

**Afghan terrorist killed**  
**F.P. Report**  
RAWALPINDI: An Afghan National, involved in terrorism inside Pakistan, was killed in Sambaza area of Zhob district. The individual was identified as Muhammad Khan Ahmedkhel, Son of Haji Qasim Dawran Khan, resident of Village Bil-orai, District Wazekhwah, Paktika Province, Afghanistan. His dead body was handed over to IAG officials on 20 January after necessary procedural formalities.

# Premier assures Pakistan's support for Gaza reconstruction

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to supporting the Palestinian people, assuring maximum contribution to the reconstruction phase of Gaza following the 42-day ceasefire.  
The prime minister, in his televised opening remarks at the meeting of the federal cabinet chaired by him, said that the ceasefire followed the killing of over 50,000 Palestinian people including men, women, and children, and the destruction of cities.  
He prayed that the temporary 42-day ceasefire turned into a permanent truce and recalled that Pakistan sent relief goods for the Palestinian people despite immense difficulties and challenges. He told the cabinet members that the Gwadar International Airport had started its operations on Monday as one of Pakistan's biggest facilities has been completed with \$230 million in funding by China.  
He said that Gwadar Airport could bring about immense benefits to the people of Balochistan as well as the whole country, if run on commercial lines. "But those who are poised to hurt Pakistan and continue to kill people, are not just going against the people of Balochistan but also showing their animosity against the entire Pakistan... We should value this Chinese gift to Pakistan. Gwadar Airport will prove to be a milestone for Pakistan's development," he remarked.  
Referring to the 10-Year Country Partnership Framework for Pakistan announced by the World Bank, he said Pakistan would get \$20 billion in loans intended to develop multiple social sectors and infrastructure. He urged the relevant ministries to make

swift and collective efforts to achieve the objectives of the Framework and overcome the hiccups in the process.  
Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed his pleasure over the record increase in IT exports to the highest-ever \$348 million in December 2024 and also showed satisfaction over the constant surge in the country's overall exports and improving economic indicators. Lauding the performance of Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima Khawaja, the relevant federal secretary, and others, he called for further efforts to increase IT exports further.  
He viewed that only serious and sincere efforts and teamwork could guarantee the promotion of Pakistan's economy and bring about progress. He expressed the hope that the upcoming Hajj would be comfortable for the pilgrims vis-a-vis their stay and other facilities in Makkahatul Mukarramah and Madinatul Munawwarah as the minister concerned and his ministry was making efforts in this regard.  
The prime minister said that the nation owed to the security forces for their immense sacrifices to ensure the country's development and prosperity. He said that the people of Pakistan highly revered the sacrifices of the security personnel who orphan their own children to save the future of millions of others in the country.  
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also approved the recommendation of the Cabinet Division to extend the validation of licenses for 86 foreign pilots, currently working in Pakistan, by two years.  
It also granted its approval to extend the foreign validation for the new pilots who joined in 2025, with a period of three years, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the prime minister was apprised that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on Pakistani pilots in previous years, Pakistani airlines had to hire pilots from abroad.  
The aforementioned recommendation of the cabinet division would be implemented following complete legal process. The prime minister constituted a committee headed by Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif to review the Toshakhana Act 2024 for bringing more transparency in the system.  
The cabinet approved the rules and regulations regarding the appointment of the chairman and members of the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority, based on the recommendations of the cabinet division. It also granted its approval to an amendment to the Rules of Business 1973, transferring the responsibility of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 from the Ministry of IT to the Ministry of Interior, as recommended by the cabinet division.  
The cabinet sanctioned the appointment of Dr. Ammar Habib Khan as member finance of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority Appellate Tribunal, based on the recommendation of the ministry of law and justice. In the meeting, the prime minister directed formation of a committee to expedite the restructuring process of the Utility Stores Corporation and ensure its effective monitoring.  
The prime minister emphasized the need to develop a new, effective strategy to ensure that the Prime Minister's Relief Package reached the deserving. The federal cabinet ratified the decisions made in the Economic Coordination Committee meetings held on January 6, 2025, and January 17, 2025.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attending National Assembly session.

## LEAs take control of bunkers in Kurram SC removes addll registrar over blunder

**F.P. Report**  
KURRAM: Curfew has been imposed in Bagan area as security forces have intensified operation against terrorists to establish peace in the district. Law enforcement agencies took control of bunkers and got Bagan and its surrounding areas evacuated.  
Business centers, petrol pumps and hotels remained closed in violence-affected areas. Internet service remained suspended. The district administration has claimed to have identified miscreants involved in the attack on a convoy near Bagan.  
It should be noted that a case of the attack was registered in CTD police station. Anti-terrorism and other provisions were included in the FIR. As many as 19 persons were nominated in the case, besides 20 unidentified suspects. In the FIR, it has been mentioned that the suspected terrorists opened fire on the convoy with heavy weapons.  
Meanwhile, the district administration has closed Tal-Para Chinar Road for one week owing to search operations in areas of strife-torn Lower Kurram. Local administration has announced that due to search operations in several areas of Lower Kurram Tal-Para Chinar Road will remain closed.  
Meanwhile, a protest sit-in continuing at Mandori, as the central highway has been blocked for last 113 days. Kurram's district administration has said that arrangements being made for the internally displaced persons (IDPs). Meanwhile, a convoy of 22 trucks carrying relief items including edibles, medicines and other essential commodities have reached Hangu.  
Earlier, security forces taken control of Bagan Bazaar in Kurram, aiming to restore order in the region. Several bunkers, four each belonging to the Watezai tribe and Tori tribe in Irfani Kalay, have been vacated during the operation.  
In the light of attacks on convoys and unrest, a search operation has been launched to apprehend the culprits. According to tribal elder Haji Kareem, door-to-door searches are being conducted to locate the miscreants involved. Security sources confirmed that the operation is focused on eliminating threats and ensuring safety of travelers and residents in the area.

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan following the controversy regarding fixing the case removed Additional Registrar (Judicial) Nazar Abbas from his post.  
A notification issued by Additional Registrar (Administration) stated that Nazar Abbas had been made an officer on special duty (OSD). According to the statement, Abbas was found guilty of a blunder by scheduling a constitutional bench case for hearing before a regular bench. The notification further stated that the additional registrar's action wasted court's and litigants' time and resources. The registrar of the Supreme Court has been directed to examine the matter.  
It is pertinent to mention that the court had recently issued a contempt notice to the Additional Registrar (Judicial) for failing to

## Cases potentially unfavorable to govt are reassigned

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Tuesday summoned the Attorney General in a contempt of court case related to non-scheduling of the bench powers case. A two-member bench, led by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and also having Justice Aqeel Abbasi, conducted the hearing. The Supreme Court registrar appeared before the court.  
As the proceedings began, the court inquired from the registrar why the case had not been scheduled despite clear judicial orders. The registrar replied that the case was intended for a constitutional bench but mistakenly assigned to a regular bench. Justice Aqeel Abbasi remarked, "If this was a mistake, it must have been going on for some time. How was it realised now?" He added, "The only mistake might have been including me in this bench since I had already heard this case in the high court. I am not sure whether including me was a mistake or something else." Justice Mansoor Ali Shah questioned how the Practice and Procedure Committee convened a meeting on this matter, asking whether the committee initiated the meeting on its own or upon a request.  
schedule cases about the powers of constitutional and regular benches. The matter of bench jurisdiction was heard by a three-member bench, led by senior judge Justice Mansoor Ali Shah.

## SC judges write letter to CJP

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Three Supreme Court judges have written letter to Chief Justice Yahya Afridi and Constitutional Bench's head Justice Aminuddin Khan over not fixing the benches powers case before the court.  
Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Ayisha Malik and Justice Aqeel Abbasi have referred the benches' powers case in the letter and complained that the case was not fixed on January 20 and called it the contempt of the court. "Justice Aqeel Abbasi was added to the bench on January 16, who had heard the case earlier in the Sindh High Court," letter read.  
In the judges' letter, January 17 session of the Practice and Procedure Committee also referred. Justice Shah informed the committee that his point of view has already been on the record. He refused to attend the committee's meeting adding that he is not required to appear in the committee.  
"The committee could have reconstituted the earlier bench and fixed the hearing on January 20," according to the letter. "The case not fixing in the court, has been equal to non-compliance of the judicial order". "The law has been violated with this non-compliance, and it is contempt of the court," according to the letter. It is to be mentioned here that a bench of the apex court headed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, also comprises of Justice Ayisha Malik and Justice Aqeel Abbasi, on Monday issued show-cause notice of contempt of the court to Additional Registrar Nazar Abbas over not fixing the benches powers case for hearing.

## Saudi Arabia freed 7,208 Pakistani prisoners Alarm sounded in Upper House over water shortage in Sindh

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia freed a total of 7,208 Pakistani prisoners between 2019 and 2024, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar informed the Senate on Tuesday.  
During Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to Pakistan in February 2019, then prime minister Imran Khan requested for the release of Pakistani prisoners. Days after the historic visit, the crown prince ordered the release of a large number of Pakistani prisoners. In a written response on Tuesday, Dar, who also holds the portfolio of deputy prime minister, apprised the upper house of the parliament that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is developing a comprehensive consular policy through stakeholder consultations for Pakistanis imprisoned in foreign jails.  
He added that while the policy is being formulated, Pakistan continues to protect its citizens abroad through established international frameworks. "Our consular officers visit Pakistani nationals, who are in prison or in detention and arrange legal representation for them," said the foreign minister.  
Giving a breakdown of the prisoners released from the Saudi jails, Dar said that 545 inmates were released in 2019, 892 in 2020, 916 in 2021, 1,331 in 2022, 1,394 in 2023, and 2,130 in 2024. Dar further informed the house that it was difficult to ascertain the actual number of prisoners released from foreign jails due to continuous influx of inmates. Currently, over 23,456 Pakistani nationals are serving jail terms in different countries across the globe, he added.  
He further said that there were 12,156 Pakistani nationals in Saudi jails, 5,292 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 811 in Greece and 338 in Qatar. It is pertinent to mention that most prisoners had settled illegally in foreign countries, while other Pakistani nationals imprisoned abroad were held for minor crimes.  
Lawmakers in Senate raised alarm on the shortage of drinking water in Sindh, saying the underground water across Sindh has turned salty with death of fresh water all

around.  
PPP's Senator Sherry Rehman said that there is a severe shortage of water in Pakistan especially in Karachi. Sherry Rehman said don't the people of Sindh have the right to demand water. She said all the water in Sindh has become salty and fresh water is not available. Sherry Rehman further said Sindh and Balochistan are affected due to floods and statistics are not given correctly in the Senate. PML-N's Senator Irfan Siddiqui said the provinces had an agreement on water-sharing formula.  
About canals, Irfan Siddiqui said Punjab has constructed canals from its share of water, so more land can be made cultivable in the province. "We do not eyeing shares of others," he added. Siddiqui said if there were objections on canal projects then these can be removed. "No such decision has yet been made which could not be reviewed," he maintained.  
Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar told the House that government is focusing on promoting various sports in order to exploit the potential of the youth. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar informed the House, in a written reply, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is developing a comprehensive consular policy through stakeholder consultations for Pakistanis imprisoned in foreign jails. He said while this policy is being formulated,  
Pakistan continues to protect its citizens abroad through established international frameworks. Ishaq Dar said our consular officers visit Pakistani nationals, who are in prison or in detention and arrange legal representation for them. The Senate today passed the National Commission on the Status of Women Amendment Bill, 2025. It was moved by Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar.  
Responding to a Calling Attention Notice, Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain said the rice exporters are being fully facilitated in the country. The Minister said he has held meetings with the rice exporters and addressed their problems on the spot.

## Trump orders US exit from WHO, rescinds 78 Biden-era executive actions

NEW YORK (Reuters): The United States will exit the World Health Organisation, President Donald Trump said, saying the global health agency had mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic and other international health crises.  
Trump said the WHO had failed to act independently from the "inappropriate political influence of WHO member states" and required "unfairly onerous payments" from the US that are disproportionate to the sums provided by other, larger countries, such as China. "World Health ripped us off, everybody rips off the United States. It's not going to happen anymore," Trump said at the signing of an executive order on the withdrawal, shortly after his inauguration to a second term.  
The WHO did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The move means the US will leave the United Nations health agency in 12 months' time and stop all financial contributions to its work. The United States is by far the WHO's biggest financial backer, contributing around 18% of its overall funding.  
WHO's most recent two-year budget, for 2024-2025, was \$6.8 billion. The US departure will likely put at risk programmes across the organisation, according to several experts both inside and outside the WHO, notably those tackling tuberculosis, the world's biggest infectious disease killer, as well as HIV/AIDS and other health emergencies. Trump's order said the administration would cease negotiations on the WHO pandemic treaty while the withdrawal is in progress. US government personnel working with the WHO will be recalled and reassigned, and the government will look for partners to take over necessary WHO activities, according to the order.  
The first item that President Trump is signing is the rescission of 78 Biden-era executive actions, executive orders, presidential memoranda, and others. The government will review, rescind, and replace the 2024 US Global Health Security Strategy as soon as practicable, the order says.  
The next-largest donors to the WHO are the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, although most of that funding goes to polio eradication, and the global vaccine group Gavi, followed by the European Commission and the World Bank. The next-largest national donor is Germany, which contributes around 3% of the WHO's funding. Trump's withdrawal from the WHO is not unexpected. He took steps to quit the body in 2020, during his first term as president, accusing the WHO of aiding China's efforts to "mislead the world" about the origins of COVID.  
WHO vigorously denies the allegation and says it continues to press Beijing to share data to determine whether COVID emerged from human contact with infected animals or due to research into similar viruses in a domestic laboratory. Trump also suspended US contributions to the agency, costing it nearly \$200 million in 2020-2021 versus the previous two-year budgets, as it battled the world's worst health emergency in a century.  
Under US law, leaving the WHO requires a one-year notice period, and the payment of any outstanding fees. Before the US withdrawal could be completed last time, Joe Biden won the country's presidential election and put a stop to it on his first day in office on Jan. 20, 2021.





## Sindh to launch an environmentally friendly EV taxi service

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to launch an environmentally friendly EV taxi service and establish a regulatory authority to oversee its operations. Plans are also under way to develop a robust EV charging network across major urban and rural areas of the province.

A high-level meeting chaired by Sindh's Senior Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, was held in Karachi. The meeting was attended by Secretary Transport Asad Zaman, Managing Director of Sindh Mass Transit Authority Kamal Dayo, Project Director of People's Bus Service Sohaib Shafiq, and other officials. The agenda revolved around discussions on introducing EV taxis in Sindh.

Addressing the meeting, Minister Sharjeel Inam

Memon emphasized that the introduction of modern, eco-friendly transportation systems is aimed at encouraging investment in the transport sector. He announced that a regulatory body is being established to monitor and regulate the operations of the EV taxi service.

The senior minister highlighted plans to develop a central command and control system to ensure efficient management and monitoring of the EV taxi fleet. The taxis will be equipped with intelligent transport systems, advanced payment solutions, and state-of-the-art security features.

Memon further stated that a comprehensive EV charging network infrastructure is crucial to support the operation and expansion of the EV taxi service. He described the initiative as a significant step toward building a modern, sustainable, and envi-

ronmentally friendly transport infrastructure in Sindh.

He underscored that the project will not only contribute to environmental protection but also create new opportunities for local businesses and attract inter-national investors, thereby fostering economic growth.

"Our goal is to position Sindh as a pioneer in green transport solutions across Pakistan," said the minister.

During the meeting, the senior minister directed officials to expedite preparations for the EV taxi service, ensuring the development of all necessary infrastructure, legal frameworks, and facilitation measures for investors.

Sharjeel Inam Memon concluded that this initiative is expected to set a benchmark for eco-friendly transport solutions in Pakistan while supporting the province's journey toward sustainable development and economic growth.



## Sindh governor welcomed at Turkish Consulate

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori praised Türkiye for preserving the traditions of its glorious past, highlighting that honoring Sultan Murad V's relatives reflects the country's profound love for its heritage.

In a statement by Sindh Governor House, he expressed these views during a dinner hosted at the Consulate of Türkiye in honor of the relatives of the Ottoman Sultan Murad V.

Upon Governor Sindh's arrival at the consulate, he was warmly welcomed by Consul General Cemal Sangu and other diplomatic staff. The dinner was attended by Ms Kenize Mourad, a descendant of Sultan Murad V, along with other distinguished guests.

Mea Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori met with Rwandan High Commissioner Hareiremana Fatou and her three-member delegation at the Governor House. Discussions included bilat-

eral relations, investment opportunities, trade enhancement, and other areas of mutual interest.

Governor Sindh emphasized that Pakistan-Rwanda relations are strengthening over time and welcomed continuous dialogue between the business communities of both nations. He expressed Pakistan's desire to increase trade with Rwanda and invited Rwandan investors to benefit from the province's lucrative investment environment and profitable sectors.

The Rwandan High Commissioner highlighted the importance of relations with Pakistan and noted that Rwandan investors are keen on exploring various sectors.

During her visit, the High Commissioner toured the Bell of Hope, Ration Drive, and IT Market. She commended the ongoing initiatives under the Governor's leadership, describing them as exemplary and inspiring.

Meahile, Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori had separate meetings with renowned social worker Maulana Bashir Farooq, prominent businessman Dinshan D. Avari, and famous fashion designer Deepak Perwani.

The discussions focused on topics related to humanitarian efforts, job creation, and fashion design. Separately, under the guidance of Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori, special arrangements have been made at the IT Marquee for the parents of students. Previously, parents had to wait outside in the cold weather.

Governor Sindh stated that a designated space has been arranged for the parents of the students. Additionally, heaters will be provided in the waiting area for their comfort. He emphasized that parents, who trusted him and sent their children to study, truly deserve such respect and facilities.

## New policy to ensure hassle-free experience for pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain has announced significant changes to the Hajj policy, aimed at providing a hassle-free experience for pilgrims where revamped policy introduces key reforms to the selection process for Muavineen, who assist pilgrims during their sacred journey.

Minister for Religious Affairs stated in an interview with Radio Pakistan's current affairs program that from now on, Muavineen who wish to perform Hajj will be required to finance their journey. Hussain stressed that Muavineen will now be mandated to accompany pilgrims throughout their entire Hajj journey, thereby providing enhanced support and guidance to ensure a smoother and more spiritual experience for all pilgrims.

Salik said that a team of top medical professionals will be accompanying pilgrims to provide high-quality healthcare services throughout the Hajj journey, ensuring their health and well-being are prioritized.

Regarding accommodations, Hussain explained that pilgrims in Madinah will be housed in buildings situated within the Markazia, offering convenient access to holy sites just a 5 to 10-minute walk away. Furthermore, to facilitate seamless travel, transport facilities will also be provided for pilgrims in Makkah, he added.

## Abducted newborn recovered in Gujranwala

LAHORE (APP): A suspect who abducted a newborn baby from a hospital in Gujranwala has been arrested, and the infant was safely recovered within hours on Tuesday.

According to a spokesperson for the Punjab Safe City Authority (PSCA), the child's father reported the abduction after an unidentified individual took the baby from the hospital. Using footage from Safe City cameras, the police launched an investigation. By reviewing the footage, the suspect was quickly identified.

The PSCA spokesperson stated that the cameras captured the suspect carrying the newborn while riding a motorcycle. The Safe City Gujranwala team shared the evidence with local authorities, prompting a swift police response. Within hours of receiving the information, the police located and arrested the suspect, successfully recovering the baby and returning the child safely to the father.

## Anti-encroachment drive gears up

LAHORE (APP): The provincial capital is undergoing an extensive and focused anti-encroachment drive, headed by Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza. The drive aims not only to clear streets and footpaths but also to secure the city's future and uphold the rights of its citizens.

In his address, Prof. Shah also shared an exciting development at the Dr. Ikram-ul-Haq Institute of Industrial Biotechnology which is establishing a state-of-the-art Diagnostic and Research Lab of international standards with an investment of \$1 million. This facility will provide subsidized diagnostic services to over 50,000 families, including alumni, faculty, staff, and the general public.

Highlighting GCU's commitment to financial support, the Vice Chancellor revealed that in 2024 alone, 426 students received Chief Minister Honhaar Scholarships. "Over the last decade, 2,372 students were awarded PEEF Scholarships, 1,640 students benefited from HEC Need-Based Scholarships, and 8172 students received financial assistance through the university's own resources," he said. Twelve students were also awarded sports gold medals.

## GCU honors co-curricular excellence at convocation

LAHORE (APP): The two-day 23rd convocation of Government College University (GCU) Lahore concluded on Tuesday, celebrating the outstanding achievements of students in co-curricular activities that are integral to character building and personality development. On the second day of the convocation, the university awarded 125 co-curricular rolls of honour and 14 medals to students excelling in debates, drama, music, arts, and other co-curricular pursuits.

Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, along with Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah, presented medals to the high achievers. They were joined by Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Prof. Dr. Babar Aziz, Controller of Examinations Shahzad Ahmed, and Additional Registrar Dr. Shaukat Ali.

Muhammad Abdullah was awarded the Muhammad Idrees Medal, Arafah Zubair Khan was awarded the Waleed Iqbal Medal, Umar Ahmed was awarded the Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif Medal,

Zeesan Ali Sheikh Safdar Ali Medal, Syed Muhammad Naqi was awarded the Thespian Medal, Ms. Tania was awarded the Madiha Gohar Medal, while Muhammad Taha Tahir, Muhammad Ahmed, Ali Rashid, and Mian Muhammad Yousuf were awarded the Dawood Ilyas Medal as the best student of Intermediate.

Speaking at the ceremony, Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan highlighted the significance of co-curricular activities in shaping well-rounded individuals. He praised GCU for upholding its legacy of excellence in academics and character development. He said, "I agree with the Vice Chancellor that GCU is truly a place of peace and knowledge. I felt immense peace coming here."

He also announced that the Nazir Ahmad Music Society, which presented a mesmerizing performance of Kalam-e-Iqbal during the convocation, would be invited to the Governor House for further recognition.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah congratulated the award

recipients, saying that students should take pride in being graduates of GCU, the alma mater of luminaries like Allama Iqbal.

In his address, Prof. Shah also shared an exciting development at the Dr. Ikram-ul-Haq Institute of Industrial Biotechnology which is establishing a state-of-the-art Diagnostic and Research Lab of international standards with an investment of \$1 million. This facility will provide subsidized diagnostic services to over 50,000 families, including alumni, faculty, staff, and the general public.

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ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of sunset after cloudy days in capital city. —INP Photo

## NAB unveils deceptive marketing tactics of illegal housing societies

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau ("NAB") is obliged under its mandate to keep people aware about the deceptive and fabricated marketing practices of illegal housing societies who are scamming the general public at large and raking in billions of Rupees.

At the present, NAB is conducting inquiries/investigations against the owner of Bahria Town (Pvt.) Ltd., Mr. Malik Riaz and the people associated with him for fraud, deceptive practices and cheating public at large.

