

3 killed in N Waziristan
F.P. Report

MIR ALI: At least three people were killed in a targeted attack in North Waziristan's Mir Ali area, police informed on Friday. The victims' bodies have been moved to the hospital. Police said, the incident occurred within the jurisdiction of Mir Ali Police Station in Haider Khel Qamar Khel where unknown assailants shot dead three individuals.

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Cop kidnapped, house burnt
F.P. Report

TANK: unidentified armed men on Friday set the house of policeman on fire in Tank district and later abducted him on gunpoint. Police said, the incident occurred in the village of Gara Shada within the jurisdiction of the Saddar Police Station. Unknown assailants completely burned down the house of police constable, Akhtar Zaman during the night and subsequently kidnapped him.

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ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of University of London Wendy Thomson presenting a souvenir to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

PTI-backed Junaid Akbar elected PAC Chairman

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) MNA Junaid Akbar Khan has been elected as the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Friday.

The election of the PAC chairman took a year to materialise, with PTI and government blaming each other for the delay. Since the current government came into power after the February 2024 elections, the position has been unfilled.

An emergent meeting of the PAC was summoned after the PTI-backed SIC sent a panel for the position on the government's demand. Besides Junaid Akbar Khan, the name of Adil Bazai was also among the panel.

Junaid Akbar Khan's name was proposed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Tariq Fazal Chaudhry and none of the PAC members objected to it, paving the way for unanimous selection. He was elected member National Assembly for the third time in general elections 2024 a PTI-backed independent candidate from NA-9 Malakand, securing 113,513 votes while the runner-up, Syed Ahmad Ali Shah of PPP bagged 40,740 votes.

Dr. Aafia's mercy appeal rejected in US: IHC told

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) was informed on Friday that former US President Joe Biden had rejected the appeal of mercy for release and repatriation of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui.

Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan of IHC heard the case regarding the release of Dr. Aafia from a US jail. During the course of proceeding, Dr. Fawzia Siddiqui and her American lawyer Clive Smith appeared in the court through video link, while the petitioner's lawyer Imran Shafiq and the Additional Attorney General were also present in the court.

The lawyer told the court that former US President Joe Biden rejected Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's mercy plea. During the hearing, the court was also informed that the US has refused to sign an agreement with Pakistan for the release of prisoners.

Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan remarked that the US is showing us our worth. The former US President pardoned his son's sentence but did not release our prisoner. On the occasion, reports containing details of the foreign visits of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were presented in the court. The Foreign Office also submitted the answer regarding not attending the meetings related to Dr. Aafia by Pakistani Ambassador to the US. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a report containing answers to court questions. The court then adjourned the hearing of the case for two weeks.

Passenger killed in Lakki Highway

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: A passenger was killed in a firing incident by robbers targeting a passenger van in Lakki Marwat district, police informed on Friday.

The incident occurred in Haji Gul Wanda within the jurisdiction of Lakki City Police Station. Police reported that the robbers opened fire on the passenger van, resulting in the tragic death of one passenger. The van was en route from Bannu to Raiwind when the attack happened.

Govt resolved to equip youth with skills: PM

— forms special task force to curb human trafficking groups

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that the incumbent government was resolved to equip the country's youth with modern skills to cope with the global market's demand.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Vice Chancellor of University of London Wendy Thomson, who called on him here, said that Pakistan's youth were capable of proving their mettle in all fields of life and bringing laurels to the country. He told the visiting dignitary that the Pakistani nationals were serving the international market having graduated from the University of London and other globally renowned institutions.

The prime minister said that the government had introduced various programs including merit-based foreign scholarships and employment, and was also formulating new strategies in this regard. Vice Chancellor Wendy Thomson appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz for the recent initiatives taken by his government to promote education in the country. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar, Economic Affairs Minister Ahmad Khan Cheema and other relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

Prime Minister also formed a Special Task Force to combat human trafficking syndicates operating in Pakistan. The task force will be led by the prime minister himself.

"We will bring the perpetrators involved in human trafficking to justice," the prime minister resolved while chairing a review meeting regarding steps to curb human trafficking in Pakistan. Stressing to speed up the pace of arrests of those involved in human trafficking, the prime minister directed all the relevant departments including the foreign ministry to play their active role in identifying the human smugglers.

The prime minister said that the entire nation, including himself was deeply saddened by the heartbreaking incident of deaths of Pakistanis in the boat of illegal immigrants. During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on the groups involved in the deaths of Pakistanis in the illegal immigrant boat incident, arrests made by various institutions in Pakistan, FIRs filed, and the future course of action.

