the provincial capital, all shared similar complaints and sought assistance.

Social Activist: Helping the poor is a collective responsibility

Habib Rahman Wahdat, a social activist in the province, said that assisting poor and combating poverty is a collective responsibility. He emphasized that local people, in addition to

the government, should also help needy individuals.

He added: "Economic poverty, prolonged wars, and lack of social support have forced some women to resort to begging. The government and traders should help these women and provide them with work opportunities."

Wahdat urged everyone to assist the poor and needy to the extent of their ability.

Meanwhile, Abdul Wahid Hamas, the spokesperson for the Ghor governor, told Pajhwok: "The Islamic Emirate has new plans for beggars, including estab-

lishing a camp for child beggars, women beggars, and addicts. Additionally, vocational training programmes are planned for them, which, God willing, will be implemented in the near future."

Recently, Governor Maulvi Hayatullah Mubarak held a meeting with provincial officials to address the issues and identify beggars and impoverished individuals. He instructed the officials and members of the provincial committee to strive to identify genuine and deserving beggars and address their problems.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar is addressing a press conference at Gandhi Chowk in Green Town.

Fazl sees no progress in govt-PTI talks

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The chief of Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam-F Moulana Fazal Rehman said that he apparently did not see any improvement in talks going on between the incumbent federal government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party.

He was talking to journalists here on Sunday after attending a religious program held in Jamia Islamia Babuzai located in Tehsil Katlang- remote area of district Mardan. The JUI-F chief Moulana Fazal Rehman said, "I pray to God for the success of talks between the government and PTI but apparently I am not seeing any improvement or breakthrough in the dialogues."

To a query, he said that every leader of PTI had his own separate statement that was why he did not respond on those separate statements; rather, he had to comment or response on

Party statements whenever it was needed.

The JUI-F chief lamented that there was no government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because the provincial rulers had lost their writ in many areas of the province.

He alleged that the incumbent provincial rulers had not been elected rather they were given power of the KPK province by some powerful forces. The corruption had broken all its records in history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because the province had been handed over to ineligible, unable and immature people.

"The disputed issues have been resolved neither by force nor by one sided decisions. We believe in Jirga system that is why the issue of Kurram Agency should be resolved through a Jirga comprised of credible and reliable personalities.

We prefer to Jirga in case of resolving our

issues and disputes as it has the ability to solve the problems and issues in a better way.

Similarly, the elders of both rival tribes have to be taken into confidence in this connection if the government wants to bring a durable peace and stability in the said area," he added.

The JUI-F chief asked the federal government include the political figures in talk-process of Kurram Agency's issue.

Replying to a question regarding talks with PTI in future, Moulana Fazal Rehman said that he was a politician and leading a political party that was why he believed in political dialogues.

He went on to say that their doors were opened for all political parties including PTI, adding that he and his party had held talks with PTI leadership in near past on issues of mutual interests and similar talks could be held in future as well.

Livestock exhibition in Karachi draws over 1.2m visitors

KARACHI (Arab News): Pakistan's largest livestock exhibition featuring thousands of animals in the southern port city of Karachi has drawn more than 1.2 million visitors in the past two days, as per an official, with the three-day event set to conclude today, Sunday.

The exhibition has been organized by the Sindh government at the city's Expo Center. It showcases a diverse range of livestock which includes over 2,000 animals, 1,000 birds and numerous reptiles, falcons and domestic pets.

Dr. Nazeer Hussain Kalhoro, director-general of the Sindh Livestock Department, told Arab News on Saturday that the main purpose of the event was to ensure collaboration among breeders, investors and farmers.

"The motto of this Sindh livestock expo is to connect, collaborate and thrive," Kalhoro said.

"So, we are connecting people, and then we are signing MoUs to collaborate with each other. And then finally, there will be the development when we will thrive together."

The official said that this was set to be the "largest Pakistan expo ever we have seen," adding that the exhibition had been visited by 0.6 million people daily since it began on Friday.

He said the numbers were expected to increase on the last day, which was a Sunday. Shakir Umar Gujar, president of the Dairy & Cattle Farmers Association, said it is essential to showcase Pakistan's livestock globally through such exhibitions. "At the same time, these expos help farmers learn and adopt measures to enhance their production," he said.

"Livestock is a crucial component of the national economy, and such exhibitions are beneficial for farmers."

Syed Nazeer Hussain, 45, was happy his children got to learn about the various animals in the country through the expo.

"They'll get to see and learn about our culture, the various breeds of animals we have in Pakistan, and gain awareness while being entertained," he told Arab News. Dr. Kalhoro pointed out that climate change, combined with issues such as water scarcity and outdated farming technologies, has drastically altered Pakistan's agricultural landscape.