NAB possesses cogent and credible information about the fact that Mr. Malik Riaz and his accomplices have not only illegally possessed/occupied State-owned land but also land belonging to private persons situated at Karachi, Takht-Parri, Rawalpindi and New Murree.

He is using these lands for developing housing societies without obtaining mandatory/required regulatory permissions/No Objection Certificates and has committed fraud against the State and general public at large to the tune of billions of Rupees.

In a duplicitous manner Mr. Malik Riaz has been developing housing societies under the name of Bahria Town (Pvt.) Ltd. in other cities including Peshawar and Jamshoro by illegally possessing/occupying land and failing to procure the same mandatory regulatory permissions and No Objection Certificates as stated earlier. Mr. Malik Riaz continues to defraud the general public at large by selling them plots/files in these illegal housing societies. Neither does Mr. Malik Riaz nor Bahria Town (Pvt.) Ltd. have a good/clear title to any of the lands in these

illegal housing societies.

At the moment Mr. Malik Riaz is an absconder in the NCA case and is wanted by Court. NAB has already frozen innumerable assets of Bahria Town (Pvt.) Ltd. and Mr. Malik Riaz.

Mr. Malik Riaz, is residing in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He has recently launched a project for the construction of luxury apartments in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The general public at large is hereby advised and warned to refrain from investing in the stated project.

If the general public at large invests in the stated project, their actions would tantamount to money laundering, for which they may face criminal/ legal proceedings. The Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan is reaching out to the Government of United Arab Emirates for the extradition of Mr. Malik Riaz through legal channels.

## PPP HR Cells calls for early setting up of Minorities Commission

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Human Rights Cell of the Pakistan Peoples has deplored the inordinate delay in the setting up of Minorite Commission as mandated in the 2014 Supreme Court Verdict and called for urgent action.

"At a time when minorities in the country are faced with increasing incidents of intolerance, forced conversions, misuse of religion-based laws and discrimination it is imperative that an independent Commission be set up under an Act of the Parliament in accordance with SC verdict", said the president of the HR Cell in a statement today.

The Commission must be formed under an Act of Parliament and not an executive order, he said.

Referring to the one-man commission formed by the SC itself over a decade ago under Mr. Shoab Suddle he said that expertise gained by it should be utilized to provide initial guidance to the new statutory Commission and then fade away. The one-man com-

mission may have been exceptional but structures dependent on individuals are fragile, he said.

In addition to the Commission at the federal level there will also have to be provincial commissions under the 18th Amendment. Since it involves Pakistan's international commitments the federal government should take the lead.

The federal legislation may also serve as prototype for provincial Assemblies to consider adopting it and set up their own Minorities Commission just as they have their own commissions on Right to Information, the Status of Women and provincial human rights commissions. For a population of nearly 250 million with significant number of minorities under siege there is clearly need for commissions in all the provinces as well.

The independent Commission should be under the Ministry of Human Rights instead of Ministry of Religious Affairs. "The religious affairs ministry is already over-burdened with Haj

matters and it is basically a human rights issue and not a religious issue".

The federal statutory Commission must be based on Paris Principles to ensure autonomy. At present none of the statutory commissions like the National Commission on Human Rights, National Commission of Sgatus of Women and the National Commission of the Rights of the Child is based on Paris Principles and that was why they have no right to vote at international platforms like the UN Human Rights Council, he said.

Farhatullah Babar said that the statutory Commission should have the representatives of minorities instead of bureaucrats dominating it. Its broad-based functions should include implementation of the 5% job quota, oversight of issues in Evacuee Property Trust, monitoring of implementation of relevant international agreements & court verdict, visit to detention centres where minorities are kept, besides making recommendations for appropriate legislation, he further said.

## Minister chairs meeting of Ring Road council

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Communication and Works (C&W) Sohaib Ahmad Bharrh chaired an important meeting of the Punjab Ring Road Council at the C&W Department here on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by Secretary C&W Sohail Ashraf, Chairman Ring Road Authority Sohail Shahzad, Member Planning and Development Abid Bodla, and officers from the Finance Department.

Chairman Ring Road Authority Sohail Shahzad provided a detailed briefing on seven agenda items. The council members recommended that the authority's budget for 2024/25 and the financial records of the last five years be reviewed by the Finance Department and a chartered accountancy firm. Additionally, the recruitment methods and rules were advised to be vetted by the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD) and the Regulation Wing.

The council approved regulations regarding axle load, road control, and traffic control, contingent upon the Law Department's input. For the authority's financial powers, it was suggested that these be vetted by the Finance Department before presenting them in the council meeting.

The members also recommended initiating a summary for establishing the Sialkot Ring Road project office and recruiting staff. Approval was granted for the post-upgradation of junior report officers, their performance allowances, and toll collection on the dual road connecting the GT Road to the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway via Whando.

## UET awards 2 PhD degrees

LAHORE (APP): The University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore awarded PhD degrees in Electrical Engineering to two scholars. According to a UET spokesman, Noor ul Ain completed her doctoral thesis on "Assessment of Transient Over voltages for Dynamic Lightning Protection in Smart Grids," while Muhammad Salim Butt's research focused on "Employing Ultraviolet Portion of the Solar Spectrum for Green Energy Generation in Terrestrial and Extraterrestrial Applications."



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson BISP Senator Rubina Khalid Holds E-Kacheri Session at Islamabad HQs. —APP Photo





PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries Abdul Karim Tordher and Advisor for Finance Muzamil Aslam inaugurateing KP BizHub Portal.

## Representatives of Railwasy Workers Union meets DS Cantonment Board



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The representatives of Railway Workers Union Open Line Satara Nishan Peshawar Division, including Divisional President Rahm Taj Shinwari, Divisional General Secretary Riaz Kashmiri, Divisional Organizer Fazal Qadir, Malik Jawad Khan, and Shehryar, joined the Member Cantonment Board Ward to Peshawar Cantt. Along with Mr. Mohammad Naem Bakhsh

Advocate met Divisional Superintendent Pakistan Railway Peshawar Division Mr. Inamullah Sahib at DS Office Peshawar.

During the meeting, the union leaders apprised DS Peshawar about the problems faced by the railway employees, especially the employees of Peshawar Division. DS Peshawar assured to solve the problems of the employees on priority basis. These problems included poor sewage system, obstruction of rain water drainage, and other

developmental works.

The leaders of the Railway Workers Union informed the DS Peshawar about their struggle to resolve the problems of the workers, on which the DS Peshawar appreciated the efforts of the union and welcomed their cooperation. He assured all possible cooperation to solve the problems.

DS Peshawar Mr. Inamullah requested Member Cantonment Board Muhammad Naem Bakhsh on this occasion to improve

the sewage system in Railway Colony and to carry out development works in this regard as soon as possible. On this occasion, Mohammad Naem Bakhsh assured to solve the problems of the railway employees as soon as possible and to provide full cooperation.

Moreover, DS Peshawar also sought help from Member Cantonment Board regarding installation of street lights and other development projects in Railway Colony. DS Peshawar specifically mentioned rainwater drainage, as during rains due to poor sewage system, water seeps into the houses of the employees, causing them severe hardship.

The meeting ended in a cordial atmosphere, and DS Peshawar assured the union leaders of all possible cooperation to resolve the workers' issues.

## Meeting reviews performance of C&W department

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting was held on Tuesday at the Civil Secretariat in Peshawar under the chairmanship of the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Communications and Works, Sohail Afridi, to review the performance of the Communications and Works (C&W) Department and devise strategies for improving its associated institutions.

The meeting was attended

by Secretary C&W Muhammad Israr Khan, Managing Director of Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority (PKHA) Asad Ali, Director Legal, DS Technical, and all Chief Engineers of the department.

Secretary Muhammad Israr Khan briefed the participants on the department's functions, its affiliated institution and key operational matters. The meeting deliberated on the department's future strategy, the effective execution of development projects

and the necessity for new legislation.

The meeting extensively discussed the proposed "C&W Act," aimed at enhancing the department's efficiency and ensuring effective delivery of public services. Participants shared various suggestions to align the act with legal requirements and improve the department's performance.

Special Assistant Sohail Afridi directed all concerned officials to Finalize the draft of the proposed C&W Act in compliance

with legal requirements. Expedite the implementation of the act to ensure transparency and efficiency in development projects.

He urged that presenting the C&W Department as a model institution for public service delivery and modernize its operational systems.

He emphasized that the act's implementation and related measures would help expedite and ensure the transparent completion of development projects across the province.

## UET Peshawar progressing towards ERP implementation

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: UET Peshawar as the premier engineering university of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is progressing rapidly towards implementation of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Student Lifecycle Management Systems (SLCS). A progress review meeting in this regard was held to assess status and address challenges to ensure timely and successful launch in near future. Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali, Vice Chancellor UET Peshawar while chairing the meeting said that it was an honor for UET Peshawar to be selected by HEC for this project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and vowed to launch the initiative with full capacity. He expressed satisfaction on the completion of student and employee data and urged the concerned departments to provide necessary data on university assets as well. He said, this initiative was part of UET Peshawar's vision to modernize its academic and human resource operations.

Prof. Dr. Misbah Ullah, project lead of ERP SLCS gave a detailed presentation. He said, the initiative with the financial support of the World Bank aims to introduce ERP SLCS in 25 public sector universities across Pakistan gradually. He said, for the first phase, UET Peshawar and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University for Women have been selected while other public sector universities will also be included in subsequent phases. He said, through his programme, Pakistani universities will witness revolution in academics, research and development which will significantly improve the quality of education. The meeting was attended by Deans, Registrar and Directors of various sections.

## Govt launches BizHub Portal to empower SMEs in KP

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has formally launched the "BizHub" digital App aiming to serve as a transformative platform for empowering Small and Medium Enterprises, fostering innovation, and catalyzing economic growth in the province.

The launching ceremony was held on Tuesday, here at local hotel, while Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries Abdul Karim Tordher and Advisor for Finance Muzamil Aslam inaugurated the portal by clicking the button.

Secretary Industries Aamir Afaq, officials of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade(KPBoIT) and representatives of United Nations Development

Program(UNDP) also present on this occasion.

Organized under the auspices of KP-BOIT in collaboration of USAID and UNDP, the event brought together policymakers, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and key stakeholders from across the province.

With the overarching vision of driving sustainable development and creating a thriving ecosystem for SMEs, the KP BizHub is set to address the unique challenges faced by businesses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while unlocking new opportunities for growth and collaboration.

The inaugural ceremony featured insightful keynote speeches from prominent dignitaries. On this occasion the Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Industries Abdul Karim Tordher

underscored the vital role of SMEs in bolstering the local economy and creating employment opportunities.

He added that, "the development of this app reflects our unwavering commitment to promoting ease of doing business in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It aligns seamlessly with our broader vision of transforming the province into a hub of trade, investment, and innovation.

This endeavor would not have been possible without the relentless efforts of our team at KP-BOIT, the insights of our business community, and the support of our partners in development."

He expressed that the establishment of the "BizHub Portal" is an important step towards facilitating investment in the province.

He added that the por-

tal should also include security aspects and features to ensure safe investments.

He emphasized that the business community would be provided with all possible facilities through the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment to ensure a conducive business environment in the province and reforms would be implemented in the sector.

He also mentioned that the province's investors and business community have faced challenging circumstances and still made investments despite the adverse conditions.

He added that this app will benefit both male and female entrepreneurs and further steps will be taken to facilitate easier business operations.

During the ceremony, the Advisor for Finance Muzamil Aslam,

## KP Law minister says he opposed PTI-govt talks from day one

### Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Member National Assembly Sheryar Afridi said that the founder of PTI will be acquitted soon because there is no evidence against him, and he is being victimized for political revenge. Provincial Minister for Law, Aftab Alam, said that he has been against negotiations from day one, and the government does not have a mandate for negotiations. He added that the federal government is not giving the province its due rights.

MNA Shahram Tarakai said that the negotiating committee has been given written demands, and if the government does not accept these demands, it will be like putting a spark in a thief's beard. He added that until the facts come to light, the issues will not be resolved.

This they claimed while speaking to the media after appearing in the Peshawar High Court, PTI leader Faisal Javed said that the PTI and its founder are being victimized for political revenge, and that's why a 14-year prison sentence was

handed down in the Al-Qadir Trust case. He added that the government did not suffer any loss in this case, and it's a fabricated case that will be dismissed by the High Court.

Faisal Javed said that the founder of PTI has been wrongly accused and that he has faith in the courts. He added that the question of a deal does not arise, and the founder of PTI will never make a deal.

Provincial Minister for Law, Aftab Alam, said that he has been against negotiations from day one, and the government

does not have a mandate for negotiations. He added the government has not responded positively to the demands for a new NFC award, and the issue is being delayed.

Shahram Tarakai said that those who have made mistakes should be punished, but the innocent should be freed. He added that until the facts come to light, the issues will not be resolved, and the negotiating committee has been given written demands. If the government does not accept these demands, it will be like putting a spark in a thief's beard.

## Third District Health Officers (DHO) Conference Ihtesham calls for accountability and improved performance

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor on Health, Ihtesham Ali, while addressing the third District Health Officers (DHO) Conference, emphasized the need for improved performance, warning underperforming DHOs to reform their approach or face consequences. He stated that DHOs who delay releasing funds to public-private partnership hospitals would be held accountable and removed from their positions if necessary.

The advisor announced a strict ban on cross-cadre postings to ensure that rele-

vant positions are filled by professionals from the appropriate cadre. Acknowledging exemplary performance, he awarded appreciation certificates to the DHOs of Malakand, Kohat, and Khyber for their outstanding contributions. Additionally, he urged the immediate utilization of funds lying idle in Primary Care Management Committees (PCMCs) to provide relief to the public. The conference was attended by Secretary Health Adeel Shah, Special Secretary Health Habibullah, Director General Health Dr. Muhammad Saleem,

Chief of the Health Sector Reforms Unit (HSRU), Regional Directors, Program Directors, and all DHOs. Key topics discussed included human resources in hospitals, availability of medicines, immunization, DHIS-2 reporting, polio eradication, and other health-related matters. A special review of vertical health programs was also presented for the first time in the DHO Conference.

Dr. Ejaz, Director IMU, provided an update on decisions made during the last two DHO Conferences. He highlighted that 86% of districts in settled areas had

placed medicine orders through the newly launched CM Medicine Ordering Portal. Out of 33 non-compliant vendors who failed to supply medicines on time, orders were canceled in 27 districts. The performance of DHOs was evaluated, with a special focus on the implementation of vertical programs. The DHO of Malakand was specifically lauded for redistributing existing medicine stock from health centers to facilities where medicines were urgently needed. This initiative increased medicine availability from 49% to 80% in the district.

## ICRC organizes seminar for students

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) organized a one-day seminar for students at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Peshawar. The seminar aimed to raise awareness among students about the ICRC's history, its programs in Pakistan, the significance of humanitarian journalism, and international humanitarian law (IHL).

Addressing the seminar, Dr. Mehnaaz Gul, Chairperson of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, emphasized the importance of humanitarian journalism

for media students. She stated that as future journalists, students have a critical role in serving humanity through their reporting. Their work can not only bring positive change within Pakistan but also influence global perspectives through impactful humanitarian journalism.

Dr. Gul expressed her gratitude to the ICRC for their efforts and highlighted the importance of providing students with insights into humanitarian journalism and International Humanitarian Law. She noted that such knowledge would not only create awareness about international laws but also help students ensure their own safety while reporting on

humanitarian crises. She also stressed the need to introduce regular certificate courses on humanitarian journalism and to engage students and faculty from other universities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in similar seminars and Panel discussions.

During the seminar, Zeeshan Anwar, Communication Lead at the ICRC, presented an overview of the organization's history. He explained that the ICRC has over 160 years of experience and was founded on the principle of serving humanity. He highlighted the ICRC's enduring commitment to this mission and its collaborative efforts in Pakistan since the country's inde-

pendence. The ICRC's contributions include partnerships with organizations focused on the physical rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, restoring family links under the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, providing basic first aid training, and working with the health department to improve emergency preparedness in hospitals, particularly in tribal districts. The ICRC also supports the provision of life-saving medicines in critical areas.

The seminar also included an informative session on international humanitarian law, where the framework and key features of this global legal system were explained.

## PTI's propaganda exposed

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: PTI's claims regarding missing workers from the D-Chowk rally have been proven baseless, as the individuals in question were found at their homes.

The party had alleged that several workers were missing, with officials repeatedly making noise about their disappearance. However, it was confirmed that the supposed missing individuals had been

arrested on November 26 during the Islamabad rally and released by the police on November 28.

Two brothers, Abdul Basit and Hassan Khan, sons of Shoaib and residents of Badaber, were found at their home. Similarly, Zeeshan, son of Naveed, a resident of Dilazak Road, and Hashim, son of Arif, from the district, were also present at their homes.

Contrary to PTI's claims, these individuals



have been going about their daily routines, expos-

ing the party's misleading narrative.





## In brief

### DC commits for good governance F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Abdul Razzaq has setup his open-air office in the lawn of district complex to provide open access to people for presenting their problems without any hesitation. The initiative is action under people friendly vision of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. DC would be listened complaints and problems of people on daily basis from 9 AM to 11 AM. He said that object of setting up open-air officer is providing speedy relief to the people. Meanwhile, trails of under 16 football player of tehsil Hafizabad and tehsil Pindi Bhattian have been completed for holding football competitions in the district. Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq, AC Pindi Bhattian Ishaq Ahmad, DSO Nabeela Cheema, TSO Faiza Kanwal, TSO Pindi Bhattian Mashaal Fatima, officials of football clubs and a large number of football players were also present on this occasion. DSO told on this occasion that under 16 talent hint football semifinal matches will be held between tehsil Hafizabad and tehsil Pindi Bhattian on January 22 and final match on January 25 at football Stadium Hafizabad.

### Traders' security to be ensured F.P. Report

BANNU: Superintendent of Police (SP) City said that the safety of traders and ordinary citizens will ensure the protection of the public. Our first responsibility is to cooperate with the tradesman police so the complete elimination of crimes. This he said during a meeting with the delegation led by President Arshad Khan of the Silver and Gold Association of the Punjab Merchants' Association in the office, senior Vice President Sajid Raza, General Secretary Syed Mahmood Hisaban, and other officials were also present. You are charged Congratulations on taking it and the brotherhood assured every possible cooperation. SP City Muhammad Junaid said that the police cannot do anything without the cooperation of the public. It will be left our effort to provide a peaceful environment to the people of Bono so that traders can do their business here in a better and peaceful way. Those who love the soil said police action league against illegal and unethical activities anywhere within the city circle, however, no pressure of any kind will be accepted.

### Govt-Opposition talks lauded F.P. Report

GILGIT: Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah praised the recent meeting between the GB government and the opposition calling it as a positive development crucial for the region's sustainable progress. He emphasized that cooperation between the two sides is essential, as continued conflict only harms the region. The governor commended the opposition for demonstrating political maturity and the government for its constructive approach. He stressed that issues can only be resolved through dialogue and meetings, highlighting the harmful effects of a lack of communication. Governor Mehdi Shah also advocated for elections to be held on time, allowing the current assembly to complete its tenure. He deemed discussions about amending the Self-Governance Order for early elections as inappropriate and called for a focus on preserving democratic values and completing the assembly's five-year term.

# Cadet College Sanghar Alumni convention held

## F.P. Report

SANGHAR: The first-ever CCS Alumni Convention was successfully held at Cadet College Sanghar (CCS) from January 18 to 19' 2025 collaboratively organized by "The Association of Sanghrites" (TAS) and Cadet College

Ali, Commandant/Principal of CCS, warmly welcomed the esteemed alumni and ex-faculty members, setting the tone for the two-day event filled with nostalgia, camaraderie, and memorable activities.

The first day of the convention featured a variety

staff. During the session, TAS President Mr. Shahjahan Ahmed Sheikh gave a welcome address and thanked college administration, current faculty, former faculty and ex-cadets for participating with their great batch strengths and CEO TAS Major Qayyum Mahar briefed the attendees on the association's bylaws and structure.

Commandant/Principal Commodore Zeeshan Ali SI (M) addressed the alumni, highlighting the significance of the convention and the need for a well-structured alumni association. He also shared insights into the remarkable progress made by Cadet College Sanghar in recent years, underscoring the institution's commitment to excellence.

The convention concluded with a group photograph and a lunch at the Mehran Cadet Mess. Alumni expressed their gratitude to the college administration and pledged their unwavering support to the institution. The historic reunion was a resounding success, marking the beginning of a new chapter in strengthening the relationship between CCS and its proud alumni.



Sanghar management the event aimed to reunite Sanghrites from across the globe on a shared platform, fostering unity and strengthening bonds with their alma mater.

The convention witnessed an overwhelming response, with over 400 ex-cadets from 26 graduating batches (1994-2019) participating. Many alumni traveled from abroad, including the United States, the Middle East, and China, to be part of this momentous occasion.

Commodore Zeeshan

of engaging activities, including sports events, a sumptuous dinner, and a lively bonfire and musical night program. Alumni relived their cherished memories while connecting with fellow Sanghrites in a joyous atmosphere.

Day two commenced with morning PT followed by breakfast, after which the Alumni conference took place at the prestigious Iqbal Auditorium. The conference was attended by ex-cadets, former faculty members, and the current teaching and administrative

# Pabbi press club cabinet meet newly posted DPO

## F.P. Report

PABBI: Pabbi press club cabinet held meeting with District Police Officer (DPO) Nowshera along with Superintendent of Police (SP) Investigation regarding contemporary law and order situation in the district, on Tuesday.

The cabinet congratulated DPO on his posting, and the Tehsil Press Club Pabbi cabinet was welcomed to the Nowshera Police Lines. The meeting was attended by president Pabbi press club Muhammad Ilyas, along with Dr. Khairul Abrar, Senior Vice President, Abbas Khan, General Secretary, Muhammad Shoaib,

Finance Secretary, Karim Khan, Secretary Information, and Molana Noorul Abrar, Vice President.

Addressing the meeting, DPO Nowshera Abdul Rashid Khan said that journalism is fourth important pillar of the state. He emphasized the need for cooperation between the media and police, stating that their common goal is to eradicate evil from society.

DPO assured that the police would welcome constructive criticism and take immediate action on every complaint. He warned that criminals would not be tolerated in the district and that those involved in narcotics, street crime, and

other illegal activities would be dealt with iron hands. The DPO directed the police inspectors of all police stations to ensure that there is no space for criminals in Nowshera. He warned that those involved in aerial firing would be sent to jail, and the groom would also be arrested if aerial firing takes place at a wedding.

The meeting was also addressed by Muhammad Ilyas, Dr. Khairul Abrar, and Abbas Khan, who appreciated the DPO's efforts to maintain law and order in the district. The members of Jahangira and Risalpur press clubs also participated in the meeting in larger public interest.