The meeting was informed that six organized human trafficking groups had been identified, 12 FIRs filed, 25 individuals identified, three key suspects arrested,

and the names of 16 individuals had been added to the passport control list. The meeting was also briefed on the seizure of vehicles, bank accounts, and assets.

The meeting was also updated on the actions taken against suspected FIA personnel and officers. Besides it was also informed about the report from the overseas investigative committee. The prime minister instructed to identify the human trafficking groups and exemplary punishment should be given to them.

The meeting was attended by federal ministers Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Azam Nazir Tarar, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Attaulah Tarar, Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi, and other senior officials.

Azerbaijani Defence Industry Minister calls on PM: Minister of Defence Industry of Republic of Azerbaijan, Vugar Mustafayev called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, both sides expressed their shared commitment to strengthen and diversify relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. The prime minister expressed satisfaction at the current trajectory of their bilateral cooperation, in all areas of mutual interest, particularly in trade, energy, investment and defence sectors.

Minister for Defence Industry thanked the Prime Minister for the warm hospitality extended by Pakistan to him and his delegation. Vugar Mustafayev is visiting Pakistan to Co-Chair the 8th Session of Joint Ministerial Commission between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, being held on 23-24 January 2025 in Islamabad.

Meanwhile, as the world observes International Day of Education on Friday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the government's resolve to advance an education system that embraced the promise of artificial intelligence while safeguarding the essence of human creativity, compassion, and purpose.

The prime minister, in his message to the nation on Education Day annually observed on January 24, acknowledged the educators, advocates, and partners working tirelessly to illuminate lives with the light of knowledge. "On this International Day of Education, we reflect on the profound role education plays in empowering individuals and communities to navigate the rapid advancements of technology..Together, let us continue to champion this noble cause and ensure that education remains a beacon of hope for generations to come," he remarked.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing during PPP CEC meeting at Zardari House.

Saif, JI leaders discuss current political situation

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, met with

Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Liaqat Baloch and Amir-ul-Azameen at the party's headquarters in Mansoor, following PTI Chairman Imran Khan's directives.

During the meeting, senior politician Muhammad Ali Durani and other Jamaat-e-Islami leaders were also present. The leaders discussed the country's overall political situation in detail. On this occasion, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif also conveyed a special message from PTI leadership to Jamaat-e-Islami leaders.

Barrister Dr. Saif praised Jamaat-e-Islami's efforts for public relief and thanked the party for its recent statement regarding the snatching of the public mandate. He said that Imran Khan and Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur sent a message of



good wishes to Jamaat-e-Islami leaders.

Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif stated that Imran Khan directed him to consult with national political parties to establish a common agenda. Liaqat Baloch, Jamaat-e-Islami's deputy chief, thanked PTI leadership for their good wishes.

Liaqat Baloch emphasized that the public wants genuine relief from inflation. Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif also briefed Jamaat-e-Islami leaders on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's efforts to combat terrorism and establish peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Information Advisor extended an invitation to Jamaat-e-Islami leaders to attend a consultative meeting called by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

Meanwhile, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif on Friday lashed out at the federal government for making amendments to the PECA Act, saying the purpose of the amendments was to hide the wrongdoings of the government from the media.

In a statement, Saif termed the amendment an attack on the freedom of press while condemning the move as digital nation destruction bill. "The government had earlier attacked the judiciary through passage of the 26th Constitutional Amendment, now they have strangled press freedom for perpetuating their time in power," he added. He vowed to stand shoulder to shoulder with journalists saying he had never seen such kind of fascism even in dictatorships.

Parliament holds sole authority to repeal 26th Amend: Bilawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Friday only parliament had the mandate and authority to roll back the 26th amendment.

Speaking to media in the federal capital, he said the judges of Supreme Court should create ease for the sitting chief justice. He added the 26th amendment had created a lot of convenience for the federation as well as the provinces. The PPP chairman said it would have been better if the government had consulted the mainstream as well digital media on PECA.

Answering a question, he said the PPP would not become part of the cabinet. Moreover, the former foreign minister said he would take part in the breakfast invitation of Donald Trump.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, said that Pakistan's foreign policy is intact and in place. The nuclear and missile

technology are the gifts to the Pakistani nation from Shaheed Quaid e Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. Pakistan Peoples Party will never trade on the issue.