PSO Bangladeshi armed forces calls on senior officials of Pak Navy

F.P. Report

KARACHI:Principal Staff Officer (PSO) of the Armed Forces Division of Bangladesh, Lieutenant General SM Kamrul Hassan on Sunday called on senior officials of Pakistan Navy.

He called on Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, Commander Coast, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin and Managing Director of Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KS&EW), Rear Admiral Salman Ilyas, said a press release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy).

During his visit, he also toured Pakistan Navy ships and units.

During these engagements, discussions



focused on professional matters of mutual interests, including regional maritime security and bilateral defence collaboration.

Various potential areas of cooperation were high-

lighted, such as joint military exercises, reciprocal visits, and training exchange programs between the two countries, it further said.

The visit of Lieutenant General SM Kamrul

Hassan is expected to further strengthen defence ties between the two brotherly nations, enhancing cooperation and solidifying the bonds between the armed forces of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Ahsan Iqbal slams PTI supporters for defending founder's corruption

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday condemned what he described as 'regrettable and shameful' attempts by supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to defend their leader Imran Khan, even after he was proven corrupt and convicted in the mega £190 million graft case.

In a statement, the minister said that the PTI founder built his entire political campaign around the "corruption card" and lured people toward him with promises of transparency and accountability.

He regretted that PTI supporters had turned a

blind eye to Imran Khan's corrupt practices, adding, "The duplicity and hypocrisy of PTI are laid bare as they defend a leader who, rather than confronting the grave breach of trust, resorts to religious or anti-establishment narratives to deflect criticism."

Ahsan mentioned some clear and undeniable facts, including that Britain's National Crime Agency had returned £190 million to Pakistan, which was supposed to be deposited in the national treasury for public benefit.

"Instead of depositing this money in the national treasury, Imran Khan transferred these funds to benefit his ally, the famous property tycoon

Malik Riaz. The money was deposited in a Supreme Court account that was created to pay the fine imposed on Malik Riaz."

In return, the minister said, the PTI founder received personal benefits from Malik Riaz, adding, "Even if these benefits are ignored, transferring state funds for personal purposes is an unforgivable crime."

He recalled that a leading British daily, The Financial Times, had published a detailed report on July 28, 2022, exposing Imran Khan's corruption in using charitable funds for his political campaigns. "To date, Imran Khan has not taken any legal action against the

newspaper, which raises serious questions about his innocence," he added.

He said the £190 million scandal was not just limited to financial corruption but represented a serious betrayal of public trust. "The leader who called himself a champion in the fight against corruption was found involved in a mega-corruption scandal of £190 million."

The PTI and its supporters' hypocrisy in defending Khan's actions, he said, was a clear violation of the principles they once claimed to uphold, adding it served as a stark warning about the dangers of blind loyalty, personality cults and unchecked power.

Extra High Tension (EHT) line trips Karachi faces electricity breakdown

KARACHI (INP): Karachi suffered a major power breakdown on Sunday as an Extra High Tension (EHT) line tripped and affected the power supply in the metropolis.

As per details, the tripping of Extra High Tension line caused widespread outages across the city.

Areas affected by the power cut include Korangi, Lyari, Kharadar, Defence, I.I. Chundrigar Road, Site Area, North Karachi, North Nazimabad, and Jacob Line.

The tripping of the high-tension line led to the shutdown of 49 feeders at the Baldia grid, 33 feeders at the Airport grid, and 40 at the Garden grid. Other

affected grids include North Karachi (33 feeders), Jacob Line (47 feeders), Jail Road (28 feeders), Orangi (38 feeders), Mahmoodabad (16 feeders), and Korangi East (40 feeders).

Furthermore, 23 feeders were tripped at the DHA grid, 31 at the Old Golimar grid, 33 at the Vileka grid, and 54 feeders at the Defence grid. The KCR, Haroonabad, Shadman, and Clifton grids also saw 38 feeders trip.

In total, over 400 feeders from 23 grid stations under K-Electric's management were affected.

Earlier, Finance and Revenue Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb

asked the K-Electric (KE) to focus on improving service delivery in Karachi.

The minister made these remarks while talking to delegation of K-Electric that called on him here. The delegation members included Chief Executive Officer (CEO) K-Electric Syed Moonis Abdullah Alvi, CFO KE Muhammad Aamir Ghaziani and Chief Regulatory Affairs Muhammad Imran Qureshi.

He asked the KE team to focus on improving service delivery in Karachi and to expedite its plan for adding cheaper generation capacity so that the cost of electricity could be brought down.

Philippines, US hold joint maritime exercises

MANILA (Reuters): The Philippines and the United States carried out joint maritime exercises for a fifth time in the South China Sea, Manila's armed forces said on Sunday, in a move that would likely irk China.