BUNER: KP Minister for Sports, Syed Fakher Jehan talking to media persons.

# Minister administers oath to Buner press club cabinet

## F.P. Report

BUNER: Minister sports and youth affairs Syed Fakhar Jahan on Tuesday administered oath to the new cabinet for 2025 of Buner Press Club Buner, on Tuesday.

The newly cabinet took oath of their respective offices. The oath taking ceremony was held at district press club Buner. Members of the Buner press club, political and social personalities also participated in the event.

On this occasion, the provincial sports minister congratulated the newly

elected cabinet and said that journalists have played a key role in highlighting the problems of the people. In response to a question, the provincial sports minister said that the provincial government is working on a priority basis for the promotion of sports. An international level hockey turf has already been inaugurated at Sawari in Buner, while the regional sports team of Buner will also be included in the national level sports, he added.

**Rescue 1122 held training:** The rescue emergency dealing trainer Nizamullah

Khan, organized a training workshop for police officers and personnel in District Police Line at Daggar. District Officer Engineer Kashif Khan Yousafzai. Rescue Training Wing, gave training to the police personnel regarding medical first aid. The rescue spokesperson shared.

During the training, different ways that how to provide immediate first aid and medical facilities before taking the patient or injured to the hospital in case of any kind of emergency.

# Late Abdul Hameed role as educationist lauded

## F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: Speakers hailing from different walks of life paid glowing tributes to noted educationist and social reformer Abdul Hameed Memon at an event organized in his memory at Government Higher Secondary School and college Jati of district Sujawal.

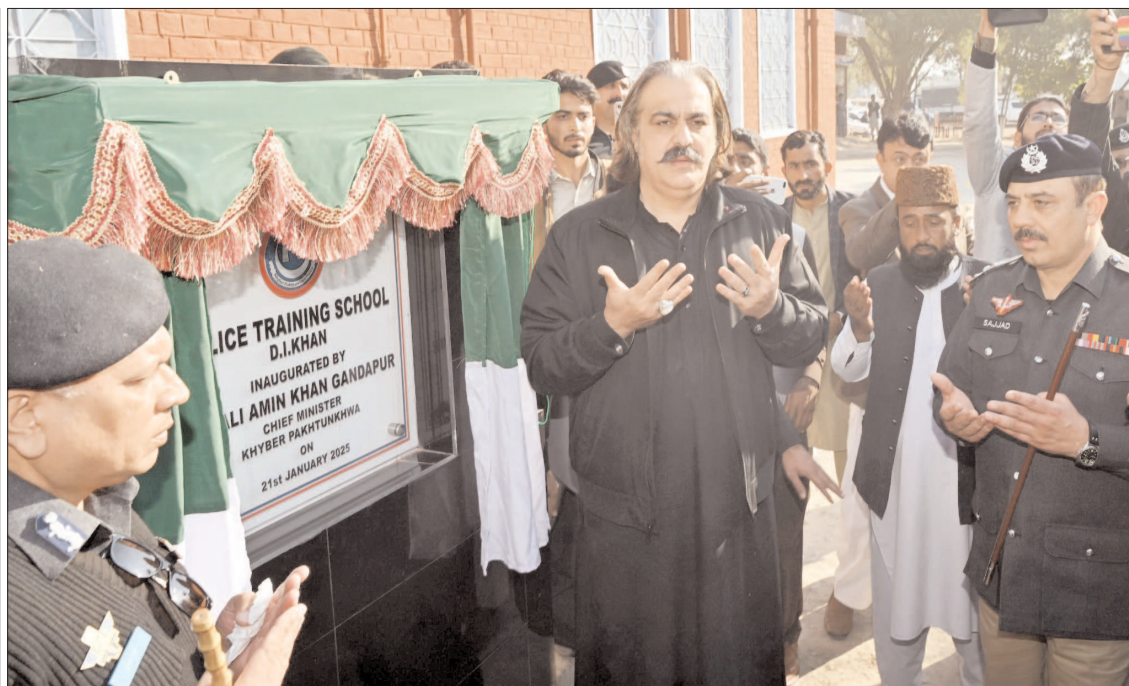
The speakers recalled his contribution in the field of education and literacy besides his tireless efforts to bring social awareness in Jati and its adjoining areas. Addressing the gathering,

speakers shed light on his dedication for the students of his native district Sujawal and his innovative ideas presented in different events and conferences for educational reforms.

Chief guest and principal of the college said that the late educationist always raised his voice for the due rights of teachers and always emphasized on the importance of education and its role in changing the society. He further said that the life of Abdul Hameed Memon is a lesson for coming generations. Writer poet and Journalist

Zahid Ishaque Sommo mentioned that Hameed Memon was blessed with several qualities prominent among those were his hospitality, vast knowledge about Sindh culture and his love for his profession. Sommo further noted that he was a vivid researcher and a decent public speaker as well.

His colleague and noted academician Dost Muhammad Thaheem said that though he had left the world early but his contributions had left deep imprints in the field of education and literacy.



D I KHAN: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur offering dua after inaugurating Police Training School.

# 2 children, woman die as roof collapses

## F.P. Report

MINGORA: At least two children and a woman were killed when roof of their house collapsed in Khwazakhela tehsil of Swat district, police informed on Tuesday.

According to details, the incident occurred in Shalpin, a village in the Khwazakhela tehsil, where the roof of a mud house caved in. As a result, a woman and two children were buried under the debris and lost their lives.

Police confirmed the incident, while local residents removed the rubble and recovered the bodies, which were later transported to the hospital.

# Sand Art Festival 2025 held

## F.P. Report

GWADAR: Sand Art Festival was organized near the sunny, vibrant, and tranquil beaches of Gwadar, as a part of Annual Beach Festival.

Led by renowned sand art expert Zubair Mukhtar, several groups showcased their creative skills and professional expertise by transforming sand into artistic forms, such as sand brushing, sculpting, and painting.

The Sand Art Festival, held by the Tourism Department of Balochistan and the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), is part of a series of activities organized in connection with the celebrations of the Annual Beach Festival, according to GDA Director General (DG) Shafkat Anwar Shahwani.

Speaking to Gwadar Pro, Shahwani emphasized that Gwadar stands out in the region due to its unique natural landscape, rich heritage, vibrant culture, and pristine beaches. At the conclusion of the festival, GDA DG Shafkat Anwar Shahwani presented awards to the winning teams in recognition of their outstanding art and talent.

# Bank employee shot dead

PATTOKI (INP): A bank employee was shot dead by the firing of two dacoits in the jurisdiction of Adhan Police Station in Pattoki.

Sources said that the deceased bank employee who was identified as Azam aged 26 was on his way to home located in Majra when two dacoits intercepted him. The bank employee ignored their signal, on this the dacoits opened fire on him resulting in his death on the spot. Later all the accused managed to escape from the scene.

Soon after receiving the report of the incident, police team reached the spot and shifted dead body of bank employee to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ) for necessary proceedings.

# Snowfall multiply cold weather

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A day-long rainfall in plains and snowfall on hill tops broke the prolonged dry spell in both the Lower and Upper Dir districts. Residents said that snowfall at Lowari Top, Karo Dara, Kumrat and Ushera Dara in Upper Dir started and continued for the second consecutive day.

Most of the hill tops in Lowari, Kumrat and Doog Dara were blanketed in white after snowfall for two days.

A large number of local youth and children thronged the Lowari Top and Kumrat to enjoy the first winter snowfall in the area. The district administration has asked the tourists to take precautionary measures before visiting the snow-covered areas in Upper and Lower Dir.

The downpour in plains on Monday broke the prolonged dry spell that turned the weather chilly forcing the inmates to remain indoors in both the districts. The much-awaited rain started in the morning at about 10 am that continued till evening on Monday. The farmers and agriculturists termed the recent spell beneficial for wheat and other crops which were affected by the dry spell.

**Transporters demand early issuance of driving licenses:** The Lower Dir transporters on Tuesday complained that the transport department and the district administration had failed to issue them driving licenses despite the passage of 10 months.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara they pointed out that about 4500

drivers had applied for getting licenses for a period of 5 years some ten months ago while depositing Rs 10800 for heavy traffic vehicles (HTV) and Rs 8300 for light traffic vehicle (LTV) licenses. The drivers said that they were being fined in other cities for having no driving license. They demanded of the government and concerned authorities to take notice of the matter and provide them the required licenses as soon as possible.

Meanwhile an official of the driving section at Timergara told Dawn on contact that due to a fault in the database and shortage of printing materials the matter of driving licenses had been delayed. He said the department would issue the licenses once the issue was resolved.

# KUST commits for accountability, transparency

## Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) has reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability amidst recent allegations against Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseer ud Din.

Dr. Naseer ud Din, a visionary leader and renowned academic, has been instrumental in KUST's growth, driving transformative progress in academics, research, and infrastructure. Under his leadership, the university

has achieved milestones in modernizing facilities, enhancing research capabilities, and fostering an environment of academic excellence.

The university administration has welcomed the inquiry initiated by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Higher Education Department, pledging full cooperation to ensure an impartial and transparent process. KUST clarified that the allegations are preliminary, and conclusive findings will emerge after the inquiry committee completes its investigation.

The university has urged media outlets and the public to avoid speculation and await the committee's report. "We stand firm in our mission to uphold the highest standards of education and accountability," stated the KUST spokesperson, emphasizing the university's dedication to its values. Dr. Muhammad Naseer ud Din's leadership continues to be a cornerstone of KUST's reputation as a leading institution in the region, delivering quality education and fostering innovation.

# DC redress Shahu Wam drinking water issue

## F.P. Report

HANGU: Deputy Commissioner Hangu has under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Government Good Governance Program "Awami Agenda", resolved the long-awaited drinking water problem in Shahu Wam in Hangu during a meeting with the delegation of residents of the Shah Wam area in his office

other day. On the special directions of the Deputy

Commissioner Hangu, the Assistant Commissioner immediately rushed to the said area and successfully resolved the problem of non-availability of water on the spot.

The elders of Shahu Wam thanked the district administration Hangu for prioritizing this important issue and resolving it immediately.

Meanwhile, on the directions of the Deputy Commissioner Hangu, Assistant Commissioner

Asfandyar Khalid launched an effective operation against the timber mafia in Samana area. During the action, he taken into custody the illegally smuggled wood along-with the vehicles.

DC Hangu has given a clear message to the timber mafia that no concessions will be made with the timber mafia and he will not hesitate to go to any extent to protect the forests and eradicate other illegal activities in the district.

# Commissioner reviews public welfare projects

## F.P. Report

Toba Tek Singh: Commissioner Faisalabad, visited Toba Tek Singh, where she presided over a high-level meeting at the Deputy Commissioner's Office and inspected various public welfare projects.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Sindh, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, and heads of all government departments.

During the session, DC Muhammad Naem Sindh briefed the Commissioner on Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's welfare initiatives, including progress on projects related to Suthra Punjab, health, education, revenue, and public facilities.

Commissioner Maryam Khan emphasized the need

for timely completion of development projects, highlighting the importance of transparency and robust monitoring mechanisms. She issued clear directives to department heads to achieve their respective targets and deliver maximum facilities to the public.

"Negligence in development projects will not be tolerated, and there will be no compromise on achieving set goals," said Commissioner Maryam Khan. As part of her visit, the Commissioner inspected the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital and Maryam Nawaz Clinics to review healthcare facilities and service delivery. She interacted with staff and patients, ensuring that quality healthcare is being provided and directed improvements wherever

required.

In a symbolic gesture to promote environmental conservation, the Commissioner also planted a tree on the lawns of the Deputy Commissioner's Office.

# Two drug pushers held

MULTAN (INP): The police arrested two drug pushers and recovered over two kilogram of hashish and ICE while in their possession in Basti Malook area, police said on Tuesday.

A police spokesman said that Basti Malook police arrested Ijaz with 1480-g hashish and 110-g ICE while in another operation an accused, Ghulam Abbas, was arrested with 530-g hashish.





# Colombia's president to declare 'state of emergency'

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP): Colombian president Gustavo Petro said that he will declare a state of emergency, following a spate of guerrilla attacks in the country's northeast that has killed dozens of people and forced thousands to flee their homes.

In a message on X Petro said that he will "declare a state of internal commotion," a measure that enables the executive branch to pass certain kinds of legislation without congressional approval for three months. The measure will go into effect after a decree is signed by the President and his Cabinet, but it can also be invalidated by Colombia's constitutional court. Internal commotion decrees were used in the early 2000s by the administration of then-President Alvaro Uribe to increase financing for the military through a special war tax. According to Colombia's constitution, this emergency measure cannot be used to suspend congress or eliminate civil rights. "I hope the judicial system supports us," Petro wrote on X.

Petro had warned that his nation's military will take offensive actions against the National Liberation Army after the rebels, known as the ELN, unleashed a wave of attacks in Colombia's Catatumbo region, in which at least 80 people have been killed. "The ELN has chosen the path of war, and that's what they will get," Petro wrote in a message on X, in which he accused the rebels of turning into a drug trafficking group and compared

their methods to those of Pablo Escobar, the infamous cartel leader who bombed government buildings and murdered his enemies by hiring hundreds of hitmen. Petro, who was a member of a guerrilla group during his youth, initiated peace talks with the ELN in 2022, after promising in his presidential campaign that he could get the rebels to demobilize within three months of taking office.

But talks have stalled over multiple disagreements about how the rebels would disarm and the kinds of economic reforms that the government would implement in exchange for their disarmament. The ELN has also criticized the government for staging separate negotiations with a breakout group in the country's southwest and angered officials by continuing to kidnap civilians and extort businesses. Petro suspended negotiations with the rebels after violence escalated in Catatumbo, a mountainous region that produces around 15% of Colombia's coca crop and is located along the border with Venezuela. The ELN, which has an estimated 6,000 fighters, reportedly attacked civilians it accused of being collaborators of a rival group, the FARC-EMC, taking people from their homes and shooting them in the streets, while in rural areas firefights broke out between members of both groups.

In a statement issued ELN leader Antonio García said that his organization does not intend to target civilians, but has been

going after former rebel fighters who are now collaborating with the FARC-EMC. Over the weekend, however, thousands of people fled towns in the Catatumbo region, fearing for their lives, including community leaders who had been threatened by the ELN. Among those fleeing were former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, who demobilized in a 2016 peace deal with the government, and have now been targeted by the ELN. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Colombia said that the new wave of violence in Catatumbo has displaced 18,300 people, who are staying in shelters and hotels in the cities of Tibu, Ocaña and Cúcuta, where officials have warned of a looming humanitarian crisis.

Sandra Tijaro, a farmer in northeastern Colombia, said in an interview she fled her village after armed men showed up and told everyone to evacuate. She is now staying with her children at a shelter in Tibu. "We want the armed groups to think about the welfare of rural folks," she said. "We are hard-working people who end up carrying the burden of this conflict." The 2016 peace deal between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia led to the demobilization of 11,000 fighters. However it left a power vacuum in some rural areas that smaller rebel groups have tried to fill, with the government struggling to reduce violence against civilians.

## Syria's de facto leader congratulates Trump

CAIRO (Reuters): Syria's de facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa congratulated US President Donald Trump on his inauguration in a statement, saying he is looking forward to improving relations between the two countries. "We are confident that he is the leader to bring peace to the Middle East and restore stability to the region," he said.

The US, Britain, the European Union and others imposed tough sanctions on Syria after a crackdown by ousted President Bashar al-Assad on pro-democracy protests in 2011 that spiralled into civil war. In early January, Washington issued a sanctions exemption for transactions with governing institutions in Syria for six months in an effort to ease the flow of humanitarian assistance. Syria welcomed the move, but has urged a complete lifting of sanctions to support its recovery.

## Biden leaves office and Washington

WASHINGTON (AP): Joe Biden wrapped up a more than 50-year political career, but promised that "we're not leaving the fight," as he bid farewell to the presidency and flew to California to unwind with his family and ease back into private life.

Biden spoke not long after watching his successor, Republican President Donald Trump, pledge during his inaugural address to "completely and totally reverse" everything that his Democratic predecessor did.

In the final hours before the noon transfer of executive power, Biden extended courtesies to the man he had turned out of the Oval Office four years ago. Trump denied losing the 2020 election and refused to offer similar niceties to Biden upon his inauguration in 2021. The bitter cold day opened with Biden and his wife, Jill, receiving Trump, and his wife, Melania, for a traditional Inauguration Day meet-and-greet over tea at the White House.

Afterward, the rivals who share a history of political animosity rode in a limousine to the Capitol where Trump was sworn in as the 47th president. "Our recent election is a mandate to completely and totally reverse a horrible betrayal," Trump said about the work of the Biden administration. Biden sat expressionless in the front row.

As Trump gave his address, the residence staff at the White House got to work clearing out the remainder of Biden's belongings so they could move Trump and his family back in. The work of turning over the White House includes redecorating the Oval Office. Walls in the press offices that were bare in the morning after most of the staff had ended their government service were decorated by midafternoon with fresh photographs of Trump.

After Trump's address, the new president and his wife walked the Bidens outside to a Marine helicopter that had been waiting on the Capitol grounds to fly them to Joint Base Andrews for a farewell event with his staff. "We couldn't have done anything we did without you," Biden told them. "No president gets to choose the moment they enter history, but they get to choose the team they enter history with and we chose the best damn team in the world."

Even though they may feel "knocked down" by the turn of events, he said what was important was how quickly they get back up. "We're leaving office. We're not leaving the fight," Biden said, urging them to stay engaged.

And he appeared to joke about Trump's speech, chuckling as he said, "we heard the inaugural address today. We got a lot more to do." Biden then made the sign of the cross and everyone laughed. He and the first lady then walked across the tarmac to the familiar blue-and-white Air Force plane he flew on as president for the flight to Santa Ynez, California.



BOGOTA: Soldiers patrolling a road in Tibu in Colombia's northeastern Catatumbo region, where dozens have been killed amid clashes between the National Liberation Army and former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

# Houthis to target only Israel-linked vessels following Gaza deal

LONDON (Reuters): Yemen's Houthis will limit their attacks on commercial vessels to Israel-linked ships provided the Gaza ceasefire is fully implemented, the Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center (HOOC) said. The Sanaa-based HOCC, which liaises between Houthi forces and commercial shipping operators and is associated with the Houthi military, said it was stopping "sanctions" against vessels owned by US or British individuals or entities, as well as ships sailing under their flags.

"We affirm that, in the event of any aggression against the Republic of Yemen by the United States of America, the United Kingdom, or the usurping Israeli entity, the sanctions will be reinstated against the aggressor," it said in an email sent to shipping industry officials dated Jan. 19. "You will be promptly informed of such measures should they be implemented." The HOCC said the Houthis would stop targeting Israeli-linked ships "upon the full implementation of all phases of the agreement". Many of the world's biggest shipping companies have suspended voyages through the Red Sea and diverted their vessels around southern Africa

to avoid being attacked.

The Iran-backed Houthis have carried out more than 100 attacks on ships since November 2023 and sunk two vessels, seized another and killed at least four seafarers. They have targeted the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which are joined by the narrow Bab al-Mandab strait, a chokepoint between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. Hamas released three Israeli hostages in Gaza and Israel freed 90 Palestinian prisoners, the first day of a ceasefire suspending a 15-month-old war. Executives from shipping, insurance and retail industries told Reuters last week that they were not ready to return to the Red Sea trade route because of uncertainty over whether the Houthis would continue to attack shipping. A spokesperson for Germany container shipping group Hapag-Lloyd said the company was still monitoring the situation, adding: "We will return to the Red Sea when it is safe to do so."

The Houthis have attacked ships in recent months based on outdated information, Jakob Larsen, chief safety & security officer with shipping association BIMCO, said. "In

recent months, they have made several false claims about successful attacks, thereby slightly undermining their credibility," he said. "Assuming the ceasefire holds and the US also refrains from using force, shipping companies are expected to gradually resume operations through the Red Sea." Insurers were also waiting for test voyages to determine if war risk premiums would ease, market sources said, asking not to be named. Higher war risk insurance premiums, paid when vessels sail through the Red Sea, have meant additional costs of hundreds of thousands of dollars for a seven-day voyage for any ships still sailing through the area. The Houthis hold the Bahamas-flagged Galaxy Leader and its 25 crew members, which was seized by the militia's commandos in international waters in November 2023. "The Filipinos, Mexicans, Romanians, Bulgarians, and Ukrainian who were on board are desperate to leave Yemen," the vessel's owner Galaxy Maritime Ltd and manager STAMCO Ship Management said. "Some have been hospitalised with malaria and one can only guess at their mental state."

# Trump orders federal workers back to office, weakens job protections

WASHINGTON (Reuters): President Donald Trump has ordered federal workers to return to the office five days a week and weakened job protections for civil servants, the first salvoes in his campaign to gut the federal bureaucracy. The one-two punch would force large numbers of white-collar government employees to forfeit remote working arrangements, reversing a trend that took off in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

If upheld by the courts, the measures could also strip mid-level officials of the legal guarantees that generally keep them insulated from ideological purges. Trump's allies have said the return-to-work mandate and the stripping of civil service protections - widely known as "Schedule F" - is intended to help the president replace long-serving government workers with loyalists faithful only to his agenda.

In a brief statement posted to the White House website, Trump ordered all heads of departments and agencies to "take all necessary steps to terminate remote work arrangements and require employees to return to work in-person at

their respective duty stations on a full-time basis, provided that the department and agency heads shall make exemptions they deem necessary." A second statement said that any power government officials have "is delegated by the President, and they must be accountable to the President." It largely reinstates a late 2020 administrative order from Trump's first term that Joe Biden rescinded when he took power and is almost certain to draw swift pushback and litigation.

The National Treasury Employee Union, a labor union that represents federal government employees in dozens of agencies, sued Trump in a federal court in Washington, aiming to block the "Schedule F" executive order. The two orders are being paired with a hiring freeze and the creation of an advisory body - dubbed the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) - which is meant to help Trump take huge chunks out of the federal government and eliminate some agencies wholesale. Experts say the aggregate effect of the changes will be to drive frustrated government employees out of their jobs, a goal the Trump

team is explicitly gunning for. Tesla CEO Elon Musk - who chairs DOGE - recently predicted that revoking "the COVID-era privilege" of telework would trigger "a wave of voluntary terminations that we welcome."

Not all government workers would be covered by the return-to-office mandate. A quarter of the federal workforce is unionized and many are covered by bargaining agreements that allow for remote work or hybrid arrangements. However, Russell Vought, Trump's nominee for Office of Management and Budget (OMB), has hinted at efforts to unwind those deals, telling lawmakers that the agreements struck during the Joe Biden administration were "a concerning phenomenon, and one that we are looking at very closely." Republicans have spent decades lamprooning federal employees as lazy bureaucrats; Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement has ratcheted the criticism to the next level, with the president calling federal employees "crooked" and "dishonest." There was sustained cheering when Trump signed the executive order ordering

the workers to return to office. Trump held the document aloft with a wry smile as the applause rang out around the arena.