On the question of him attending President Trump's inauguration, Chairman PPP said that this was the news on the media and one should ask this question to the media. He said, he will go to attend the breakfast event and for the PPP this has continued for a long time. I don't have an official position so I do not have any program to hold official meetings with US authorities. I intend to meet Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's friends. On the question of the PPP joining the government he answered in the negative. Responding to a question, regarding PECA he said that, it is on record we opposed PECA ordinance at the time of PTI's government.

That opposition was not just for

the sake of opposition as we had given our suggestion and input in that legislation which was included. The final proposed draft of the bill shows that the PPP continuously remained engaged with the government and brought several amendments which have improved the law more than before. There are other political parties as well and if they want to give any suggestions they can do so.

This is the way to give your party's point of view in the parliament. The PPP thus does not have a majority to legislate according to its wishes but with the numbers we have in the parliament we can play our positive role. It would have been better for this legislation journalists' organizations should have been consulted to forge a consensus and it would have been better to have consulted the representative of media and digital media at the time when the legislation was at the committee level.

Parliament's joint session concluded

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The joint session of Parliament quickly concluded on Friday amid the opposition's protest over the recently passed amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (PECA) law 2025.

A live telecast from the Pakistan Television Network showed lawmakers who presented the bills and National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq wearing headphones to avoid noise. The opposition started protesting after the NA speaker denied Leader of Opposition Omar Ayub's request to speak on the floor of the House.

The house approved important bills including, Trade Organizations (Amendment) Bill 2021. The bill was presented by Federal Minister Jam Kamal, the bill was approved with a majority vote. Imports and Exports (Amendment) Bill 2023 tabled by Federal Minister Jam Kamal was also passed by the house. National Technology Organization Establishment Bill 2024, proposed by Member of Assembly Zahra Wadood Fatima was also okayed with majority.

The joint session of parliament on Friday lasted 18 minutes of which the treasury took nine minutes to pass four bills and then the speaker adjourned the house till February 12.

PTI to boycott 4th round of talks with govt: Gohar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A day after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar refused to sit with the government in the ongoing negotiations any further till the formation of the judicial commission to probe the events of May 9 and Nov 26, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday summoned another meeting of the dialogue committee scheduled to be held on Jan 28.

Barrister Gohar Ali Khan told the newsmen on Friday said the decision to call off the talks can be revisited if the government constitutes a judicial commission to probe May 9 and November 26 events.

On the other hand, Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub said the government didn't have the power to offer anything in the negotiations while Gohar said PTI founder Imran Khan had directed the party not to become part of the ongoing negotiations anymore.

It must be noted that the PTI founder had announced ending the negotiations with the government without the formation of the judicial commission demanded by his party. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said talks with the government had been put on "hold" by party founder Imran Khan due to not meeting their demands.

The PTI chairman revealed it while talking to media at Parliament House a day after he announced calling off the negotiations with the government committee. "We had put only two demands but no action was taken to form judicial commissions in seven days," he said while asserting that seven days were enough to announce the commission.

He said the PTI could reconsider talks if the government formed the commission to investigate the May 9 and Nov 26 incidents. A day earlier, Gohar Ali Khan told media outside Adiala Jail that Imran Khan had directed the party to withdraw from the

dialogue amid government's prevarication on the formation of judicial commissions as demanded by the PTI.

Barrister Gohar stated that despite granting the government a seven-day deadline, no progress had been made in forming a judicial commission. He emphasised that the PTI's preference was to resolve issues through dialogue. However, if the government fails to announce the commission, no further rounds of negotiations will take place.

Spokesperson for the government's dialogue committee, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, said the PTI had also been invited for the meeting while saying the latter had refused to join and hadn't submitted any written response.

National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has called a meeting of the government and Opposition's negotiation committees while government committee's Senator Irfan Siddiqui on Friday said that they did not halt the negotiations, asking the PTI to return to the talks on January 28.

According to a notification released by the National Assembly Secretariat on Friday, the NA speaker has called the meeting of both the committees on January 28 (Tuesday) at Parliament House's Committee Room 5 at 11:45 am. This is going to be the fourth round of talks between the two sides.

Meanwhile, talking to newsmen outside the Parliament House in Islamabad on Friday, Irfan Siddiqui maintained "No ifs and buts, the PTI should come to the table on January 28." He said whom should the government talks as the PTI had called off the talks. "Should we talk to the walls in meeting? A man from Adiala Jail abruptly announced that the PTI was not interested in the dialogue process," he added.