The Philippine military

said in a statement it held a "maritime cooperative activity" with the US on Friday and Saturday, its first for the year and fifth overall since launching the joint activities in 2023.

Security engagements between the two allies

have soared under Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who has pivoted closer to Washington, allowing the expansion of military bases that American forces can access, including facilities that face Taiwan.

From Bhutto to Imran: A chronicle of judicial convictions in Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

SINCE Pakistan's establishment in 1947, the Office of the Prime Minister has been a focal point of judicial scrutiny. The judiciary has frequently intervened, resulting in the conviction and disqualification of several Prime Ministers-developments that have not only shaped their political destinies but also left an indelible mark on the nation's democratic fabric.

The founder of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the country's first democratically elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's leadership ended with his overthrow in a military coup by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977. Subsequently, Bhutto was arrested and trial for the murder of Nawab Mohammad Ahmed Khan Kasuri. The trial, widely criticized for its

political undertones, culminated in his conviction and execution on April 4, 1979, a decision that remains one of the most contentious in Pakistan's judicial history.

Mohatrama Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's first female Prime Minister, faced judicial scrutiny during her tenure and beyond. Although her governments were dismissed twice on charges of corruption and mismanagement, it was during her years in opposition that the judiciary convicted her. In 1999, an accountability court convicted her in absentia on corruption charges, sentencing her to five years in prison and barring her from holding public office. However, this verdict was later overturned in 2001 due to insufficient evidence and procedural flaws.

Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, another prominent figure, served as Prime Minister during three non-consecutive

terms (1990-1993, 1997-1999, and 2013-2017). His political career was marred by multiple convictions. During his second term as Prime Minister, a military coup led to his ousting in October 12, 1999. He was later convicted by an anti-terrorism court for hijacking and terrorism charges related to his attempt to deny landing rights to a plane carrying General Pervez Musharraf. This resulted in a life sentence, which was commuted following a deal leading to his exile. Sharif's third tenure ended in 2017 when the Supreme Court disqualified him from office. This disqualification stemmed from corruption charges uncovered in the Panama Papers, leading to a verdict on July 28, 2017. Subsequently, an accountability court sentenced him to 10 years in prison in the Avenfield reference case.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, who served as Prime Minister

from 2008 to 2012, was disqualified by the Supreme Court on June 19, 2012. The disqualification resulted from his refusal to write a letter to Swiss authorities to reopen corruption cases against then-President Asif Ali Zardari. The court held Gilani in contempt, ending his tenure and setting a precedent for judicial oversight of executive compliance.

Raja Pervez Ashraf, Gilani's successor, also faced legal challenges. Though he completed his term, he was implicated in the Rental Power Projects corruption case. While investigations and trials continue, his name remains associated with allegations of financial irregularities during his tenure as Prime Minister.

Imran Khan, the leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), served as Prime Minister from 2018 to 2022 and became yet another vic-

tim of Pakistan's political-judicial entanglements. In 2023, he was convicted in the Toshakhana case, accused of concealing details of state gifts and selling them unlawfully. This conviction resulted in a three-year prison sentence and his disqualification from elections. Although the conviction was later suspended, Khan continues to face numerous legal challenges.

On January 17, 2025, the judiciary convicted former Prime Minister Imran Khan on charges of financial misconduct and abuse of power. This conviction, announced by a special accountability court, involved allegations of misusing public funds for personal gains during his tenure. The court sentenced the individual to 14 years in prison, along with a hefty fine and disqualification from holding public office. The verdict was seen as part of the judiciary's ongoing efforts to

ensure accountability among the country's political elite, but it also sparked debates about the impartiality of the decision.

The overarching narrative of these convictions reveals a pattern in which judicial actions are often closely tied to political conflicts. While some leaders faced genuine charges of corruption or misconduct, others were seemingly targeted through politically motivated cases. The recurring legal battles of the country's leaders reflect the fragile state of governance and accountability in Pakistan, raising questions about the impartiality of judicial processes and the overarching influence of political agendas.

The Quran and Hadith emphasize the principles of justice and impartiality in governance. Surah An-Nisa (4:135) commands believers to stand firm in justice, even against themselves or their

kin. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) highlighted the perils of selective accountability, stating: "The people before you were destroyed because they inflicted legal punishments on the poor and forgave the rich" (Sahih Bukhari). These teachings underscore the need for equitable and unbiased justice, a standard against which judicial actions must be measured.

While the judiciary's role in holding Prime Ministers accountable is vital for ensuring the rule of law, it has often been criticized for overreach and selective application of justice. Allegations of judicial activism, have at times undermined public confidence in its impartiality. Ensuring that judicial actions align with Quranic principles of justice and transparency is essential for strengthening democracy and fostering trust in state institutions.