"The politics play well with the MAGA crowd, because work-from-home workers tend to be higher educated," said Nicholas Bloom, an economics professor at Stanford University who studies labor and management issues. While Trump and other Republicans have suggested that remote work is rampant among federal employees, government data shows that it is more limited. About 46% of federal workers, or 1.1 million people, are eligible for remote work, and about 228,000 of them are fully remote, according to a report issued by the White House Office of Management and Budget in August. The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), a federal employee union, said hybrid working arrangements were a "key tool" for attracting America's best employees. "Restricting the use of hybrid work arrangements will make it harder for federal agencies to compete for top talent," it said in an email.

# Russian disinformation targets German election campaign

BERLIN (Reuters): A Russian disinformation campaign is seeking to boost the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), undermine mainstream German parties and sow worries about the economy ahead of the country's Feb. 23 election, a think-tank has found.

German think-tank CeMAS said it had tracked down hundreds of German-language posts on social media platform X over the past month exhibiting what it said were typical patterns of Russia's Doppelgaenger disinformation campaign against the West that German, US and French authorities have previously denounced.

The campaign, created after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine to undermine

Western support for Kyiv, spreads links to falsified Western news outlets sharing false information, according to a German foreign ministry report published last June. Russia has consistently denied involvement in disinformation campaigns against the West.

In recent weeks, the German posts on X have blamed the Greens party for Germany's economic woes, lambasted Chancellor Olaf Scholz for his support of Ukraine, cast the conservatives as untrustworthy but spoken in favour of the AfD, CeMAS said. The posts it tracked have shared links to falsified German news websites or to articles on authentic ones supporting their narrative, or simply images. Amplified by networks of fake accounts, they have

received over 2.8 million views, CeMAS said.

The report comes a month ahead of the election which Germany's main opposition conservatives are expected to win. However the strength of the AfD, polling in second place, could make the arithmetic of forming a coalition - and governance in general - more difficult if it can swing a blocking minority. In December the anti-immigration AfD won the endorsement of X owner Elon Musk, who this month also hosted a live chat with the party's chancellor candidate Alice Weidel on his platform. A survey published by pollster INSA put the conservatives on 29% and the AfD on 21% - twice what it achieved in the 2021 election. Scholz's Social

Democrats were trailing in third place on 16% and the Greens on 13%.

Germany's domestic intelligence agency (BfV) said in November it had set up a task force to head off any foreign state attempts to influence the federal election. Germany is Ukraine's second biggest financial and military backer, seeking to help it fend off Russia's full-scale invasion that began nearly three years ago.

This has resulted in a sharp rise in "aggressive behaviour" by Moscow towards Germany and other Ukraine allies, the BfV said. The US Justice Department said last year that the Russian Doppelganger operation is orchestrated by the Russian government through a group of Russian marketing agencies.

# Wake up and spend more on defense, Macron tells Europe

PARIS (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron called on Europe to "wake up" and spend more on defense in order to reduce its reliance on the United States for its security, in a speech to the French military as Donald Trump returns to power.

Macron referred to expected changes in Washington's foreign policy, especially regarding the war in Ukraine, saying it was an "opportunity for a European strategic wake-up call," in his New Year's speech to the military at the Army Digital and Cyber Support Command based in western France. "What will we do in Europe tomorrow if our American ally withdraws its warships from the Mediterranean? If they send their fighter jets from the Atlantic to the Pacific?" he asked.

Trump has criticized the

cost of the war in Ukraine for US taxpayers through major military aid packages and has made it clear that he wants to shift more of the fiscal burden onto Europe. He has vowed to bring the conflict to a swift end, voicing hope that peace could be negotiated in six months.

France and Europe need to adapt to evolving threats and changing interests, Macron said. "Who would have thought a year ago that Greenland would be at the center of political and strategic debates? That's the way it is."

He said providing lasting support to Ukraine is key so that Kyiv is in a strong position when engaging in any future peace negotiations. Ukraine must receive "guarantees" against any return of the war on its territory when hostilities cease and Europe must take "play its full role" in the process,

he said. Last week, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he discussed with Macron about the possibility of Western troops deploying in Ukraine to safeguard any peace deal ending the nearly three-year war with Russia.

"As one of these guarantees, we discussed the French initiative to deploy military contingents in Ukraine," Zelenskyy said. Potentially sending European troops as peacekeepers to Ukraine is fraught with risk. Such a move may not deter Russia from attacking Ukraine again in the future, which is the fear of Ukrainian officials, and could drag European countries into a direct confrontation with Moscow. That, in turn, could pull NATO - including the United States - into a conflict.

# 'Migrants in shelters be in country legally'

BOSTON (AP): The governor of Massachusetts proposed that in most cases, all members of a family staying in emergency shelters would have to be in the country legally, hardening her stance at a time when concerns are being raised about the safety at the facilities.

Democratic Gov. Maura Healey also is looking to strengthen background checks for anyone staying at the shelter by disclosing criminal convictions in the state and elsewhere. Her proposal would require applicants to verify their identity, residency, and status before being housed. Currently, shelter applicants are allowed to be housed before providing any documentation. It would also be limited to those who were evicted in the state, not anywhere in the country.

"I believe these changes are appropriate and needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the state shelter system in a way that aligns with the original intent of the law," Healey said in a statement. "In addition, these proposed changes will allow us to continue to ensure the safety of our system, support cities and towns in addressing the needs of unhoused fami-

lies in their communities and put us on the path toward a more fiscally sustainable shelter system." The governor's proposal must be passed by the legislature.

The state's shelter system for homeless families has been overwhelmed by a surge in migrant arrivals since 2023. Similar challenges have emerged in New York, Chicago and Denver, leading to an increase in homelessness. Last year, Healey announced that families not prioritized for placement in emergency assistance shelters would be eligible to stay at overflow sites for just five days. Healey said she was tightening restrictions on emergency assistance system eligibility because of the system's "continuing capacity constraints" and the need to protect its financial sustainability.

The state also began limiting how long homeless families can stay in shelters to nine months. After that, families are eligible for up to two 90-day extensions.

There also have been concerns about safety, after a migrant this month was found with drugs and an automatic weapon at one shelter. Records from the state indicate there

have been hundreds of serious incidents at the shelters, including rapes. Democratic House Speaker Ronald Mariano said the proposal is in line with what lawmakers have been trying to do.

"From the outset of the shelter system crisis, the House has consistently led the effort to ensure that the Commonwealth's emergency assistance program could remain financially viable in the long-term, resulting in reforms that capped the maximum length of stay, and that required job training for individuals in the shelter system," he said in a statement. Republican lawmakers, who have used those safety concerns to amplify their criticism of the governor's handling of the migrant crisis, welcomed Healey's proposal and said it showed her willingness to engage on the issue.

"With the growing consensus not only on Beacon Hill, but throughout the Commonwealth, that major changes are needed urgently, we have the opportunity to at last take actions that will make the system safer, more accountable and transparent, and more sustainable," Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr said in a statement.



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# Trump's second inaugural speech carries his rhetoric

DONALD Trump's second inaugural on Monday was impressive. More important was President Trump's second inaugural speech. He declared that America's Golden Age has begun with the inaugural. He also said that America's decline will end on the day.

He had indirectly castigated the Biden administration for its many failures on the home and foreign fronts. And he announced the many executive orders that he would be signing. He thanked all the Americans, including Asian-Americans, Hispanics, Blacks, and he said that he will make real the dream of Martin Luther King Jr.

Then he went on to say that he will deploy American troops at the Mexican border and send back the "criminal aliens" who have illegally entered the country. He has gone on to say that freedom of speech would be restored, and there would be no restrictions. He declared that the freedom of speech is restored and no state restriction can be placed on it.

He said that the state will be pushed back, and that Americans will enjoy the freedom fully. He also said gender and race would not be allowed to enter discussions. He also said that there are only two genders, male and female. He said he was reversing the green deal, and that America would drill for oil, 'the liquid gold' to make America powerful and rich.

He said the American autoworkers would get back to work and Americans can buy any car they want to. His speech showed that Trump plans to carry the Trump programme at full throttle, and nothing can stop Americans from doing what they want to. He meandered through the speech, repeated himself, and reiterated the basics of his agenda. He declared Gulf of Mexico to be Gulf of America, and he said that America will take over the Panama Canal from Panama. He accused Panama for handing over the running of the Panama Canal to China.

It sounded unrealistic on many issues, but that has been the strength of the Trump campaign that brought him back to the White House. He said he will set right the economy, bring the prices down, and end inflation. He made it appear that it can happen in a jiffy.

Despite the slender Republican majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate, he will not be able to push his programmes and make them into law. And as to the economy, there are too many obstacles in the way. He wants to make America the manufacturing hub it was nearly half-a-century ago.

The Japanese auto industry had revolutionised the global auto sector from the 1960s and the 1970s. Right now, electric vehicles (EVs) are leading the next phase of the auto revolution. While emphasising that America will be the leader, he also talked of global cooperation and of ending war in the world.

As he settles down to the daily business of administering America through the US Congress and through the Supreme Court and through the states, he will find that there are many rules to be negotiated and many compromises made at many levels to make things work. President Trump would himself be aware of the complexity of American government whatever his radical personal views might be.

He may want to simplify things, and do away with many of the rules he might consider as trivial. But he will understand that rules cannot be done away with. He will also understand that America can be a leader in the world only if it respects other countries and their respective sovereignties. And also America cannot be great or prosperous unless it trades with the rest of the world, and the domineering rhetoric would not be of much help in doing business.

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# Mars, watch out — Trump's coming for you too

Belén Fernández

IT was a cold day yesterday in Washington, DC, when Donald Trump was sworn in for his second stint as president of the United States of America. On account of freezing temperatures, the inauguration ceremony was moved indoors to the Capitol Rotunda, and the weather became a primary focus of much pre-inauguration media commentary.

The Reuters news agency reported that this was "one of the coldest inauguration days the US has experienced in the past few decades", while also providing other crucial ceremony updates such as that "Mike Tyson snacked on a banana in the overflow room".

I, myself, watched the event on my computer in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, where it is precisely the opposite of cold and where I have spent the past several days battling the scorpion population that has taken up residence in my house. By the end of Trump's swearing-in, however, I was undecided as to what was less pleasant: killing scorpions or watching the next episode of American dystopia unfold.

I tuned in at 11am, meaning I had a full hour before Trump took centre stage; for much of this time, the audience in the rotunda was treated to musical selections befitting a carousel or a circus. The frigid weather outside was, meanwhile, at least probably good practice for life on Mars, a territory Trump would soon claim for the United States during his inaugural speech: "And we will pursue our manifest

destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the stars and stripes on the planet Mars."

This, to be sure, was not the only territorial conquest Trump promised yesterday. He also reiterated his determination to rename the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America" as well as to seize control of the Panama Canal because "American ships are being severely overcharged and not treated fairly in any way, shape, or form".

But the Mars comments earned a maniacal grin from one person in the audience: the gazillionaire Tesla CEO Elon Musk, known for such ideas as that the "next really big thing is to build a self-sustaining city on Mars and bring the animals and creatures of Earth there". Musk was one of various representatives of the earthly super-elite who — unlike poor Mike Tyson — made the cut for a spot in the rotunda. Also present were Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, and Shou Zi Chew, the CEO of TikTok.

As Al Jazeera noted the day prior to the inauguration, Apple CEO Tim Cook reportedly donated \$1m to the ceremony, while "Google, Amazon, Microsoft and Meta have said they would donate \$1m, along with Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, who donated \$1m". As of January 8, Trump's inauguration fund had already racked up a record \$170m.

Anyway, what better way to "Make America Great Again" than by

supercharging the plutocracy?

Declaring at the start of his speech that "the golden age of America begins right now", Trump went on to express numerous other hallucinations, including that "national unity is now returning to America". Never mind that the tyranny of an astronomically wealthy minority is not exactly, um, unifying.

Luckily on Planet Trump, reality is whatever he says it is. And Trump says that "sunlight is pouring over the entire world".

In his speech, Trump announced a "series of historic executive orders" that according to him, will jumpstart the "complete restoration of America and the revolution of common sense". Among these executive orders is the declaration of "a national emergency at our southern border", paving the way for the deportation of "millions and millions of criminal aliens" and entailing the deployment of the US military "to repel the disastrous invasion of our country".

Under Trump's command, the US "will also be designating the cartels as foreign terrorist organisations". Then there's the new "official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders, male and female". And of course, the more emergencies, the better: "[T]oday I will also declare a national energy emergency. We will drill, baby, drill." Recoiling at the very thought of environmentalism, Trump proclaimed: "We will be a rich nation again, and it is that liquid

gold under our feet that will help to do it."

And if we happen to destroy Earth in the process, well, there's always Mars.

As usual, the continuous invocation of God during the inauguration ceremony made a fine mockery of the ostensible separation of church and state in the US, and Trump revealed the reason he had survived a July assassination attempt in the state of Pennsylvania: "I was saved by God to make America great again."

Last but not least, Trump took advantage of the overlap of his inauguration with Martin Luther King Jr Day, celebrated annually in the US on the third Monday of January, to pledge that "we will make his dream come true" — which would probably be easier if Trump himself weren't a bona fide racist.

Indeed, Trump's notion that "our power will stop all wars and bring a new spirit of unity to a world that has been angry, violent and totally unpredictable" would seem to be distinctly at odds with King's assessment of the US as the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world".

None of this is to imply that the Democrats have not done their part in terms of purveying global violence or upholding plutocracy, perpetuating brutal inequality, terrorising refugee seekers, and so on. But yesterday's inaugural charade was an exercise in nihilism — and, as I return to my scorpions and Trump goes about making dystopia great again, I think I'll take Mars over the "golden age of America" any day.

# Lebanon's government between threats and opportunities

Eyad Abu Shakra

FOLLOWING the bitter objections of the "Shiite duo" to Nawaf Salam's designation as Lebanese prime minister, he is seeking to reassure them by stressing that he has two choices: accommodation or ... accommodation.

Thus, surrendering to failure is not an option. There is no desire for the vindictiveness or exclusion that Mohammad Raad, the head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, complained of. This position fits with what we know about the prime minister-designate: a calm, cultured figure who is very familiar with the conditions of southern Lebanon. His familiarity stems from his family's extensive properties in the Tyre district, close to the southern border, and his marriage to a woman from the city of Sidon, the largest city and capital of the South Governorate.

More importantly, Salam did not take on the role of prime minister to settle scores with the "resistance" and there is no reason to think that he did.

As a diplomat and judge at the UN, he courageously confronted Israel's Likudists from within the organization's two most powerful bodies: the UN Security Council and the International Court of Justice. Furthermore, his leadership will strengthen the south's position in the new political equation, particularly since the president, Gen. Joseph Aoun, is the first southerner to occupy the position since Lebanon gained its independence.

The picture should be

clear with this introduction. But where might the problems lie?

The early Shiite objections are ominous, especially since they are underpinned by three significant and interrelated accusations rooted in the post-Israel war climate: betrayal of the "resistance" (Hezbollah and its base), seeking to leverage external influence to their disadvantage, and seeking to "marginalize" Shiite influence, beginning with their exclusion from the formation of Salam's Cabinet.

It is understandable that a deep and inflamed wound has been left by the Israeli assault, cutting into Hezbollah's body amid unprecedented US support for Israel. Moreover, it was easy for Washington to justify that war to the West, as it could claim that Hezbollah was not defending itself or resisting the occupation of its land this time.

Rather, Hezbollah had launched a war of choice — without coordinating with the Lebanese state — in solidarity with Hamas in Gaza.

Of course, despite the horrific massacres and displacement in Gaza, the American-Israeli narrative is that Israel's belligerence was a "defensive response" to Hamas' attack on the Gaza envelope during the Al-Aqsa Flood operation on Oct. 7, 2023.

Thus, the political miscalculations — firstly those of Hamas and then those of Hezbollah — did not merely justify Washington's support for Israel's war machine, they also left the

Republicans and Democrats "outbidding" one another to curry favor with the Israeli lobby in the year before November's US presidential election. In the end, this auction was won by the Republican right, which is fully aligned behind the Likud, a significant victory.

There is no need to unpack the reasons for Iran's role in encouraging both the Al-Aqsa Flood and Hezbollah's subsequent supporting war. The Lebanese people are now clearly confronted with a new political reality. A key feature of this reality is that Lebanese citizens have reclaimed their agency, despite the multitude of interpretations and conflicting interests of small partisan and sectarian groups.

For decades, Hezbollah (with backing from Iran and, to a large extent, the Assad regime) used the pretext of resistance to solidify its grip over the country. Unlike other Lebanese partisan and sectarian militias, Hezbollah retained its arsenal, becoming the only armed nonstate actor in the country, even after Israel's withdrawal in 2000. Until 2005, however, patriotic Lebanese citizens had seen no compelling reason to provoke a domestic crisis and tensions with a Lebanese faction that, geographically at least, had fought only on the front lines with Israel.

Although the Lebanese were aware of Hezbollah's ideological and strategic ties to foreign actors, particularly Iran, they did not seriously question its role

and ambitions until the wave of assassinations and assassination attempts that began in 2004. Then came the 2006 war, which was followed by the incursions into Beirut and Mount Lebanon and the occupation of downtown Beirut to impose Michel Aoun as president, making the picture crystal clear.

The party's leaders, who are accusing the forces responsible for bringing Joseph Aoun and then Salam to the executive of yielding to foreign dictates, seem to have forgotten the role of external actors in granting them the upper hand in the past. Their dominance was reflected in every aspect of Lebanon's political, security, economic and judicial life. They also ignored the fact that, for the first time, deputies and other political figures acted in line with popular sentiment.

"The street," sensing the implications of Hezbollah's recent setback, embraced the party's community without hesitation or begrudging generosity. After decades of living under the nightmare of Damascus' rule, which began in the mid-1970s, the people of Lebanon reached out to Hezbollah despite its negative role in Syria.

The truth, quite simply, is that the Lebanese street opposes exclusion, isolation and marginalization. However, it hopes that Hezbollah will turn the page and introduce a chapter defined by citizenship rather than arrogance, partnership rather than contempt and consensus rather than domination.

# How Gaza became Israel's Achilles' heel

Osama Al-Sharif

GAZA has been a thorn in Israel's side for decades. That narrow strip of land, home to more than 2.4 million people — 70 percent of whom are refugees — would not exist if it were not for the creation of Israel in 1948. Its very existence is, in fact, a daily reminder of the tragedy that has befallen the Palestinians, who, until today, are denied justice and the right to self-determination.

Gaza is home to eight refugee camps, although Israel has largely obliterated them in the past 15 months. Today, more than 90 percent of Gazans are displaced as a result of Israel's barbaric war. The humanitarian crisis in the Strip will last for years. Israel's horrific violations of human rights and international law in Gaza will haunt that nation forever.

Even before Hamas took over in 2007, Gaza represented a security nightmare for Israeli leaders and its military, especially in its crowded and poverty-stricken refugee camps. In 1992, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was quoted as saying: "I wish I could wake up one day and find that Gaza has sunk into the sea."

It was in Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp that the First Intifada detonated in 1987, before quickly spreading to the rest of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It marked the first popular uprising against the Israeli occupation since 1967. Between 1987 and 1991, Israel killed at least 1,087 Palestinians, of whom 240 were children.

The Intifada created political undercurrents that led to the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 and the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Under the latter, Israel agreed to withdraw from Gaza as an initial step toward ending its occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat

After Hamas carried out a bloody coup against the Palestinian Authority in 2007, it assumed complete control of Gaza. The year before, it had won a majority of seats in the Palestinian legislature. President Mahmoud Abbas was forced to ask Ismail Haniyeh, a leading Hamas figure, to form a short-lived government. Hamas' takeover of Gaza led to Israel imposing a blockade on the Strip and that triggered multiple bloody confrontations between the two sides. These involved the firing of rockets from Gaza and Israeli airstrikes, as well as limited ground invasions. Thousands of Gazans were killed in these fights. But nothing compares to Israel's response to the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on southern Israel. Between Oct. 8, 2023, and Sunday's pause, Israel carried out a war on Gaza that killed more than 47,000 Palestinians, the majority women and children.

arrived in Gaza in July 1994, marking a historic return of a Palestinian leader, himself a Gaza refugee, to a self-ruled area. Israel dismantled its Gaza settlements and withdrew in 2005.

But Gaza and its refugee camps were also the birthplace of Hamas, a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which became the primary opponent of Fatah, the largest of the Palestinian groups, whose head was Arafat. Hamas appeared during the First Intifada and vowed to use armed resistance to liberate all of Palestine.

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Between Oct. 8, 2023, and Sunday's pause, Israel carried out a war on Gaza that killed more than 47,000 Palestinians, the majority women and children. That figure is likely to rise sharply, since thousands remain buried under the rubble and are unac-

counted for.

While Israel, led by Benjamin Netanyahu and his extremist government, waged a genocide, Gaza became every Israeli's nightmare: a threat that simply will not go away. After 470 days of the most brutal and indiscriminate bombing of one of the most crowded places on Earth — destroying more than 90 percent of the civilian infrastructure — Netanyahu was forced into accepting a ceasefire deal by incoming US President Donald Trump. The agreement differs little from former President Joe Biden's suggestion of last May, which was accepted by Hamas at that time.

When Netanyahu declared war on Gaza, he set three main goals for a war that he said must end in "total victory." They were the destruction of Hamas, the return of all Israeli captives and full Israeli military control of Gaza. While the second and third phases of the deal need more negotiations, few in Israel believe Netanyahu has fulfilled any of these objectives.

While a now humbled Netanyahu has said that Israel will resume its attacks on Gaza at any given moment, the reality is that neither Trump nor the rest of the world would allow a resumption of the bloodbath. In a few days, the foreign press will enter Gaza — Israel has banned them since Day 1 of the war — and they will report to the rest of the world the horrors and the tragedy that Gaza has suffered.

While the future of Gaza — including who will end up running it and how normality can ever be achieved — remains ambiguous, the reality is that Israel has failed to erase the people of the Strip or drive them into the desert. Injured, shell-shocked, hungry and cold, the people of Gaza have derailed Israel's plans. People are returning to the battered north, Israel's army is withdrawing, aid is flowing in and Jewish settlers are not colonizing

the Strip. And to rub it all in, Hamas, while weakened, has not been destroyed. Sunday's prisoner exchange, with elite Hamas fighters emerging in military gear, sent a chilling message to Netanyahu and the extremists. All the killings and all the destruction only brought shame and debacle for Israel: it has a prime minister who is now wanted for war crimes and the country itself is facing charges of genocide at the world's highest court. But soul-searching and cool heads are now needed on both sides. The Palestinians have paid a high price — the highest since the Nakba — for a war they did not choose to start. Hamas bears responsibility for a decision it made that has left the Strip in ruins. Israel, too, must try to learn from its Gaza blunder. It has blemished itself and the stains are indelible. Israel cannot claim victory or a moral high ground when the horrors of what happened to Gaza will continue to unfold for generations to come.