Irfan Siddiqui said the government negotiation committee was still unaware of the latest situation because as on the other side only one man controls the entire negotiations process who lacks moral values.

KP govt includes Life Insurance Scheme in Health Card Program

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government decided to incorporate the life insurance scheme into the Health Card Program. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed for the implementation of the life insurance scheme at a ceremony held at the Chief Minister's House.

The event was attended by officials from the Health Card program and State Life Insurance Corporation, with Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur as the chief guest. Addressing the ceremony, CM Ali Amin Gandapur stated that KP has become the first province in the coun-

try to introduce an insurance scheme of this kind. He emphasized that this initiative is a source of pride and happiness for the provincial government and its people.

He said under the scheme, financial support will be provided to the families of deceased breadwinners who were beneficiaries of the Sehat Card Plus program. Families will receive compensation of Rs one million if the head of the household, aged up to 60 years, passes away. For those above 60 years, families will receive Rs 500,000.

The Chief Minister highlighted that over 10.4 million families will benefit from this life insurance

scheme, which will cost Rs 4.5 billion annually, entirely funded by the provincial government.

He added that this initiative, following the Sehat Card Plus, is the KP government's second major program for social security. With nearly 49% of the province's population living below the poverty line, the government is determined to ensure their social protection.

The CM concluded that the life insurance scheme will provide much-needed relief to families who lose their primary earners. Furthermore, under the Health Card program, 100% of the province's population is already receiving free and quality healthcare services.

CM Maryam pledges Ramadan packages to millions of families

Maryam said, "Nighaban Ramadan package is a right of the poor, and a duty of the government." She added, "People should get their right with respect and dignity." She highlighted, "People should not stand in queues to get Nighaban Ramadan packages." She said, "People should be served to seek Allah Almighty's pleasure in Ramadan." She added, "The administration and relevant authorities should perform their duties considering them not as a duty but an act of worship."

[illegible]



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur witnessing MoU signing ceremony to launch Life Insurance Scheme.

PHC flays police’s probe in transgender viral video case

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Shakeel Ahmad has expressed dissatisfaction over the inadequate police investigation into a case involving the viral obscene video of transgender named Ayan alias Dolphin, on Friday.

During the hearing, Justice Shakeel Ahmed remarked that the police investigation was flawed, emphasizing the need for timely and thorough investigations, similar to those conducted in foreign countries, which include DNA testing.

Justice Shakeel Ahmed questioned the DSP Investigation, saying, "You were called to court for several reasons. Why didn't your investigation officer complete the investigation? Did you conduct an identification parade of the accused?"

The DSP Investigation replied that the main accused, Ijaz Baghi, was initially unknown but was later nominated, and that a reconciliation agreement had been reached between the accused and the complainant.

Justice Shakeel Ahmad expressed dissatisfaction with the investigation, saying, "There are many flaws in your investigation. When there is even a slight discrepancy in the investigation, it benefits the accused. I have been saying repeatedly that you should conduct investigations on time and correctly."

PHC stressed that protecting transgender is the government's responsibility, highlighting that in foreign countries, special consideration is given to protecting the rights of children, women, and the elderly.

PHC's Justice Shakeel Ahmed ordered the relevant officers to submit a report, warning that if protection is not provided, the IG and other officers will be summoned. The court also directed that the report be sent to all relevant authorities.

The Additional Advocate General informed the court that the accused is nominated in 12 other cases. Justice Shakeel Ahmed suggested that the accused be made to swear an affidavit that he will not work with such people in the future.

PHC has postponed the hearing, seeking a report from the relevant authorities and observed that the court will issue an order in this regard which will be communicated to the concerned officials.

Crackdown on begging rackets in Peshawar continues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: During a crackdown on begging rackets under the supervision of Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsum, six contractors involved in exploiting beggars have been arrested, while raids are underway to apprehend 18 more contractors. The operation, led by Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Sarmad Salim Akram, has resulted in the detainment of over 300 beggars, including a majority of women and children.

The detained beggars revealed that the most profitable locations for begging in Peshawar include Peshawar Club Chowk and Pir Zakori Pull Chowk, where each beggar is required to pay their contractor up to PKR 12,000 daily. Other high-income areas identified include University Road, Phase 3 Chowk, Ghari Qamardin Pull, Dabgari Chowk, Inner City Markets, Qissa Khwani, Khyber Bazaar, Shoba Bazaar, Peshawar Saddar Market, and Karkhano Market, where significant amounts of money are collected.