Gaza has become Israel's Achilles' heel, a traumatic event that is now stuck to it and taints its existence. The country's far right has erased the romantic, often false, narrative espoused by Israel. Its legacy today is one of genocide, the killing of babies, war crimes, rape, torture and the usurping of land. If anything good has come out of this war, it is this: The Palestinians have survived, will continue to survive and will seek justice and accountability. But only Israel, the one that seeks penance, can deliver both.



# Trump wields huge power to kick start his new ‘Golden Age’

**D**ONALD Trump on Monday restored the warp speed presidency. Proclaiming a new American “Golden Age,” Trump consolidated power hours into his new term, wielding massive executive authority in seeking to obliterate large chunks of Joe Biden’s legacy and showing he plans to learn from his first-term failures to pull off a transformational presidency.

Trump pardoned hundreds of rioters from the January 6, 2021, attack with a single signature in his black Sharpie. He initiated his promised immigration purge and border security plan and ushered billionaire tech oligarchs into his inner political circle.

The new president set off simultaneous political alarms in multiple foreign capitals with off-the-cuff foreign policy making, instantly turning the US away from the internationalism embraced by every president apart from him since World War II.

In a freewheeling news conference back in the Oval Office, Trump demonstrated a capacity to drive his own message and move geopolitical chess pieces in public in a way that Biden lost when age caught up with him. The imagery was of a well-briefed new president eyeing big goals, confident that his first term gives him a heads-up on how to wield the levers of power and determined to make the most of a second chance.

But Trump also laced the pageantry of Inauguration Day with rally-style grievance politics and vast doses of untruths, twisted facts and an increasingly messianic sense of his own power, which was a foreboding omen for the rule of law. Several rambling and vindictive speeches in addition to his inaugural address suggested that, as in his first term, his biggest challenge in forging a meaningful legacy will lie in choosing presidential focus over stunt politics.

And despite the theatrics of signing scores of executive actions, the arrival of the first legal challenges heralded new political battles. A substantive second presidency will need to match executive power with new laws threatened through a tiny GOP majority in the House of Representatives. After all, much of Monday’s action could be wiped out by a new Democratic president in four years just as Trump expunged Biden’s.

There was something almost surreal in seeing Trump back behind the Resolute Desk in the hastily redecorated Oval Office — as if he’d never been away.

On a day of soaring rhetoric, an executive power earthquake and

euphoric receptions for the 47th president at MAGA inauguration balls that ran late into a frigid cold night, these were the most important developments.

In a gesture that was shocking in its magnitude and that instantly raised questions about the equal application of the law, Trump offered blanket pardons to approximately 1,500 January 6 rioters. Hours after swearing to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution, he showed no distinction between those guilty of beating up police officers and others who entered the US Capitol but were not convicted of violent offenses. His commutations extended to some of the country’s most high-profile extremists including Proud Boys and Oath Keepers hardliners.

Trump’s stunning move showed that president

Stephen Collinson

of a president who took office vowing to restore the integrity of the Justice Department but then pardoned his son Hunter after saying he wouldn’t.

Biden also handed Trump an opening just 20 minutes before the end of his term by preemptively pardoning more family members, including his brothers James and Francis Biden and his sister Valerie. Biden said his kin had done nothing wrong but warned that “the mere fact of being investigated or prosecuted can irreparably damage their reputations and finances.”

Presidents have almost unlimited pardon power for federal matters. But by approving countless preemptive pardons in recent weeks, Biden has given Trump or any future president incen-

overseeing immigration courts and promised in his inaugural address to send troops to the border. He declined to tell reporters when enforcement raids, expected to set up showdowns with Democratic cities, would start. But uncertainty that breeds fear is a goal in itself.

Still, Trump can’t fulfill his goals for mass deportations with his pen alone. He must thread the needle in Congress to fund his big plans.

Trump also acted fast on a batch of campaign promises that will delight his MAGA base but could leave some Americans feeling stigmatized. He, for instance, reversed Biden’s orders against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation and stripped diversity programs from the federal government. In one example of the change,

There was something almost surreal in seeing Trump back behind the Resolute Desk in the hastily redecorated Oval Office — as if he’d never been away. On a day of soaring rhetoric, an executive power earthquake and euphoric receptions for the 47th president at MAGA inauguration balls that ran late into a frigid cold night, these were the most important developments. In a gesture that was shocking in its magnitude and that instantly raised questions about the equal application of the law, Trump offered blanket pardons to approximately 1,500 January 6 rioters. Hours after swearing to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution, he showed no distinction between those guilty of beating up police officers and others who entered the US Capitol but were not convicted of violent offenses. His commutations extended to some of the country’s most high-profile extremists including Proud Boys and Oath Keepers hardliners. Trump’s stunning move showed that presidents who win office after assaults on democracy can defy justice themselves and then absolve their supporters. It legitimized the use of violence as a tool of political expression, weakening American democracy and suggesting that those who use commit violent crimes in the 47th president’s name might get away with it.

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Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called Trump’s “actions an outrageous insult to our justice system and the heroes who suffered physical scars and emotional trauma as they protected the Capitol, the Congress and the Constitution.”

But Trump was not the only president accused of abusing the pardon power.

Before he left office, Biden granted preemptive blanket pardons to public servants, including former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley, former top government infectious diseases official Dr. Anthony Fauci and lawmakers and staff who served on the House select committee that investigated the Capitol riot. Biden argued that his hand was forced by Trump’s vows of retribution against innocents. But the pardons further tarnished the reputation

tives to theoretically push staffers or relatives to break the law in the knowledge that they can get a pardon at the end of a term. This represents a huge potential expansion of presidential power, which the Founders never intended and which threatens to foster White House corruption.

Trump picked up on the implications immediately. “Now every president, when they leave office, they are going to pardon everyone they met,” he told reporters.

No issue has powered Trump’s political career more than his demagogic and exaggerated claims that America is being swamped by undocumented migrants. In the 2024 campaign, he seized on Biden’s failure to temper a border crisis earlier in his presidency.

On Monday, Trump used executive actions to unlock new power by declaring an emergency at the southern border, ending the use of an app that allowed legal migrants to enter the US and starting the process of ending birthright citizenship, setting off a legal and constitutional showdown. The new president also suspended refugee resettlement for four months.

Trump fired senior Justice Department leadership responsible for

the State Department will now require passport and visa applicants to reflect “accurately” their sex on their official documents.

Elon Musk made it to the White House before the new president. The X and SpaceX owner, who has massive federal contracts, showed up while Trump was watching his indoor inaugural parade at Washington’s Capital One Arena. Musk is ready to get to work at the new Department of Government Efficiency set up by another executive action.

And earlier on Monday, Musk, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, Apple CEO Tim Cook, Google CEO Sundar Pichai and Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg appeared alongside Trump at a pre-inauguration service and took up prominent positions at the inauguration.

It was a stunning manifestation of the shift by Silicon Valley kingpins away from Democrats and toward Trump. The president argued later that it made sense to put such pioneers to work for American interests in a hyper-competitive world. That’s true. But their presence in his court brings enormous potential conflicts of interest. And the executives effectively control information sources for millions

of Americans and now have incentives to shape it to please Trump.

Trump is back disturbing the sleep of global leaders.

During his Oval Office news conference, he threw out foreign policy on the fly. He confirmed the widely rumored demand for NATO members to more than double their pledged defense spending to 5% of GDP. That’s impossible for allies mired in economic troubles and trying to finance vast welfare states. This is probably a bargaining tactic — and the US does not spend that much. But Europe is back in Trump’s sights.

Trump escalated his war of words over the Panama Canal, saying the US had made a “foolish gift” when it ceded sovereignty of the vital waterway. He falsely claimed “China is operating the Panama Canal and we didn’t give it to China. We gave it to Panama and we’re taking it back.”

He also designated Mexican drugs cartels as foreign terrorist organizations. Speaking to reporters, he refused to rule out a hugely risky raid into Mexico to go after the cartels with special forces.

Trump also tried to start a bidding war for his first foreign visit, saying if Saudi Arabia or any nation spent \$500 million on US goods, they could be top of the list.

And in a fascinating move, he cranked up pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin to make a peace deal in Ukraine, saying the war “does not make him look very good.”

One thing Trump didn’t do immediately was impose massive new foreign duties on trading partners — perhaps to avoid spooking markets — despite saying earlier that tariff was the most “beautiful word.” But he later said he’d slap 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada on February 1, raising the prospect of a continental trade war.

He didn’t give a date for his promised tariffs on China, while confirming he had been invited to visit Beijing. This suggested that Trump seeks the potential stick of new tariffs as a negotiating tool ahead of any trip.

Trump also repeatedly falsely claimed that tariffs would reap massive financial gain for the US, when their cost would largely be borne by American consumers. The possibility they could lead to inflationary pressures and increase the cost of basic foods, lodging and gasoline might also be giving Trump pause.

Because if he can’t fix these issues, which powered his 2024 election triumph, all of the aggressive presidential power he flexed on Monday might be for nothing.

— CNN

# How AI threatens linguistic diversity

David Gosset

**C**ULTURAL diversity and biodiversity are often discussed in parallel, and for good reason. Both are invaluable to the richness and sustainability of life on Earth. Just as we must take action to preserve the vast variety of species that inhabit our planet, we must also protect the diversity of cultures that shape the human experience.

In this context, the plurality of languages plays a critical role in nurturing and maintaining cultural diversity. Language is not just a tool for communication; it is a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, traditions, values and worldviews. However, despite their immense practical value, large language models (LLMs) are exacerbating the pressure on non-English languages, contributing to a subtle but

survival of local languages. This phenomenon is especially visible in cyberspace, where English has become the lingua franca — 52.1 percent of websites are currently in English. Spanish comes second, accounting for only 5.5 percent.

Large language models are contributing to this trend in both subtle and overt ways. This applies not only to already endangered languages (more than 3,000 of them) but also to more stable ones (more than 3,500). Among the latter, it even affects the most widely spoken languages worldwide, such as Chinese, Hindi, Spanish and French.

The message is clear: passively allowing linguistic homogenization to occur and become the norm is unwise.

LLMs are designed to

tently reinforce the dominance of English at the expense of their native tongues.

This issue is compounded by the fact that the development of AI technologies is often driven by countries and companies in the English-speaking world. As a result, the tools designed to aid human communication are often created with little consideration for the preservation of linguistic diversity. While some AI developers are working on making their systems more inclusive, the challenge of supporting hundreds of languages, each with its own unique grammar and cultural context, is formidable.

Raising people’s awareness of the impact of LLMs on linguistic diversity is crucial for fostering a true sense of cultural preservation. Just as biodiversity is not just about saving individ-

Cultural diversity is deeply intertwined with linguistic diversity. Every language carries within it a unique set of ideas, ways of thinking, and forms of expression. When a language fades, so does the cultural knowledge it embodies. Linguistic diversity helps societies address and adapt to challenges and innovate in ways that might otherwise be impossible. Just as ecosystems thrive when diverse species coexist, societies become more resilient and dynamic when diverse cultures and languages flourish. The loss of a language is not just the loss of words, but the sad erosion of one particular vision of the world. In the global village shaped by the influence of the United States, the rise of English as the dominant language in business, technology and academia has created a significant imbalance. While the proliferation of English has brought people together across borders, it has also placed enormous pressure on the survival of local languages. This phenomenon is especially visible in cyberspace, where English has become the lingua franca — 52.1 percent of websites are currently in English. Spanish comes second, accounting for only 5.5 percent. Large language models are contributing to this trend in both subtle and overt ways. This applies not only to already endangered languages (more than 3,000 of them) but also to more stable ones (more than 3,500). Among the latter, it even affects the most widely spoken languages worldwide, such as Chinese, Hindi, Spanish and French. The message is clear: passively allowing linguistic homogenization to occur and become the norm is unwise. LLMs are designed to process vast amounts of data from the internet, and this data is overwhelmingly in English. Although these models are capable of understanding and generating text in many languages, they are predominantly trained on English-language content.

significant decline in linguistic diversity.

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In the global village shaped by the influence of the United States, the rise of English as the dominant language in business, technology and academia has created a significant imbalance. While the proliferation of English has brought people together across borders, it has also placed enormous pressure on the

process vast amounts of data from the internet, and this data is overwhelmingly in English. Although these models are capable of understanding and generating text in many languages, they are predominantly trained on English-language content. This structural bias toward English reinforces the dominance of the language. The increasing reliance on LLMs in applications like translation, customer service and content creation further consolidates the centrality of English.

While AI bias is a widely discussed issue, particularly in terms of race, gender and socioeconomic status, the impact of large language models on linguistic diversity deserves more attention. In fact, it may be one of the most pressing issues for the future of cultural diversity. The widespread use of English in AI systems risks marginalizing minority languages and expediting their extinction. As more people rely on AI for communication, learning and business, they may inadvertently

ual species but maintaining the intricate web of life that sustains ecosystems, cultural diversity is about protecting the multitude of human experiences that contribute to the global mosaic of human identity. As we continue to advance in the field of AI, it is essential to incorporate the values of linguistic diversity and cultural inclusion into the design and deployment of these technologies.

The conversation on AI’s impact on language and culture must be global. Governments, tech companies and linguists must collaborate to ensure AI serves as a tool for promoting, rather than diminishing, cultural and linguistic diversity. By making concerted efforts to develop technologies that support the vitality of all languages, we can help safeguard the rich diversity of human cultures for future generations. This makes the preservation of linguistic diversity not just an academic issue, but also a cultural imperative that is essential to the flourishing of human civilization.

# Advancing China-Africa win-win cooperation

ARKEBE OQUBAY

**C**HINA-AFRICA cooperation is the largest and most dynamic form of South-South cooperation. It is comprehensive, cooperative and strategic. It is based on mutual respect and the principle of win-win cooperation. China and Africa share common aspirations for development and prosperity.

Both are committed to developing a fair global governance system and represent the solidarity spirit of the Global South.

It is the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2025. Significant achievements in trade, investment, infrastructure development and people-to-people relations have been recorded over the 25 years. However, we also need to recognize that the potential for China and Africa is still to be fully tapped, and we should scale up our joint efforts to release that potential. For instance, bilateral trade has increased from

over \$10 billion in 2000 to \$282 billion in 2023. Research indicates that the trade volume between Africa and China has more potential for further growth over the next decade. During the past 25 years, China’s foreign direct investment flow to Africa reached around \$50 billion. However, given Africa’s demographic and economic transformation, there are vast opportunity and necessity for massive productive investment to create jobs, exports and productive capacity. Significant infrastructure development — energy, transport, communications — was achieved during this period. China and Africa have substantial opportunities for green transformation and building of a carbon-neutral economy through a joint effort.

In his speech at the FOCAC Beijing summit in September 2024, Chinese President Xi Jinping stated that the founding of the forum was a milestone in the his-

tory of China-Africa relations. He proposed that bilateral relations between China and all African countries having

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diplomatic ties with China will be elevated to the level of strategic relations, and that the overall characterization of China-Africa relations will be elevated to an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era.

Furthermore, he also stressed the vital features and urgency of modernization in support of the African Union’s Agenda 2063, the continent’s development blueprint

over a 50-year period.

In his speech, President Xi stressed that over the

next three years, China will work with Africa to take partnership actions for modernization in the following respects, including deepening China-Africa cooperation and spearheading the modernization of the Global South; mutual learning among civilizations; trade prosperity; industrial chain cooperation; connectivity; development cooperation; health; agriculture and people’s livelihoods; peo-

ple-to-people exchanges; green development; and common security.

At the Beijing summit, significant attention was given to accelerating Africa’s industrialization and developing industrial chain cooperation, modernizing agriculture and food security, energy cooperation, the digital economy and financial cooperation. China has removed all import tariffs on goods from 33 African countries and has taken the initiative to apply alternative payment systems for cross-border

trade. Both sides should maximize their cooperation and efforts to achieve these shared goals and aspirations.

More importantly, China has remained a source of inspiration and development experiences for African countries in poverty reduction, industrialization, infrastructure development, urban development, human development, economic catch-up, and economic governance. Policy learning is a vital dimension of China-Africa cooperation. I have been involved in Ethiopia’s continuous endeavor to learn from

China’s reform and opening-up journey over the past more than four decades.

China is at the forefront of the global fight for sustainability and a carbon-neutral economy. China is the leader in renewable energy, accounting for over 80 percent of solar power production and contributing to massive cost reduction and accessibility. China is also the world’s leading manufacturer of electric vehicles and battery storage. In the past decade, China has emerged as one of the innovation and technological leaders, in many fields such as renewable energy and electrification — solar, wind, green hydrogen, automotive and digital technologies. In comparison, Africa has a massive demand for clean and renewable energy. It accounts for over 60 percent of the potential for global solar energy. Africa must also create millions of jobs, generate exports and develop its industrial capacity.

I genuinely believe in

the potential and impact of what I describe as a new green pact for Africa as one of the drivers of Africa’s green transition and economic transformation. This pact will bring together China’s capability and African requirements for a better future. It will also manifest the vision of a shared future for the Global South. This cooperation should be comprehensive and include green financing, investment, industrial capacity, knowhow transfer and a common position on climate justice.

The vision for China-Africa cooperation should be more resilient in meeting people’s expectations. It should also aim to promote multilateralism and a multipolar world, reform the international financial architecture, and reform the United Nations system and Bretton Woods institutions. New institutions should be established to accelerate economic growth, sustainable development and build a prosperous future.

— China Daily



# PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 802 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 802.56 points, a negative change of 0.69 percent, closing at 115,042.25 points as compared to 115,844.82 points on the last trading day.

A total of 767,270,814 shares were traded during the day as compared to 675,046,602 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs31.825 billion against Rs37.533 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 450 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 135 of them recorded gains and 266 sustained losses,

whereas the share price of 49 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Cnergyco PK with 114,034,653 shares at Rs7.29 per share, Bank Makramah with 69,476,357 shares at Rs3.53 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 64,227,770 shares at Rs1.78 per share.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs121.84 per share closing at Rs3,108.52 whereas runner-up was Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited with Rs94.94 rise in its share price to close at Rs9,194.94.

Unilever Pakistan Foods

Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs299.49 per share price, closing at Rs21,550.01, whereas the runner-up was Khyber Textile Mills Limited with Rs43.88 rise in its per share price to Rs526.08.

**Rupee sheds 16 paise against dollar**

Pakistani rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 16 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.81 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.65.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs279.80 and Rs281.30, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.67 to close at Rs289.00 against the last day's closing of Rs287.33, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.78, whereas an increase of Rs1.50 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs341.53 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs340.03.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal also increased by 05 paise and 04 paise to close at Rs75.91 and Rs74.30, respectively.



MULTAN: Labourers unloading tomatoes sacks from delivery truck at Vegetable Market.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where four ships, MTM Amazon, Venus, River Side and Annegrit carrying Palm oil, LPG, Fuel oil and Coal, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal-1, Engro Vopak Terminal, FOTCO oil Terminal and Pakistan Bulk Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile three more Container ships, GFS Ruby, Maersk Kensington and MSC Positano are also arrived at outer anchorage on Tuesday.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers ship 'MSC Maeva' left the port on Tuesday early morning, while four more ships, MTM Amazon, Ardmore Cheyenne, Karrar and Venus are expected to sail on Wednesday.

Cargo volume of 151,712 tonnes, comprising 80,409 tonnes imports cargo and 71,303 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,435 Containers (596 TEUs Imports & 3,839 TEUs Export) was handled at the port.

There are 28 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Maersk Kensington, MSC Positano, Au Taurus, Nord Valorous and Ivan-6 & another ship 'Fuwarit' carrying Container, Palm oil, Soya Bean Oil, LPG and LNG are expected to take berths at QICT, MW-1, LCT, EVTL and PGPCL respectively, while two more container ships, Maersk Cabo Verde and One Reliability are due arrive at outer anchorage on Wednesday.

# Aleem for increasing Pak Post revenue target to Rs14b

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization & Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan has assigned the task of increasing Pakistan Post's revenue to Rs.14 billion by June 30.

Aleem Khan while chairing a review meeting directed to change the framework of Pakistan Post and establish a world-class courier company there which can compete with the private sector and contribute to the improvement and survival of this institution by applying professional skills.

He said that this organization has made positive progress in the last few months with an improved business model in which there is a large scope for further betterment.

He said that Pakistan Post will have to reduce unnecessary expenses along with austerity so that the jobs of the employees in this organization can be saved.

The minister said that there is no doubt that the postal delivery system has become modern so Pakistan Post will have to adapt current requirements and ensure digitalization as through strong marketing network, this organization can be made profitable.

He directed the Director General of Pakistan Post to formulate a new business plan within a week and hold another meeting with recommendations so that positive activities can be taken forward quickly.

It was informed during the meeting that Pakistan Post has earned 23.5 per-

cent more revenue this year compared to last one. Pakistan Post has taken steps to increase new business worth Rs 1.4 billion and cost-cutting measures will save Rs 2.4 billion in the current fiscal year while the collection of Pakistan Post's arrears from various departments and renting out post office buildings will also increase revenues.

Pakistan Post is working on a three-point strategy to increase its performance and enhance the business of this organization, reducing costs and improving services are part of the strategy.

Expressing satisfaction with these steps, the federal minister stressed the need for further increase in them so that Pakistan Post can be improved by moving away from traditional practices.

## IFN Best Banks Poll 2024: BankIslami Pakistan honored as 'Best Islamic Trustee'

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: BankIslami Pakistan has been recognized as the "Best Islamic Trustee" at the IFN Best Banks Poll 2024, marking a significant moment in the global Islamic finance landscape.

The IFN Best Banks Poll, now in its 20th edition, introduced the "Best Islamic Trustee" category this year, acknowledging the critical role of trustee and custodial services in the Islamic finance ecosystem. BankIslami secured the top position in a highly competitive category, with Maybank and Standard Chartered Bank named as

runners-up.

This year's poll attracted input from financial stakeholders across 35 countries, underscoring the increasing relevance and growth of Islamic finance on a global scale.

The "Best Islamic Trustee" category was introduced to highlight financial institutions providing fiduciary and custody services that prioritize asset management for third-party managers. The award reflects BankIslami's approach to these services, rooted in compliance with Shariah principles and operational reliability.

The annual IFN Best Banks Poll is considered a

key measure of industry sentiment and performance in Islamic finance. Categories such as Best Islamic Bank for ESG & SRI, Best Islamic Digital Bank and the new Best Islamic Trustee represent evolving priorities in the sector, including sustainability, digital transformation and asset stewardship.

BankIslami is one of the country's leading Islamic financial institutions, with a network of over 530 branches nationwide. Established in 2005 as the first Islamic commercial bank to receive a license under Pakistan's 2003 Islamic Banking Policy, BankIslami provides a

range of Shariah-compliant banking solutions, including retail, investment and trade finance services. As a subsidiary of JSGroup, it is part of one of Pakistan's leading financial services groups.