Raihana sheds light on challenges to women in inheritance rights

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ms. Raihana Tabassum, an M.Phil. scholar at the Department of Social Work at the University of Peshawar, has taken a bold step by shedding light on a pressing yet often overlooked issue in her thesis, "Challenges to Women in Seeking Inheritance Rights in District Chitral Lower." Guided by Dr. Shakeel Ahmed, her research focuses on the struggles women face when trying to claim their rightful inheritance in a society where male dominance over property is the norm.

The Thesis was examined by Dr. Farhat Ullah, Assistant Professor of Social Work at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST). Chitral, with its breathtaking mountains and simple traditions, stands apart from other districts in Pakistan. Here, weddings are modest, free from the burden of dowries, and the community thrives on hard work despite limited resources. Yet, women in Chitral are often excluded from land ownership, a critical source of economic security, due to deeply rooted cultural norms and a lack of awareness about their rights. Through interviews with women, men, and legal experts, Ms. Tabassum revealed how pursuing inheritance often strains family relationships and drags women into lengthy, expensive legal battles. Many women hesitate to fight for their rights, fearing societal backlash and familial discord. Her research emphasizes the need to educate communities about women's inheritance rights, ensuring they can claim what is rightfully theirs without conflict. Ms. Tabassum's work is a call for change—one that aims to empower women and pave the way for a more just and equitable society in Chitral.

Rs10mn aid distribution for Kurram victims held at Governor House

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday chaired a ceremony held at the Governor House on Friday to provide aid to the victims of Kurram district.

The event was attended by Syed Kmail Haider Shah, Chairman of the District Council Sukkur and President of the Local Council Association, along with his delegation from Sindh province.

On the instructions of Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Syed Kmail Haider Shah presented a check worth 10 million rupees to Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, for the victims of Kurram district.

Kumail Shah also announced that the Local Council Association would provide additional aid worth Rs20 million for the victims and mentioned that another 10 million rupees would soon be handed over to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter of the Red Crescent Society, which would further distribute the assistance in Kurram.

Kumail Shah emphasized that the aid was a moral duty, in line with the instructions of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and assured that the assistance would be channeled through the Red Crescent Society to directly benefit the affected people of Kurram.

The ceremony was also attended by key figures including Malak Habib Orakzai, Chairman of the Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Vice Chairman Farzand Wazir, Chairman of the Red Crescent Society for merged districts Imran Wazir Advocate, and other relevant officials.

During the event, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi thanked Syed Nasir Hussain Shah the founder of the Association, Syed Kumail Haider Shah, and the Local Council Association for their generous contribution, describing the humanitarian aid as a prime example of brotherhood and solidarity.

He also expressed gratitude to Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for his special instructions to provide assistance to the victims.

Governor Kundi further acknowledged the support from the provincial governments of Balochistan, Sindh, and Punjab, who stood with the people of Kurram during difficult times.

He said that peace was being restored in Kurram and stressed the provincial government's commitment to ensuring complete peace and order in the region.

The Governor shared that efforts had been made to organize a Jirga in Kohat and an All Parties Conference at the Governor House to restore peace across the province.

He emphasized that all political parties, including the provincial government, should work together for the restoration of peace in Kurram and other parts of the province.

Looking ahead, Governor Kundi announced that a convention for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's district councils and local representatives would be held at the Governor House in Peshawar in the second week of February. The convention will focus on addressing the challenges faced by local governments and finding solutions to their problems.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi being briefed during her visit to Government Degree College Nahaqi.

Journalists bodies reject amendments to PECA Act

F.P. Report

Muhammad. Journalists staged a walkout from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and protested outside the building.

Prominent provincial leaders, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MPA and former Speaker Mushtaq Ghani, Provincial Minister Dr. Amjad, and Minister for Labor Fazal Shakoor, joined the protest to express solidarity with the journalists.

During the protest, Khyber Union of Journalists President Kashifuddin Syed and Peshawar Press Club President M. Riaz stated that legislation without consultation is unacceptable. They criticized the PECA Amendment Bill for criminalizing dissent and called on the government to suspend the bill in the Senate if it intends to consult stakeholders. They argued that the rushed introduction of the amendments reflects the federal government's anti-media stance and demanded the immediate withdrawal of the bill, which they said imposes restrictions on freedom of expression.

Provincial leaders, including Mushtaq Ghani, Dr. Amjad, and Fazal Shakoor, also criticized the federal government, accusing it of attempting to silence public opinion through oppressive laws. They stated that the PECA amendments target not just social media but also digital platforms of electronic and print media, with the aim of criminalizing dissent. They argued that the hasty approval of this amendment reinforces the perception that the federal government is determined to suppress voices of truth and justice.