Islamic Finance News (IFN) is a global platform for Islamic banking and finance, providing news, insights and analysis to audiences in over 35 countries. The annual Islamic Finance News Best Banks Poll recognizes outstanding contributions across various segments of Islamic finance, offering a comprehensive snapshot of market trends and institutional performance.

# Food group exports increase by 13.83% to \$3.959 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Food group exports from the country witnessed an increase of 13.83 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The exports of various food commodities were recorded at \$3.959 billion during July-December (2024-25) as compared to the exports of \$3.478 billion in July-December (2023-24), according to PBS data.

The food commodities that contributed to positive growth in trade included rice, the exports of which

grew by 14.50 percent, from \$1.637 billion to \$1.875 billion.

The other food commodities that contributed to positive growth included fish and fish preparations, the exports of which increased by 1.47 percent, from \$199.074 million to \$201.996 million whereas the exports of vegetables rose by 1.71 percent, from \$128.661 million to \$130.859 million.

The exports of tobacco increased by 103.65 percent, from \$44.918 million to \$91.478 million; meat and meat preparations by 3.64 percent, from \$240.108 million to

\$248.858 million and sugar by 1525.93 percent from \$21.069 million to \$342.571 million.

The food commodities that contributed to negative growth in trade included fruits, the exports of which decreased by 1.32 percent, from \$171.345 million to \$169.084 million.

The exports of spices dipped by 16.14 percent, from \$57.465 million to \$48.191 million; oil seeds, nuts, and kernels by 16.54 percent, from \$364.102 million to \$303.873 million whereas the exports of all other food items decreased by 10.82 percent, from \$614.194 million to

\$547.712 million.

Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports of food commodities witnessed a decrease of 4.23 percent during the month of December 2024 as compared to the same month of last year.

The food group exports during December 2024 were recorded at \$804.857 million against the exports of \$840.426 million.

On month-on-month basis, the exports of food commodities however increased by 1.88 percent in December 2024 when compared to the exports of \$790 million in November 2024, PBS reported.

Textile exports up by 9.67% to \$9.084 billion

# Textile exports up by 9.67% to \$9.084 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Textile exports witnessed an increase of 9.67 percent during the first half of the current financial year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Tuesday.

The textile exports from the country were recorded at US \$9,084.564 million during July-November (2024-25) against the exports of US \$ 8,283.246 million during July-November (2023-24).

The textile commodities that contributed in trade growth included cotton cloth the export of which increased by 4.10 percent to \$ 964.661 million from \$926.677 million while the export of knitwear surged by 16.49 percent to \$ 2,565.637 million from \$ 2,202.526 million.

The other commodities that witnessed growth in trade included bed wear, the export of which rose by 14.75 percent to \$ 1,580.203 million from \$ 1,377.109 million, towels by 5.97 percent to \$ 530.009 million from \$ 500.133 million, tents, canvas, and tarpaulin up by 9.55 percent to \$ 66.761 million this year compared to the exports of \$ 60.940 million last year.

Similarly, the export of readymade garments grew by 22.48 percent to \$ 2,044.424 million from \$ 1,669.251 million.

lions, art, silk and synthetic textile rose by 12.58 percent to \$ 199.535 million from \$177.236 million, made up articles (excl. towels and bed wear) increased by 9.36 percent to \$385.877 million from \$352.865 million while the export of other textile materials went up by 2.79 percent to \$ 364.298 million from \$ 354.418 million.

The textile commodities that witnessed negative trade growth included raw cotton the exports of which declined by 98.85 percent to \$0.616 million from \$53.412 million. Likewise, the exports of cotton yarn declined by 37.96 percent to \$365.132 million from \$588.530 million whereas the export of cotton carded or combed dipped by 100 percent from 0.588 million to zero export during the period under review.

The exports of yarn other than cotton yarn also declined by 11 percent to \$17.411 million from \$19.562 million.

Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the textile exports witnessed an increase of 5.55 percent during December 2024 as compared to the same month of last year.

The textile exports from the country during December 2024 were recorded at US \$ 1,477.302 million against the exports of US \$1,399.652 million in December 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, the textile exports from the country witnessed an increase of 1.11 percent during December 2024 as compared to the exports of \$ 1,461.070 million recorded in November 2024, according to the data.

It is pertinent to mention here that the overall merchandized exports from the country increased by 10.52 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

# WCCI in Khanewal inaugurated

KHANEWAL (APP): Deputy Commissioner Khanewal Dr Salma Suleman stated that the establishment of the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WCCI) in Khanewal would provide excellent opportunities for skilled women in the region to showcase their businesses on national and international platforms.

She added that the initiative would foster economic development through enhanced business networking among women entrepreneurs. These women will now be able to introduce their products effectively and

secure fair compensation.

The Deputy Commissioner expressed these views at the inaugural ceremony of WCCI Khanewal.

The event was moderated by Filza Mumtaz, and the members collectively appreciated the efforts of Patron-in-Chief Begum Farukh Mukhtar, whose dedication brought the institution into existence.

Founder President Saadia Ali Advocate welcomed the attendees and highlighted the contributions of Begum Farukh Mukhtar in establishing the chamber. She also thanked High Court Bar's

former president Rana Asif Saeed and Multan Tax Bar's General Secretary Sharif Ansari Advocate for their support.

The ceremony was attended by District Bar General Secretary Malik Adnan, DSP Rehan Rasool, and other notable personalities.

Speaking on the chamber's objectives, Founder President Saadia Ali Advocate said that the platform would empower skilled women to market their businesses effectively and contribute to regional economic growth. She called the establishment a

significant step for women's economic uplift in the area.

Deputy Commissioner Dr Salma Suleman termed the chamber a milestone for the economic empowerment of women in Khanewal and assured her full support for its progress. Shields were distributed to participants at the end of the event.

Prominent attendees included Vice President Dr Nuzhat Altaf, Executive Committee Members Razia Rehman, Ayesha Shamshad Advocate, Maria Sadiq, Sana Umair, and General Body Members Filza

Mumtaz, Masooma Shoaib, Madiha Rana, Zainat Batool, Aftreen Advocate, and Mahjabeen. Special participation was noted from Farah Saqib, President of Women Chamber of Commerce Multan.

## Gold prices increase by Rs300/tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs300 and was sold at Rs283,200 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs282,900 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs257 to Rs242,798 from Rs242,541 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs222,565 from Rs222,337. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,372 and Rs2,890 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$3 to \$2,711 from \$2,708, the Association reported.

As stated earlier if we compare the children of different societies, we find a stark difference. In more advanced societies children are meticulously trained on technology, privacy, fake news and propaganda but the children of developing nations especially of low-income families are often neglected.

Their rights are often exploited in the name of seminars, talk shows and articles but they are not

# Society, media and culture: Their impact on children's growth

### Akhtar Ali Burki

While searching some information in one of the online pages, I clicked on a website which was new for me and instantly a very colorful and organized page appeared in front of me. This page comprised of a variety of things including theories and personalities associated with philosophy, religion, politics, psychology etc. I could not resist and with delight started reading its contents which was about "Harry Potter and Deathly Hallows" and "Grimm's Fairy Tales". The stories' have titles in bold font and its thumbnails showing jubilant children reading from the book. At the same time, I heard shouting outside my house where a father was rebuking and taunting his son. I imagined what sort of culture and personality traits

would develop in the two boys, if one is reading from the fiction book and the other is receiving harsh treatment from his father. In the same vein a child who is born in underdeveloped country and low-income family gets beating and reproaching from the parents, uncles and close kinsmen. In addition, these children also experience bullying, stereotyping, colorism and violence etc., in one form or the other. In such conditions a child in his adult stage may become vulnerable to radicalization, crime and negativity. In psychological terms such teen has developed cognitive schema with negative future outcomes.

In one of their research, Stefania Maggi et al (2016) stated that in child growth family, income, neighborhood and socio-political context play an important

role. She compared developed and underdeveloped societies and said that the latter wrestle with gender stereotyping, war, slavery and other basic health problems. By fulfilling elementary needs of home how a person would be able to develop cognitive, creative, technical and other skills.

On the flip side, those children who acquire healthy practices from the parents, grow in a literate environment and educate themselves through fiction and non-fiction, then we can say that the culture of that boy would bring positivity. Such a person follows societal norms, rules and mores which prevent him from ethnocentrism, narcissism and alienation. That's why develop countries stress on inclusivity and embracing good points of others' cultures. Apart from exceptions and some corrupt practices,

children of the upper class or those having amenities of life comes in this category. These children, in the future become successful people and change the world.

In the traditional societies family and neighborhood play an impactful role on child growth and development. But in today's world social media has become an effective tool in changing the overall personality of a child. Social media generate contents of entertainment embedded with violence, romance and sensationalism. Every day a 'mediated environment' is created by celebrities, Youtubers and Tik-Tokers. They take selfies with expensive mobiles, stroll in beautiful places and show his worth in his Vlogs, leading an adolescent, who follow them, towards anxiety, depression, beauty concerns, likes and followers'

issues etc. So, the social media creates its own culture which may have negative impact on the children and grown-ups. Its positive aspects could not be ignored if it is used for education and constructive work.

On the impact of social media on children, Mehwish discusses that the children of today seems alone because the family have no time for them as they are busy in their phones. Looking at their parents, children are also imitating them by using gadgets. She further added that in the joint family system children were learning how to interact with people and they have no tension of meeting people. In collective family they respect and help others and follow their elders' culture. Now in the nuclear family children seek guidance from the media and

like to follow the commands of media. In the words of George Gerbner, who once said that television has become a key member of our family who tells most of the stories most of the time. Likewise, media change, divert and manipulate children what to do and what not to do. They have no critical mind to repel the negative discourse of social media.

As stated earlier if we compare the children of different societies, we find a stark difference. In more advanced societies children are meticulously trained on technology, privacy, fake news and propaganda but the children of developing nations especially of low-income families are often neglected.

Their rights are often exploited in the name of seminars, talk shows and articles but they are not

given their due share. Pakistan, which is a developing country have signed United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) and introduced many laws for child protection such as 'Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Act 2018', Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act, 2020 etc, but still children are sexually harassed, raped and bullied. That's why when these children cross the infancy and become adults, they are more inclined towards antisocial activities. In it the social media has a great share.

Although children face many problems in their life cycle but it is not difficult to think on its solutions. The first responsibility of children must be shouldered on parents and neighbors because they socialize here and learn good and bad

aspects of the society. Parents should educate themselves how to train their children on the onslaught, bombardment and manipulation of media. Secondly, government, apart from their legislation, should enforce their decisions in letter and spirit. It is also necessary for government to train children and youngsters on media literacy and a space be given in the school, colleges and university curriculum.

### Name Correction

My Correct name is Muhammad Daud Khan S/o Muhammad Shoaib Khan while mistakenly written in my some documents as M. Dawood S/o M. Shuaib please make the required correction as Muhammad Daud Khan S/o Muhammad Shoaib Khan as written in my DMC and CNIC # 1730101065335 Mob: 03497292054





In brief

Pakistan gears up for final against Ireland

JOHOR, MALAYSIA (APP): The Pakistan women's under-19 cricket team is intensifying their preparations for their final Group B match against Ireland, scheduled for Wednesday at the Johor Cricket Academy Oval. On Tuesday, the team conducted a rigorous three-hour practice session at the Marlborough College Ground, led by head coach Mohsin Kamal. Players focused on improving their batting, bowling and fielding skills with guidance from assistant coach Hanif Malik, fielding coach Nahida Khan and strength and conditioning coach Asfand Yar. This match is crucial for Pakistan as they aim to secure a spot in the Super Six stage. The first ball is set to be bowled at 2:30 PM local time which is 11:30 AM Pakistan time.

Commissioner opens handball championship

MULTAN (APP): Commissioner Multan division and chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Multan Aamir Kareem Khan on Tuesday formally opened the inter-board handball championship 2025. Speaking on the occasion, the commissioner/chairman board said that sports played an important role in capacity and character building of younger generation. He hoped that Multan team that is the reigning champion for the last three years would hopefully be able to take advantage of home ground and defend the title. He urged the players to work hard and earn fame for the country at international level. Secretary Board Khurram Qureshi said that total eight teams from different boards were participating in the tournament and finalists would test their skills and talents on Jan 23. Later, the commissioner/chairman board presided over a meeting with the officials of BISE Multan and ordered them to facilitate students to the best of their professional competence and guide them properly.

George ruled out of Six Nations opener

LONDON (AFP): England vice-captain Jamie George has been ruled out of the Six Nations opener against defending champions Ireland on February 1, the Rugby Football Union announced on Tuesday. The 34-year-old hooker, who last week was replaced by Maro Itoje as captain, suffered a hamstring injury in Saracens' Champions Cup defeat by Castres on Sunday. Northampton scrum-half Alex Mitchell sustained a knee problem against Munster but could yet feature against Ireland after being taken to the squad's pre-championship training camp in Spain to continue his rehabilitation. Northampton lock Alex Coles, Leicester scrum-half Jack van Poortvliet and Harlequins No 8 Alex Domsbrandt have also been ruled out of the match in Dublin. Curtis Langdon (Northampton), Arthur Clark (Gloucester), Ben Spencer (Bath), Henry Pollock (Northampton), and Raffi Quirke (Sale) have been called into the squad by England coach Steve Borthwick. "We've had to make a few amendments these last 24 hours as every coach needs to," said Borthwick, speaking later Tuesday at the Six Nations launch in Rome. "There's always adaptations you need to make. And I think the nature of international rugby is good adaptation."

Zalmi and Kuwait Cricket sign MoU for cricket exchange program



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An MoU has been signed between Pakistan Super League franchise Peshawar Zalmi and Kuwait Cricket under which Pakistani players will also represent the Kuwaiti team under the exchange program. Peshawar Zalmi will continue to provide opportunities and all possible facilities to the young cricketers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Javed Afridi Mou Signing held at Hayatabad Sports Complex Peshawar, Peshawar Zalmi Chief Operating Officer Mian Abbas Laeeq and Kuwait Cricket DG Sajid Ashraf signed the MoU. On this occasion, former captain Muhammad Yusuf Peshawar Zalmi Director of Cricket Muhammad Akram were present Under the MoU, an

exchange program has started between Peshawar Zalmi and Kuwait Cricket. Peshawar Zalmi's talent hunt and trials in Peshawar also selected players for the Kuwait cricket team. 100 cricketers shortlisted for the trials of Peshawar Zalmi this month participated in the trials for the Kuwait cricket team. Peshawar Zalmi and Kuwait cricket coaches evaluated the performance of the players in the trials that lasted for three days. Kuwait Cricket DG Sajid Ashraf said that he is thankful to Peshawar Zalmi who helped in the selection of players for the Kuwait Cricket Team in the talent hunt. The exchange program will not only give the cricketers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan an opportunity to showcase their talents, but also

strengthen the ties between the two brother countries. Peshawar Zalmi Director of Cricket Muhammad Akram said that he welcomed the officials of Kuwait cricket in Peshawar and Pakistan. Chairman of Peshawar Zalmi, Javed Afridi, said in his message that Peshawar Zalmi has been trying since the first day to give the young cricketers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa not only an opportunity to express their abilities, but also to provide them with all possible facilities, including cricket equipment, kit. Bags included should also be provided. Peshawar Zalmi's talent hit has brought young cricketers to the fore in the past and this time not only the 100 best cricketers have been shortlisted but now they will get a chance to play in Kuwait as well.

NBP's 49th Snooker C'ship commences in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karachi NBP 49th National Snooker Championship started from January 21 at the Snooker Arena of National Bank Sports Complex, National Snooker Champion Asjad Iqbal will defend his title. The event started by Pakistan Billiards and Snooker Association Chairman Alamgir Sheikh with a press conference. National Bank Senior Vice President and Head of Sports Wing Sher Muhammad, PBSA President Javed Karim, Abdul Qadir Memon, Irfan Motin, Muhammad Farhan, PBSA Secretary Zulfiqar Ali Ramzi, Tournament Director Naveed Kapadia, and others were also present at the

occasion. Sharing his view, Mr. Alamgir Sheikh said that like every year, this year too, National Bank has sponsored the National Championship. We are happy that last 16 years, the National Bank has been sponsoring our National Championship. The prize money for the championship has been set at Rs 525,000. The winner of the National Championship will be given Rs 200,000 and the runner-up will be given Rs 100,000. The semi-finalist will be given Rs 50,000, the quarter-finalist Rs 25,000 and the player who made a big break in the championship will be given Rs 25,000. 48 players from all over the country are participating in this National Championship, divided

into eight groups. The top two players from each group will qualify for the pre-quarterfinals. Last year's National Championship winner Asjad Iqbal will defend his title. Five junior champion players have been given direct entry to the championship. He said "we will claim Rs 30 million for three-time World Snooker Championship winner Muhammad Asif and Rs 10 million for Ahsan Ramzan from the government under the Cash Award Sports Policy. Hopefully, our request will get this prize money. Apart from this, we also have to claim all the international medals from 2019-20 so that we can organize the second and third-ranking tournaments with the money we get.



MULTAN: West Indies players attend a practice session ahead of the second Test Cricket Match against Pakistan at Multan Cricket Stadium. —APP Photo

Djokovic beats Alcaraz in Melbourne blockbuster as Sabalenka survives

MELBOURNE (Agencies): A vintage Novak Djokovic tamed Carlos Alcaraz in a late-night blockbuster to set up an Australian Open semi-final with Alexander Zverev as two-time women's defending champion Aryna Sabalenka fought on. The 37-year-old Djokovic rolled back the years at the scene of his greatest achievements on Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne with a 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 triumph sealed close to 1:00 am. The Serb surged into the semi-finals and a date with world number two Zverev to edge closer to an 11th Melbourne crown and all-time record 25th Slam title. "I just wish that this match today was the final," said Djokovic, paying tribute to "terrific guy" Alcaraz after they dished up three hours and 37 minutes of high-quality tennis. "Just one of the most epic matches I have played on this court, any court really." With former rival Andy Murray now in his coaching corner, Djokovic was at his imperious and defiant best, cupping his ear to the crowd after winning big points. Djokovic was at the centre of a row on Monday after he demanded an apology – and got one – from a local TV presenter for what he called "insulting and offensive comments". Spain's world number three Alcaraz will have to



wait another year to get a kangaroo tattoo. He had vowed to get one if he won the Australian Open for the first time. The 21-year-old four-time major champion has still never been beyond the Melbourne Park last eight. Former number one Djokovic extended his career advantage over Alcaraz to 5-3, having also beaten him in the Paris Olympics final in their last meeting. Alcaraz got the better of his rival in the 2023 and 2024 Wimbledon finals. In hot and windy conditions, Germany's Zverev defeated the American Tommy Paul 7-6 (7/1), 7-6 (7/0), 2-6, 6-1 to step up his quest to win a Grand Slam for the first time. The 27-year-old lost his cool at one point – because of a feather. The umpire called for a replay when the

feather drifted in front of him as he played a shot at a critical juncture. "C'mon, that is unbelievable on break point," he shouted, before taking out his fury on Paul by breaking to love. World number one and defending champion Jannik Sinner plays home hope Alex de Minaur in the quarter-finals on Wednesday, the winner facing American 21st seed Ben Shelton or the unseeded Italian Lorenzo Sonego. As if by magic Sabalenka will face Paula Badosa in the last four as the Belarusian bids to win the Australian Open for a third time in a row, something last achieved 26 years ago by Martina Hingis. The world number one kept that dream alive but had to battle for it in beating Russian 27th seed A n a s t a s i a

Pavlyuchenkova 6-2, 2-6, 6-3 in the wind. "Honestly I was just praying, trying to put the ball back in these tough conditions," said Sabalenka. "I'm just super happy I was able to somehow magically win this match." At 33, Pavlyuchenkova had been enjoying a late-career renaissance and was the oldest remaining woman in the draw. Sabalenka next plays Badosa, the Spanish 11th seed who stunned world number three Coco Gauff 7-5, 6-4. Badosa is into her first Slam semi-final at the age of 27. "I'm a bit emotional," said Badosa. "I'm a very emotional person. I wanted to play my best game, I think I did it." It capped a remarkable comeback for the Spaniard, who was ranked outside the top 100 a year ago after a stress fracture in her back. "I mean, a year ago, I was here with my back and I didn't know if I had to retire from this sport, and now I'm here playing against the best in the world," said Badosa. Third-seeded American Gauff, 20, described herself as "disappointed but not completely crushed" after her first defeat of 2025. On Wednesday, Iga Swiatek will look to continue her march to a first Australian Open title when she faces Emma Navarro. The winner plays Madison Keys or Elina Svitolina in the last four.

Buttler rejects calls for Afghanistan boycott



LONDON (Agencies): England's match against Afghanistan at the Champions Trophy next month should go ahead despite calls for a boycott, says captain Jos Buttler. A cross-party letter, signed by nearly 200 UK politicians, was sent to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) calling for England to refuse to play in response to the Taliban regime's assault on women's rights. Female participation in sport has effectively been outlawed since the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Speaking publicly on the issue for the first time, Buttler said: "Political situations like this... as a player you're trying to be as informed as you can be. "The experts know a lot more about it, so I've been trying to stay in dialogue with Rob Key [ECB managing director of men's cricket] and the guys above to see how they see it. What is the background? Calls for a boycott grew at the start of January with the sending of the cross-party letter. Labour MP Tonia Antoniazzi said England's players should use their "power" to "make a difference". Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said the government was speaking to international counterparts on the issue but Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy later said the game should go ahead, adding that boycotts are "counterproductive". "They deny sports fans the opportunity they love and they can very much penalise the athletes and sportspeople who work very, very hard to reach the

top of their game," she told the BBC earlier this month. International Cricket Council (ICC) regulations state full membership is conditional upon having women's cricket teams and pathway structures in place. However, Afghanistan's men's team have been allowed to participate in ICC tournaments seemingly without any sanctions. The ICC is keen to use its position and the sport of cricket to influence change in the country and does not believe it should punish players for government policy. ECB chief executive Richard Gould wrote to the ICC, calling for more action from the global governing body after what he called "gender apartheid". He stopped short of calling for an immediate boycott but did ask the ICC to place "immediate condition" on Afghanistan's full member status to provide women's cricket by a certain date. "I'm led by the experts' England, who played Afghanistan at the 2022 T20 World Cup and the 2023 50-over World Cup, are in India for a white-ball tour which begins on Wednesday. They are scheduled to play Afghanistan in Lahore on 26 February. The Champions Trophy, which is being held in Pakistan and Dubai, begins on 19 February. "The players haven't really worried too much about it," Buttler said. "These things, you're trying to educate yourself and read up on these things. "There's been some good stuff written about it that I've tapped into and I've

Raja Samiullah steers Army to win in Maj Gen Saeed-uz-Zaman Janjua Memorial Polo Cup opener

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Team Army defeated Team Balochistan by 10½-6 goals in the opening match of the eight-goal Maj Gen Saeed-uz-Zaman Janjua Memorial Polo Cup, sponsored by JS Bank, that commenced under the auspices of Jinnah Polo Fields. A good number of families and spectators, along with Jinnah Polo Fields Secretary Major (R) Ali Taimoor, JS Bank official Majid Qureshi, polo players, their families and polo enthusiasts were present at Jinnah Polo Fields to witness and enjoy the enthralling and exciting match. Team Army, which had a 2½-goal handicap advantage, was spearheaded by Raja Samiullah, who smashed in seven superb goals. Additionally, LD Imran Shahid scored one goal for the winning team. On the other hand, Team Balochistan's Raja Mikayial Sami hammered five fabulous goals while Mumtaz Abbas Niazi contributed one goal, but they fell short of four and a half goals. The match kicked off with Team Army displaying a strong performance against a spirited Balochistan side, edging out a narrow 2-1 lead by the end of the first chukker. The second chukker witnessed an intense battle as both teams showcased their skills, scoring two goals each. Despite the tight contest, Army maintained a slim 4-3 advantage heading into the third chukker. In the third chukker, Army stepped up their game, delivering an impressive three goals while Balochistan managed to respond with two, extending Army's lead to 7-5.

soken to quite a few people to try to gather expert opinion. I'm led by those experts on situations like this. "But certainly as a player, you don't want political situations to affect sport. "We hope to go to the Champions Trophy and play that game and have a really good tournament."

Mbappe dispels doubts before crucial Real Madrid Champions League clash

MADRID (AFP/APP): Just when it seemed the pressure of a lifelong dream switch to Real Madrid might prove too great for Kylian Mbappe to overcome, the French superstar silenced his doubters. After a troubled start to life at Madrid, Mbappe finally seems at home and ready to wreak havoc both in Spain and in Europe. Mbappe's rediscovered elan comes at the perfect time for Real Madrid with two crucial Champions League matches ahead, starting with RB Salzburg's visit to the Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday. Madrid then face Brest on the road next week, aiming to secure progress to the next phase of the competition. It would be unthinkable for the

holders and record 15-time European champions to suffer an early knock-out, but after a poor start they are presently 20th in the 36-team group, with the bottom 12 teams eliminated. Madrid lost at Liverpool, with Mbappe missing a penalty, as well as against AC Milan at home and away at Lille. Shortly after the defeat at Anfield, Mbappe missed another spot kick in a La Liga defeat by Athletic Bilbao and it proved a turning point for the France captain. "A big mistake in a match where every detail counts, I take full responsibility for it," said Mbappe in a post on social media platform Instagram. "It's the best time to change this situation and show who I am." Since pledging to turn things around, Mbappe

has scored eight goals in 10 games for Madrid across all competitions, including a stunning solo effort against Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final. Mbappe also struck as Madrid won the Intercontinental Cup against Pachuca in December, but beyond the goals, he now looks every part the devastating, world-beating talent president Florentino Perez hoped for. - 'Moves only he can make' - Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti has been patient with Mbappe, often defending the forward and insisting he needed time to adapt to life in the Spanish capital and gel with his new team-mates. The Italian also stuck by his guns with regards to Mbappe's positioning, insisting from the start of the

season the French hitman should play down the middle, leaving Vinicius Junior to stay on the left flank in his preferred role. Mbappe and Vinicius struggled to gel, at times occupying the same spaces on the pitch. The team's 4-0 Clasico humbling by bitter rivals Barcelona in October was a particularly disappointing moment for Mbappe, who was caught offside numerous times in the match by the Catalans' high defensive line. Left out of the national team squads for Nations League matches at the time by coach Didier Deschamps and battling with former employers Paris Saint-Germain over unpaid income, Mbappe seemed weighed down and overwhelmed.

Ancelotti persisted with the striker and said at the end of December Mbappe had bedded in and, after a thigh injury, was now ready to perform at his best. "His (adaptation) period, which he obviously needed, because everyone needs it, is over," said the coach. "Where does Mbappe have to improve? Just in consistency... trying to make the moves that only he can make, as often as possible." Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ancelotti, a record five-time European Cup winner as a coach, was right. Mbappe's skill and speed have made him unstoppable in recent weeks and the 26-year-old looks increasingly confident in himself with every passing match. "The Bilbao game was good

for me, I hit the bottom... and it was a moment to realise that I have to give everything for this shirt and show my personality," said Mbappe at the end of 2024. Mbappe produced arguably his finest display for Madrid as he netted a brace against Las Palmas on Sunday to help take Real top of La Liga. "I have adapted to the team and I can play how I want, with my team-mates, with personality," he said after the game. Vinicius was suspended against Las Palmas but will return in the Champions League, and he and Mbappe must continue developing their partnership. If Madrid's dynamic duo can find the same wavelength they will be ready to defend their status as the kings of Europe.





## In brief

### ANF seizes 20 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 3 operations seized over 20 kg drugs worth over Rs 4 million and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Tuesday. He informed that 14.4 kg opium and 4.8 kg cannabis were recovered from the possession of an accused arrested from a passenger bus near Motorway Toll Plaza, Islamabad. In third operation, 700 grams Ice drug was recovered from the bag of the two accused rounded up near Lahore Bund Road bus stand. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

### Police arrest kite supplier

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi are making efforts to control kite flying and managed to arrest a kite supplier on recovery of over 3000 kites and 20 kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed, that Taxila police arrested a kite supplier namely Abdul Shakoar and recovered 3000 kites and 20 kite flying string rolls. Police also impounded a maza truck being used for supply of kites. A case has been registered against the accused and further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Potohar directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers.

### Police bust bike lifting gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police have busted a bike lifting and street criminal gang and arrested its two members on recovery of seven stolen motorcycles, cash Rs 15,000, weapons and other items, said a police spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that Wah Cantt police netted two accused namely Noorullah and Abdullah, allegedly involved in bike lifting cases and recovered seven stolen motorcycles, cash Rs 15,000, weapons and other items. Superintendent of Police, Potohar directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operation against bike, car lifters and street criminals.

### Police hold 19 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Tuesday held 19 criminals during operations against drug peddlers, liquor suppliers, illegal arms owners and illegal petrol sellers. According to a spokesman, the Rawal Division Police arrested four drug peddlers with over 4.5 kilograms hashish. The Ganjmandi Police recovered 1.46 kg hashish from accused Abdullah, while the New Town Police nabbed accused Shiraz with 1.45 kg hashish and Umair with 550 grams hashish, and the Bani Police held accused Shahid with 1.1 kg hashish. Similarly, seven accused were nabbed during actions against liquor suppliers with more than 60 litres of liquor. The Waris Khan Police recovered 10 litres of liquor from accused Ahmed Ali, while Bani and New Town Police held accused Dawood and Aamir Gul respectively on the recovery of 05 litres of liquor each. Likewise, the Airport Police recovered 12 litres from accused Junaid Javed, while the Gujjar Khan Police arrested accused Ali Shan with 5 litres, Ahmed Ramzan with 10 litres, and Ahmed Ikram 15 litres of liquor.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain in a meeting with Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan Akamatus Shuichi. —INP Photo

## Humanitarian bodies' support for calamity hit people laudable: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tuesday lauded the organizations that have supported people during natural calamities, emphasizing their vital role in providing assistance during challenging times.

He said this during a meeting with Farid Abdul Qadir Muhammad, Head of Country Delegation of the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) in Pakistan, along with his delegation, met with the Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, at his residence in Islamabad. The meeting focused on various important matters.

During the discussions, issues related to flood operations in the southern areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in Dera Ismail Khan, and the impact of seasonal changes in Upper Chitral were addressed. The Governor highlighted the challenges faced by different areas, and clarified the difference between the issues in Kurram and those faced by temporary displaced persons (TDPs).

The Governor praised the efforts of the Red Crescent staff, saying that

they always work on the frontlines and their contributions are commendable. He further mentioned that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, in collaboration with the Chief Ministers of Balochistan and Sindh, had ensured the delivery of medicines to Kurram.

Meanwhile, Dr Ifthikhar Aliyar, Head of Norwegian Red Cross in Pakistan, along with Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Malik Habib Orakzai, Chairman of Merged Areas PRCS Imran Wazir, and Secretary Merged Areas Saeed Kamal, met with the Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi, at his residence in Islamabad. During the meeting, various important issues were discussed, including humanitarian aid, climate change, and ongoing rehabilitation efforts in the affected regions.

The Governor praised the services of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society and Norwegian Red Cross, saying that these organizations have always played a vital role in Pakistan during

natural disasters and challenging situations. He emphasized the need to make relief activities more effective in various areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially the southern districts and flood-affected regions.

Dr Ifthikhar Aliyar briefed the Governor on the ongoing projects of Norwegian Red Cross in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which include health-care services, water supply, and efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Chairman PRCS, Habib Orakzai, and Chairman of Merged Areas PRCS, Imran Wazir, also shared their thoughts, affirming that PRCS will continue close cooperation with Norwegian Red Cross to support the affected population. Secretary of Merged Areas, Saeed Kamal, provided technical details of the ongoing rehabilitation projects.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi assured full support from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor House for all these projects and emphasized ensuring close coordination with international aid organizations. He also promised to highlight these issues on national and international forums.



ISLAMABAD: A student works on building robots during a lab session, demonstrating innovative skills at ICG in the federal capital. —APP Photo

## BISP hosts a live E-Kacheri session through FB page

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid, hosted a live E-Kacheri session through BISP's official Facebook account on Tuesday to listen to the complaints of the beneficiaries.

During the one hour and 14-minute session, 37 callers shared their concerns and issues with the Chairperson who instructed the staff to resolve all complaints and problems on the spot.

Through the E-Kacheri platform, Senator Rubina Khalid informed all beneficiaries that there is no fee

for BISP registration and no survey form is required.

She emphasized that surveys for deserving households are conducted only through the dynamic registry centers set up at BISP Tehsil Offices or via mobile registration vans across the country. There is no other method for the survey, so beneficiaries should avoid sharing their personal information with anyone.

Senator Rubina Khalid further explained that once a survey is conducted, another survey of the same household is not possible within two years. Therefore, beneficiaries

should not repeatedly request surveys or visit centers unnecessarily.

She reiterated that 8171 is the only official number of BISP, and any message from other numbers is fraudulent. Beneficiaries are urged to count their payments carefully and report any deductions immediately.

Senator Rubina Khalid assured that strict action will be taken against fraudsters and scammers. The beneficiaries are encouraged to report their complaints to ensure swift resolution of their complaints and accountability.

## Women on wheels: Scooty trend sweeps the capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Scooties have become an increasingly popular mode of transportation among women of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, offering a convenient, affordable, and empowering mode to commute to work. With increasing financial independence, rising living costs and inflation, women were turning to scooties as a reliable mode of transportation.

Today, it is a common sight to see working women and students zipping around on two-wheelers, effortlessly navigating their daily commutes as a cheaper and easier way of transportation.

Sania who confidently rides scooty from her home in Rawalpindi Sadar to workplace Islamabad said "My scooty is perfect for running and commuting to work. It's so convenient and saves me so much time and money!". She said that my scooty makes me feel empowered and strong. I love the sense of freedom it gives me!

Aneeta a house wife said that "I use my scooty to take my kids to school and pick up groceries.". She added that she cannot afford a car, as she is the breadwinner of family and scooty is a more affordable and accessible option for her.

Another commuter Sara jhangir said that "For me, mornings can be chaotic and relying on public transportation can be a hassle.

But with my scooty, I have found a game-changer. It's a huge relief to have a reliable and convenient mode of transportation that gets me where I need to go quickly and stress-free."

She also mentioned that scooties require less maintenance than cars, making them a cost-effective option for women.

Scooties provide women with the freedom to travel wherever they want, whenever they want, without depending on public transportation or others, she added.

## Pakistan wants to further strengthen bilateral relations with Sweden: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has reiterated Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its bilateral relationship with Sweden, based on mutual respect, shared values, and common goals.

During a meeting with the Ambassador of Sweden Alexandra Cannell Berg von Linde he expressed the commitment to further deepen cooperation across multiple domains, including inter-parliamentary collaboration, trade, and addressing global challenges such as Islamophobia.

He extended a warm welcome to the Ambassador and conveyed Pakistan's high regard for its long-standing relations with Sweden, marked by trust, cooperation, and shared values. He also acknowledged the importance of the meeting as Pakistan and Sweden celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, which is a testament to the strength and resilience of this partnership.

He called for further aug-

menting the ties in the areas of political dialogue, trade and investment, education, and people-to-people exchanges. During the meeting Chairman Senate emphasized the importance of strengthening inter-parliamentary relations between Pakistan and Sweden as a key component of bilateral ties.

He observed that parliamentary diplomacy can contribute in building understanding, sharing best practices, and contributing to global peace and security. He underlined the need for exchange of visits between parliamentary delegations from both countries to facilitate collaboration in diverse sectors.

He expressed satisfaction with the trajectory of economic cooperation between the two sides in diverse sectors. Chairman also invited Swedish companies to take advantage of Pakistan's business-friendly environment and explore investment opportunities in different sectors.

Gilani acknowledged the growing concern about

Islamophobia globally and its impact on peace and interfaith harmony and emphasized Pakistan's commitment to addressing Islamophobia on international platforms.

He called for collaborative efforts with Sweden to promote a more inclusive and tolerant world. He said that people-to-people exchanges play a vital role in enhancing mutual understanding and fostering closer ties between Pakistan and Sweden. He also highlighted Pakistan's desire to expand student exchange programs and scholarships, allowing both countries to benefit from each other's academic strengths.

He said that Pakistan is committed to combating climate change and working with Sweden on renewable energy and sustainable development projects.

He expressed optimism that through continued dialogue and collaboration across various sectors, both nations can achieve shared prosperity and contribute to global peace and stability.



## Salik & Japanese envoy commit to strengthen Pak-Japan ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, convened an important meeting with Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi here on Tuesday, marking a significant milestone in the quest to fortify bilateral ties and unlock new avenues for economic cooperation. As the two dignitaries engaged in a comprehensive dialogue, they underscored the vast potential for mutual growth and development, said a press release.

Pakistan and Japan have been economic partners for a long time, and now is the perfect opportunity to renew their relationship in economic terms, according to Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

The Minister emphasized the need for cooperation in technical assistance and proposed starting a joint technical college in Pakistan to equip the young generation with skills tailored to the Japanese market.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain welcomed Japanese companies to Pakistan to train locals according to Japanese market demands. He also highlighted the importance of technical assistance and training programs, such as the

Technical Intern Training Program and the Specified Skilled Workers Program.

The Minister noted that Japan is known for its strict adherence to rules and regulations, and therefore, Pakistan wants Japanese expertise to train its human resources and establish testing facilities in Pakistan. He also mentioned that Pakistan is working with South Korea on similar grounds and has seen significant success, with the number of Pakistanis going to South Korea increasing from 1,500 to around 5,000, and for the first time, around 20 to 30 workers from Balochistan will also go to South Korea. Almost 700,000 people are going abroad for jobs, and out of these, only a few are going to Japan. This number can be increased by establishing testing centers in Pakistan.

Mr. Muhammad Tayyab, DG BE&OE, said that if they get the testing facility, the OEPs (Overseas Employment Promoters) are set to give the training, which will increase the number of Pakistanis going to Japan. Last year, around 1,500 Pakistanis went to Japan, and around 1,100 went in 2023, and around 900 in 2022.

Mr. Naseer Khan Kashani, Managing Director, OEC, told that

they have also sent Assistant Language Teachers to Japan, and some are completing the process to go to Japan, with their number being around 67.

The Japanese Ambassador, in his remarks, lauded Pakistan's resilience and determination, acknowledging the country's immense potential for growth and development. He reiterated Japan's unwavering commitment to supporting Pakistan's economic trajectory, underscoring the importance of human resource development, education, and vocational training in driving sustainable growth. The Ambassador also expressed Japan's interest in collaborating with Pakistan to establish vocational training institutes, designed to equip Pakistani youth with the skills required to succeed in Japan's highly competitive job market.

Both Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain and the Japanese Ambassador concurred that the trajectory of Pakistan-Japan relations is poised for a significant upswing, with a renewed focus on economic cooperation, human resource development, and mutual growth. Deputy Secretary OP&HRD, Mr. Tahir Mahmood Qureshi was also present in the meeting.



RAWALPINDI: A female customer selects a cozy coat from a vendor at the bustling Raja Bazaar. —APP Photo



Denmark donates \$2.8m aid

KABUL (Amu TV): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Tuesday that Denmark has contributed \$2.8 million to support humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan. In a statement on X, OCHA said the funds have been allocated to the UN Humanitarian Fund for Afghanistan. “Financial support from global donors strengthens the capacity of aid organizations in Afghanistan to respond quickly to crises,” the statement read.

38 Afghan citizens freed

JALALABAD (Khaama Press): Reports from Nangarhar province indicated that 38 Afghans were released from a neighbor country prison and have returned to Afghanistan after being detained despite holding valid legal documents. Local Taliban officials in Nangarhar reported on Tuesday that 38 Afghans were released from a neighbor country prison and returned to Afghanistan. These individuals were detained despite possessing valid legal documents.

Afghan released in prisoner exchange deal with US

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on Tuesday confirmed the release of an Afghan, Khan Mohammad, from a US prison in exchange for the release of two American nationals.

According to a statement issued by the IEA, this move followed extensive negotiations with the US.

Khan Mohammad, was detained nearly two decades ago in Nangarhar and later sentenced to life imprisonment by a US court. He had been serving his sentence in California.

“The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan considers this exchange as a good example of resolving issues through dialogue, and is particularly grateful to the fraternal State of Qatar for

its effective role in this regard,” the statement read.

The IEA praised the swap as a step toward the “normalization” of ties between the US and Afghanistan.

AP meanwhile reported that the freed Afghan had been imprisoned for life on drug trafficking and terrorism charges. The deal came as former president Joe Biden, who oversaw the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, handed power over to returning President Donald Trump.

AP reported that the family of Ryan Corbett, one American held in Afghanistan, confirmed he had been released.

Corbett was arrested in Afghanistan in August 2022 while on a business trip.

Before Biden left office, his administration had been trying to work out a deal to free Corbett as well as George Glezmman and Mahmood Habibi in exchange for Muhammad Rahim, one of the remaining detainees at Guantanamo Bay.

Glezmman, an airline mechanic from Atlanta, was taken by the IEA’s intelligence services in December 2022 while traveling through the country. Habibi, an Afghan American businessman went missing in 2022.

The IEA has denied that it has Habibi. It wasn’t immediately clear if either of the two men was the other released. Officials in Washington did not respond to AP’s requests for comment early Tuesday.

IEA urges Iran to address kidnappings of Afghans

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban Supreme Court said on Tuesday that their judicial delegation led by Abdul Malik Haqqani has called on senior officials from Iran’s Interior Ministry to address the abduction of Afghan nationals by criminal groups in Iran and to take steps to prevent such incidents.

In a statement, the court said the delegation requested Iranian authorities to transfer several individuals accused of kidnapping Afghan nationals back to Afghanistan for prosecution.

The Taliban delegation also urged Iranian officials to extend residency permits for Afghan nationals with proper identification documents and to streamline the process to facilitate their stay in Iran.

In addition to addressing kidnappings, the discussions covered several other key issues, including combating human trafficking and drug smuggling, and improving border management between the two countries.

The Taliban said the delegation pressed Iran to lift restrictions on bank accounts belonging to Afghan citizens and to waive taxes that have been levied on them in recent years.

Reports of Afghan nationals being abducted in Iran have sparked alarm, with kidnappers reportedly demanding ransom payments from victims’ families.

The meeting comes amid heightened tensions between the two countries over Iran’s treatment of Afghan refugees. Since the Taliban’s return to power, Iran has intensified the deportation, detention, and expulsion of undocumented Afghan migrants. Iranian officials have reiterated that migrants without proper documentation will not be allowed to remain in the country.

Iran hosts one of the largest populations of Afghan refugees, many of whom fled instability and conflict over the past decades. However, the relationship between the two nations has been marked by challenges, particularly since the Taliban’s takeover in 2021.

Iran seeks direct intelligence ties with Kabul



KABUL (TOLONews): Iranian media outlets have reported that Iran has requested the establishment of a direct communication channel between the intelligence agencies of Kabul and Tehran.

The Islamic Emirate delegation, which traveled to Iran and met with officials from the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice of that country, considered direct communication between the intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies of both sides effective in strengthening bilateral relations.”

According to these reports, the Iranian Deputy

Minister of Interior, in a meeting with the delegation from the Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate, emphasized that the release of criminals, border issues, counterterrorism, drug trafficking, and human trafficking are key priorities in relations between the two countries.

IRNA reported: “Pourjamschidian considered the establishment of a direct communication channel between the intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies of both sides effective in strengthening bilateral relations.”

“The only communica-

tion channel should be mutual respect for the laws and regulations of the concerned countries. I hope the Iranians will accept a politically stable Afghanistan next to them. The delegation from the Supreme Court should ensure that we no longer witness the execution of Afghans,” said Zalmay Afghan Yar, a military affairs expert.

The Supreme Court also stated in a press release that the Islamic Emirate delegation, in a meeting with Iran’s Deputy Minister of Justice, discussed the transfer of Afghan prisoners to

their home country and cooperation between the Interpol police of both countries.

“We have problems with Iran regarding Afghan migrants and prisoners, which can only be resolved through dialogue,” said Saleem Paigir, a political affairs expert.

This comes after the Islamic Emirate delegation, in a meeting with the Deputy for International Affairs of the Iranian Judiciary, had requested a list of Afghan citizens sentenced to execution and sought alternative solutions to prevent their execution.

EU contributes 16.5m to WFP to help vulnerable Afghans during winter

KABUL (Amu TV): The UN World Food Programme said it has received 16.5 million from the EU to support its relief efforts in Afghanistan, providing critical food assistance to vulnerable families and nutrition programs for mothers and children.

The funding, provided through the EU’s Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO), arrives as Afghanistan faces a worsening hunger crisis this winter.

“Despite improvements in food security, largely due to effective humanitarian assistance, Afghanistan remains a global hunger hotspot, with more than a quarter of the population going hungry,” said François Goemans, who oversees EU humanitarian aid operations in Afghanistan. “More than three-quarters of the population cannot afford a nutritious diet that meets their needs and protects them from malnutrition.”

An estimated 15 million Afghans are experiencing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity this winter, WFP said.

To address this, WFP said it has begun distributing food to remote communities already cut off by heavy snow and ice, aiming to prepare them for the harsh months ahead.

“A severe funding crisis has forced us to reduce WFP’s activities in Afghanistan. For almost half of 2024, we were only able to reach one million people with life-saving food assistance each month, leaving 11 million people with unmet needs,” said Hsiao-Wei Lee, WFP’s country director in Afghanistan. “This funding from the European Union is crucial to help us reach some of the most vulnerable families across the country this winter.”

WFP said it plans to provide emergency food assistance to six million people every month during the

winter, supported by funding from the European Union and other partners. Families will receive either food supplies or cash to purchase essentials from local markets. Pregnant and breastfeeding women, along with young children, will receive specialized nutritious food to prevent or treat malnutrition.

The EU’s latest contribution builds on 86.3 million (\$92.5 million) in support over the past two years for WFP’s emergency programs and the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), which WFP operates to facilitate humanitarian operations across Afghanistan, according to WFP’s statement.

While Afghanistan has seen some improvements in food security, millions remain vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition due to widespread poverty, economic instability, and the ongoing effects of climate change, the statement said.

Herat Exporters’ Union begins operations



HERAT (TOLONews): The Domestic Products Exporters Union in Herat has commenced its operations with the aim of increasing the export of the country’s domestic products.

Officials of the union

say they are striving to boost the production and export of domestic goods compared to previous years.

It is planned that traders will export domestic products to various countries through this union.

Mohammad Atif Dae, the executive director of the Domestic Products Exporters Union, said: “The purpose of establishing this union is to increase domestic production and expand the export of goods

produced within Afghanistan.” However, political and economic challenges remain major obstacles to the export of domestic goods.

Ahmad Saeed Sina, the head of the Domestic Products Exporters Union in Herat, said: “Saffron is recognized as one of Afghanistan’s top export products. Additionally, stone mines, especially marble, are considered valuable export capacities of the country.”

Some manufacturers consider the establishment of this union a significant step in facilitating exports.

Zubair Azizi, a representative of a private manufacturing company, said: “We were always concerned about the lack of a suitable market for our products, and after production, a large part of our energy was spent on marketing. Now, with the establishment of this union, this challenge

has been resolved.”

The Herat Chamber of Commerce and Investment has announced that the export of domestic products from the province has increased by 20% compared to the previous year.

Mohammad Yousuf Ameen, the executive director of the Herat Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: “Our exports in the past nine months have increased by 20% compared to last year. Our main export products include agricultural products, domestic productions, handicrafts, and various other items.”

According to statistics, Afghanistan had approximately \$1.8 billion in exports and \$10.6 billion in imports in 2024.

Previously, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce had announced that the export of domestic goods had decreased by nearly 4% compared to last year.

Women in Uruzgan face dire shortages of health services

URUZGAN (Amu TV): Women in Uruzgan Province are increasingly forced to give birth without access to doctors or midwives due to a severe lack of healthcare services, local residents say. Many women report that their newborns suffer from illnesses, particularly infectious diseases, while poverty prevents them from seeking proper medical care or nutrition.

In interviews with Amu TV, women described a cycle of hardship that leaves them unable to provide adequate care for their children. Anar Gul, a mother in Uruzgan, said she gave birth without medical assistance and now watches her children struggle with repeated illnesses.

“Our children suffer from various illnesses: coughing, pneumonia, stomach aches, headaches, and more,” she said. “We have no money to buy medicine or treat them.”

Another mother, who gave birth three days ago to a son named Awal Khan, remains bedridden without medicine or treatment, according to her husband, Ghaus Mohammad.

“My wife gave birth here at home. I couldn’t afford to take her to a doctor or midwife,” Mr. Mohammad said. “I swear I don’t even have a single rupee to buy meat or sweets for my wife. For three days, my wife and child have been sick, and I can’t take them to a doctor or buy medicine.”

Uruzgan, one of Afghanistan’s most impoverished provinces, faces widespread poverty, traditional gender norms, and limited access to healthcare, exacerbating the situation for women and children. Local sources report that traditional beliefs and a lack of awareness about family planning contribute to high birth rates. Families often have between five and ten children, but most lack the resources to meet their basic needs or afford medical care.

ing longer to recover, needing more prescriptions, and showing slower responses to medications.

He explained that respiratory diseases spread through coughing, sneezing, direct contact, and touching contaminated surfaces, with symptoms such as fever, wheezing, runny nose, weakness, coughing, watery eyes, shortness of breath, and abnormal breathing sounds.

He stated: “Respiratory diseases are mostly seasonal and can affect children, but there is a group that is at a higher risk of these diseases. This includes premature babies, children with weak immune systems, children lacking sufficient vitamins, especially vitamin A, children who are not breastfed or vaccinated, and children living in crowded areas.”

He added: “Additionally, children with underlying health conditions, such as heart problems or diabetes, or those living in polluted environments, have a significantly higher chance of contracting respiratory diseases compared to other children.”

He urged families to focus on environmental health, ensure that infected individuals wear masks, and isolate sick individuals from healthy ones.

He also advised against self-medication and recommended taking sick children, especially, to a doctor as soon as possible.

Dr. Wali Mohammad Arin, a pediatric specialist at the French Institute for Children’s Medicine in Kabul, also stated that while respiratory diseases can occur in any season, they are more common in winter due to the polluted air and the fact that rooms are often kept closed.

“Around 80 percent of our patients are suffering from respiratory diseases, most of whom are children under five years of age. We admit seven to eight respiratory patients daily,” he said.

Child scavengers in Nimroz demand govt support

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): Impoverished and orphaned children in northwestern Nimroz, who collect garbage to bring home a piece of bread for their families, are asking the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to support them and provide them education opportunity.

In this cold harsh weather, children in the alleys and backstreets of Nimroz are struggling to survive. These children, many of whom are orphaned or affected by war and poverty, search through garbage heaps for fuel or materials they can sell.

Sher Ahmad, an orphaned child

Sher Ahmad, 12, is one

of these children. He, along with his brother and sister, spends every day from dawn to dusk searching through garbage piles to gather wood and scraps to heat their house and meet their daily needs.

With a sad voice, Sher Ahmad says, “We don’t have parents. Our grandmother lives with us, and we have to work. If we don’t work every day, we stay hungry.”

He says they collect and sell some reusable materials like soda cans and use the money to buy bread, but they use plastic and paper to heat their house.

Like many other children, Sher Ahmad has had to leave school due to the

extreme winter cold and endless poverty, and now he spends his days searching for garbage.

He, who dreams of studying like other children and building a bright future, asks the IEA to provide him and other children the opportunity to receive education as they cannot study because of poverty.

Javed and Jamila, two siblings who also collecting garbage due to father’s addiction

Javed, 8, and Jamila, 10, are two siblings who, in this severe cold, search for reusable materials in garbage dumps.

Javed says, “My father is addicted to drugs. My sister

and I have to work to earn money for our mother. In the morning, our mother gives us a plastic bag and tells us to find bread and firewood for the night.”

These siblings shiver from cold, but they continue their search so that they don’t return home empty-handed.

Jamila says, “My sister and I like going to school. All the children and girls go to school, but we can’t because we don’t have school supplies or bags.”

Javed, who also wants to study and build a good life in the future, asks the IEA to provide educational opportunities for him and other poor children who are unable to attend

school.

Bismillah Seerat, a social activist in Nimroz province, told Pajhwok that children without guardians or those from poor economic backgrounds are forced to beg, collect garbage, or do hard labor to support their families.

He added that some children are also coerced into these activities by mafia networks.

He added that most of these children are under 15 years old and are deprived of education, so serious attention should be given to their situation.

Seerat suggests that first all these children should be gathered and categorized, separating orphaned chil-

dren from those with bad guardianship.

He continued, “Children who are controlled by mafia networks should be separated and handed over to families or support organizations.”

He emphasized that for orphaned children, opportunities for education or vocational training should be provided to secure a better future for them.

Seerat also proposed that employment opportunities should be arranged for the guardians of these children so that they do not have to force their children to work.

Maulvi Muhammad Qasim Mubashir, head of the Department of Labor

and Social Affairs in Nimroz, says they have launched a survey to support orphaned children, and as a result, orphaned children have been placed in separate boys’ and girls’ orphanages.

He says, “We plan to expand the survey across the province, so that children who beg on the streets will be sent to the relevant departments, and those who are orphaned will be placed in orphanages. For those children who have guardians but are forced to beg, we will obtain guarantees from their families to ensure they will not exploit their children in the future.”

According to him, the

Department of Labor and Social Affairs has currently enrolled 50 boys and 15 girls in orphanages in Nimroz, each has a capacity of 200 children.

Mubashir added, “The designated committee continuously collects orphaned children and those who beg on the streets. Our efforts to support orphaned and street children continue.”

Based on his information, recently, a charity organization provided winter clothing for 15 children in the girls’ orphanage, and the Department of Labor and Social Affairs also distributed winter clothing to 120 orphaned children.



# Aseefa inaugurates Shaheed BB block at Global Hub Girls' Cadet College

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The inauguration of the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Block at Global Hub Girls' Cadet College Malir was graced today by the First Lady of Pakistan and MNA, Her Excellency Mohtarma Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, as the Chief Guest. This milestone event celebrates a transformative step in empowering young women through education and leadership opportunities in Pakistan.



The ceremony was attended by notable dignitaries, including Commander Sohaib, CEO of Girls' Cadet College Malir; Abdul Qadir Jaffer, Patron-in-Chief of Jaffer Foundation; Sardar Shah, Sindh's Minister for Education; and Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Sindh's Minister for Health, who served as Guests of Honour. Numerous distinguished personalities from education, health, and government sectors also participated,

showing their commitment to this vital initiative.

The event commenced with a Guard of Honour presented by female cadets from Cadet College Jhang to the Chief Guest. Following this, First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari unveiled the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Block, a dedicated facility symbolizing progress, opportunity, and hope for girls' education in Pakistan.

Addressing the gathering, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari emphasized the signif-

icant role of education in a democratic society. By investing in their education, we are investing in the future of Pakistan. I am deeply moved to see the dedication of the staff, the enthusiasm of the students, and the unwavering support from all stakeholders who made this vision a reality."

Speakers at the event highlighted the importance of initiatives like the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Block, which are designed to foster leadership, cultivate skills, and provide quality education for young women. They applauded the role of the Jaffer Foundation and Falcon Education System in realizing this vision.

"The Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Block is not just a building; it is a beacon of hope for generations to come," the First Lady remarked. "This facility will nurture leaders who will contribute to our nation and beyond. I am proud to be part of this journey towards empowering women through education."

Sindh Education Minister Sardar Shah assured the full support of the Sindh government, stating, "Education is a fundamental right, and we are committed to supporting such institutions that focus on the betterment of our youth." Health Minister Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho extended her ministry's assistance for the health and well-being of the school's students and staff.

The inauguration of the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Block marks a significant stride towards gender equality and educational progress in the region. As part of the Global Hub School's vision, the facility represents an unwavering commitment to equipping young women with the skills, knowledge, and leadership capabilities necessary to build a brighter future for Pakistan and South Asia.



DAVOS: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, meeting with Saeed bin Mohammad Al Ghamdi, Chairman of Saudi National Bank.

## PAF contingent to participate in exercise

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: To participate in a Multi National Aerial Combat Exercise "Spears of Victory-2025", Pakistan Air Force contingent comprising JF-17 Thunder Block-III fighter jets alongside dedicated air and ground crew has landed at King Abdul Aziz Air Base, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For this International deployment, PAF fighters flew non stop from home base in Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, carrying out inflight Air-to-Air refuelling; showcasing long range employment capabilities of JF-17 Block-III Aircraft.

During the conduct of the exercise, PAF pilots flying AESA & Extended Range BVR Equipped JF-17 Thunder will be pitched against participating Air Forces equipped with a wide variety of sophisticated Combat Aircraft. The exercise is witnessing participation of fighter jets and Combat support elements from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bahrain, France, Greece, Qatar, UAE, UK and USA.

Royal Saudi Air Force is holding the fifth cycle of the exercise, which provides an excellent opportunity to bolster interoperability within the participating Air Forces in the back drop of technological advancement, increasing complexity in Airpower application & shared aerial defence challenges.

Participation of Pakistan Air Force contingent in the exercise not only highlights PAF's commitment to regional & international cooperation but also underscores its capabilities and prowess to operate in diverse and challenging environments amongst contemporary airforces.

## Landslides, flash floods kill 16 in Java

JAKARTA: At least 16 people have been killed and 10 injured as a landslide struck Indonesia's Central Java province, government authorities said. The landslide in the city of Pekalongan was triggered by heavy rains, a spokesperson for the country's disaster mitigation agency said on Tuesday. Authorities are searching for another three missing people as they warned that the rain was expected to continue for several days.

Local news outlet Kompas TV showed houses heavily damaged and partially buried by the landslide. Several cars were also seen submerged in the mud. Roads were damaged with rubble and rocks strewn across them. The spokesperson said two bridges had also been hit.

Doni Prakoso, police chief in Pekalongan, told local broadcaster Metro TV, that rescue workers were trying to find at least five people who were still missing. Bergas Caturasi Penanggulangan, a Central Java disaster agency official, said the search effort had been delayed due to difficulty accessing the area.

"Volunteers are in the process of going to the location," he told broadcaster Kompas TV. "Time is limited due to the weather, we are racing against the weather." Penanggulangan said local volunteers had joined the search alongside rescue workers, while heavy machinery would be called in to help dig for survivors "who are buried under thicker soil". Indonesia is prone to landslides during the rainy season, typically between November and April, but some disasters caused by adverse weather have taken place outside that season in recent years. — Aljazeera

## KP CM pays tribute to police sacrifices for peace

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur formally inaugurated the newly established Police Training School on Tuesday during his visit to his native district Dera Ismail Khan. Upon his arrival, the Chief Minister was presented with a guard of honor by a contingent of police personnel.

The Chief Minister visited various sections of the training school and observed mock exercises conducted by recruits under training. Officials briefed him on the facilities and operational capacity of the school, which was built at a cost of over Rs. 20 million. The school covering an area of 452 kanals, is equipped with a computer lab, classrooms, a mess hall, residential quarters, and other essential amenities.

Currently, the training school has the capacity to train 100 recruits, with plans to expand this capacity to 500 in the future. It was also told that the facility will provide training to

female police officers in the coming phases. At present, the first batch of 100 recruits is undergoing training at the institution. Officials highlighted that the newly established Police Training School will benefit the police forces of Dera Ismail Khan and adjacent districts. Additionally, plan for establishing a tactical training wing within the school for advanced-level training is under consideration.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur lauded the role of the police force in maintaining law and order and safeguarding lives and property of people, and paid rich tribute to the sacrifices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, acknowledging their efforts in maintaining peace and security. He also paid homage to the police martyrs for their unmatched contributions, assuring that both the provincial government and the people of the province hold these sacrifices in the highest regard.

The Chief Minister emphasized that maintain-

ing law and order remains a top priority for his government. He outlined steps being taken to modernize the police force, including the provision of advanced weaponry, bulletproof vehicles, and other necessary equipment to enhance their operational readiness.

He also highlighted the government's efforts in clearing pending recruitment cases under the quota for children of police martyrs and resolving hurdles in timely promotions for police personnel. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving the quality of police training schools across the province. On this occasion, the Chief Minister announced the construction of a firing range at the Dera Ismail Khan Police Training School.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Additional Inspector General of Police (Training) Akhtar Abbas, District Police Officer Dera Ismail Khan Sahibzada Sajjad, and other senior officials from the police and district administration.

## Zelensky says Ukraine working to set up Trump meeting

DAVOS (Reuters): Ukraine is working to set up a meeting between President Volodymyr Zelensky and US President Donald Trump, Zelensky said on Tuesday. "The teams have been working on a meeting, they are currently in the process," Zelensky said of efforts to arrange a meeting with Trump.

He was speaking in an interview panel at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Trump, who took office on Monday, has said he will stop the war in Ukraine swiftly without saying how. Zelensky said Ukraine would not agree to Russian demands that it drastically reduce the size of its military, predicting that Russian President Vladimir Putin would demand Ukraine cut its military to a fifth its size.

"This is what he wants. We will not allow this to happen," Zelensky said. In his speech, Zelensky suggested Europe had less influence over Washington because the United States viewed its allies' contribution to security as lacking. "Does anyone in the United States worry that Europe might abandon them someday — might stop being their ally? The answer is no," Zelensky said.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday that Europe should develop a joint defense policy and be willing to increase spending to guarantee its own security from emerging threats. His comments to the World Economic Forum in Davos came a day after the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, who has demanded NATO members raise their defense spending and boasted he can end the war in Ukraine, without offering a clear roadmap.

Zelensky said Europe needed to be ready to stand on its own feet and must work to remain relevant as a "strong global" player and "indispensable" on the global stage. "We need a united European security and defense policy, and all European countries must be willing to spend as much on security as is truly needed," Zelensky argued in his address to the WEF.

"Europe must be able to guarantee peace and security for itself," he added. He evoked the Kremlin's deployment of North Korean troops to western Russia to illustrate what he said were growing threats to European security. "European leaders should remember this — battles involving North Korean soldiers are now happening in places geographically closer to Davos than to Pyongyang," he said. And he pointed to a recent pact between Russia and Iran boosting their economic and military cooperation, saying the accord was an example of a changing landscape that was a threat to Europe.

## PHC extends protective bails of 11 PTI's leaders

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court has extended the protective bail of 11 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders including National Assembly Asad Qaiser, Iqbal Afridi, Shreyar Afridi, Shahram Tarakai, Dawar Kundi and provincial ministers Faisal Khan Tarakai along with Suhail Afridi, on Tuesday.

PHC's divisional bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah, heard the petitions filed by the PTI leaders seeking protective bail in cases registered against them in various police stations in Punjab and Islamabad.

The counsel Alam Khan Adenzai and Mozzam Butt advocates informed the court that the petitioners wanted to appear before the relevant courts to respond to the charges leveled against them. They requested the court to direct the

authorities to provide details of the cases registered against their clients.

Deputy Attorney General Sana Ullah and Dawlat Khan appeared on behalf of the federal government. The Deputy Attorney General informed the court that Asad Qaiser was already provided with a report on the cases registered against him, and that the court had already dismissed a similar petition earlier.

The counsel for the petitioners argued that the current petition was filed after November 24, and that they were seeking details of cases registered against their clients after that date.

Deputy Attorney General informed the court that Asad Qaiser was facing one FIR, while Sheryar Afridi's case was still pending and no report had been received yet. He also informed the court that Faisal Khan Tarakai was facing one FIR in Islamabad.

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor informed the court that NAB did not have any inquiry pending against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister Faisal Khan Tarakai. The counsel for the petitioners requested the court to direct the authorities to provide a report from the provincial Anti-Corruption Department.

In the meanwhile, Justice Syed Arshad Ali remarked that since the petitioners' party was in power, they should obtain the report from the Anti-Corruption Department themselves.

The court extended the protective bail of Asad Qaiser, Sheryar Afridi, Shahram Tarakai, Faisal Khan Tarakai, Dawar Kundi, Aftab Alam, Suhail Afridi, Nadia Khattak, Malak Shahab advocate and Iqbal Afridi, and directed the authorities to provide details of the cases registered against them. The court adjourned the hearing of the case.



GAZA: A truck carrying much needed humanitarian aid drives through southern Gaza's Rafah

## Israel-Hamas truce holding though Trump doubts it will last

JERUSALEM (AFP): The Israel-Hamas ceasefire entered a third day on Tuesday, while US President Donald Trump said he doubted the fragile deal would hold. Desperately needed humanitarian aid has begun to flow into war-battered Gaza after Israel and Hamas conducted the first exchange of hostages for prisoners agreed under the terms of the ceasefire.

Gazans displaced by more than 15 months of war have been walking through an apocalyptic landscape to return to whatever remains of their homes, while rescuers trawl the rubble for bodies. "Gaza is like a massive demolition site," Trump said as he signed a flurry of executive orders following his inauguration.

Asked whether he believed the two sides

would maintain the truce, Trump said: "That's not our war; it's their war. But I'm not confident." Trump had claimed credit for the three-phase ceasefire agreement announced ahead of his return to the White House by Qatar and the United States, following months of fruitless negotiations under his predecessor Joe Biden.

Trump has made clear he would support Israel, and in one of his first acts as president, he revoked sanctions on Israeli settlers in the West Bank imposed by the Biden administration over attacks against Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas both congratulated Trump on his return.

"I look forward to working with you to return the remaining hostages, to

destroy Hamas's military capabilities and end its political rule in Gaza, and to ensure that Gaza never again poses a threat to Israel," Netanyahu said. Displaced Gazan Ghadeer Abdul Rabbo, 30, told AFP she hopes that "with or without Trump", the ceasefire will hold and world governments will help "maintain this calm, because we are afraid". If all goes to plan, during the initial, 42-day phase of the truce that began Sunday, a total of 33 hostages are to be returned from Gaza in exchange for around 1,900 Palestinians.

Over those six weeks, the parties are meant to negotiate a permanent ceasefire. In Rafah, in southern Gaza, Ismail Madi said that "we have endured immense hardships, but we will stay here. We will rebuild this place."

## Turkish ski resort fire kills 66

ISTANBUL (Reuters): A fire at a ski resort hotel in Turkiye's Bolu mountains killed 66 people on Tuesday and forced panicked guests to jump out of windows in the middle of the night. Some 51 people were injured, Health Minister Kemal Memisoglu said at the Kartalkaya ski resort in northwest Turkey.

The blaze began around 3:30am (0030 GMT) on the restaurant floor of the 11-storey Grand Kartal Hotel, authorities said earlier. Several fire engines surrounded the charred building, with white bed sheets tied together and dangling from one upper-floor window where guests attempted to flee.

The fire comes at the beginning of a nationwide two-week school holiday, a time when skiers from nearby Istanbul and Ankara usually head to the Bolu mountains. TV footage showed several fire engines surrounding the charred hotel at the base of the ski slopes,

with white bed sheets tied together and dangling from one upper-floor window. Investigators were looking into what caused the blaze, authorities said.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan cut short an address to his ruling AKP party congress in Ankara, saying: "Our pain is great, our heartache is great." He said administrative and judicial investigations have been launched into the cause of the fire. "All necessary steps will be taken to shed light on all aspects of the incident and to hold those responsible accountable," he promised.

Television footage showed huge plumes of smoke rising into the sky with a snowcapped mountain behind the hotel. "I heard screams around midnight, [hotel] residents were shouting for help," Baris Salgur, who works at a nearby hotel, told NTV television. "They asked for a blanket, saying they will jump. We did what we could, we

brought rope, pillows, we brought a sofa. Some people threw themselves once the flames approached them."

Footage showed the wrecked lobby of the hotel with shards of glass on the floor, the reception desk and the wooden furniture inside charred black. Authorities warned that the building could collapse.

A survivor who managed to escape the flames told local media that no alarms rang out at the hotel when the fire started and complained about the lack of any safety measures, including fire stairs or smoke detectors. Tourism Minister Nuri Ersoy said that the hotel had two fire escapes. "The hotel has a fire safety certificate issued by the fire department ... Regular inspections must be carried out by the fire department," he said. Footage revealed bed sheets hanging from the hotel's windows indicating that some people had tried to use them to escape the blaze.