Meanwhile, KUJ President Kashifuddin Syed and Peshawar Press Club President M. Riaz expressed gratitude to the provincial government for passing a resolution in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly condemning the PECA amendments.

They reaffirmed that the PECA Amendment Bill 2025 poses a serious threat to press freedom and vowed to continue their protest until the bill is withdrawn.

Quorum and its impact on legislative efficiency

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

In a parliamentary democracy, elected representatives are entrusted with the legislative duties of debating and passing laws, a critical process governed by established rules and regulations. Among these, quorum holds special significance as it determines the minimum number of members required to be present in the House to conduct its business. Quorum ensures the legitimacy, accountability, and efficiency of parliamentary systems worldwide by mandating sufficient participation for decision-making.

The primary purpose of quorum is to guarantee that decisions reflect the involvement of a reasonable number of representatives, preventing undue influence by a small group. It serves as a safeguard against decisions being made without adequate deliberation or oversight, upholding democratic principles and the integrity of legislative processes. Ensuring quorum is generally seen as the responsibility of the ruling party or coalition, as they manage governance and legislative continuity. However, opposition parties frequently raise quorum issues as a political strategy to highlight inefficiencies, exert pressure on the government, or emphasize key

issues. Occasionally, even government members point out quorum deficiencies, particularly when dissatisfied or during internal disagreements or during session requisite by Opposition.

According to Article 55(2) of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007, the quorum is one-fourth of the total membership of the National Assembly (84 out of 336 members). If quorum is lacking, the Speaker must suspend proceedings until the required number is present or adjourn the session if it cannot be met. In Indian Constitution, Article 100 is the power of the Houses to act notwithstanding the absence of a quorum. The Indian Constitution specifies that one-tenth of the total membership of the House should be present to constitute a quorum. According to the 41(1) Standing Orders of the House of Commons, the United Kingdom requires 40 members in the House of Commons, including the Speaker.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, a quorum is the minimum number of members required to conduct business, as specified in Article I, Section 5 of the U.S. Constitution, which states that

a majority of each House constitutes a quorum. A quorum is generally assumed to exist unless challenged by a member, at which point a quorum call may be ordered to verify the count. While certain activities, such as debates, can occur without a quorum, voting on legislation requires one. According to Section 39 of the Australian Constitution, the quorum is one-third of the total number of members in the Australian House of Representatives, while in the Canadian House of Commons, the quorum is 20 members, including the Speaker (According to Section 48 of the Constitution Act, 1867).

Quorum requirements in several Asian and African nations further illustrate diverse practices. In the Malaysian House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat), the quorum is the minimum number of members required to conduct business. According to Standing Orders of the Dewan Rakyat 13. (1), the quorum is 26 members, including the Speaker. Singapore sets quorum at one-quarter of the total membership. In the Parliament of Sri Lanka, the quorum is the minimum number of members required to conduct its business. According to Article 73 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the Standing Orders of

Parliament, the quorum is 20 members, including the Speaker. The quorum of the Senate or of the House of Representatives shall be one-third of all the members of the legislative house concerned according to the Section 54(1) of the Constitution of Nigeria.

According to Article 96 of the Turkish Constitution, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey shall convene with at least one-third of the total number of members for all its affairs, including elections it holds.

Unless otherwise stipulated in the Constitution, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey shall take decisions by an absolute majority of those present; however, the majority for decision can, under no circumstances, be less than one plus a quarter of the total number of members. In the Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament) of Bangladesh, the quorum is 60 members, including the Speaker, according to Article 75(2) of the Constitution of Bangladesh.

In the French National Assembly, there is no fixed quorum required for regular debates or general proceedings. However, for certain decisions, such as passing legislation or constitutional amendments, specific quorum rules apply. For example, in the case of constitutional amendments under

Article 89 of the French Constitution, a three-fifths majority of both houses of Parliament (National Assembly and Senate) is required during a joint session in Congress.

According to the Rule 45 of Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag and Rules of Procedure of the Mediation Committee, a quorum of the Bundestag shall exist when more than one half of its Members are present in the Chamber. Similarly, the same rule follows in the Russian State Duma i.e. The procedural provisions for the sessions of each of the Chambers of the Federal Assembly are established by their Standing Orders. Of greatest importance in this respect is the matter of quorum, ensuring legitimacy to the sessions and the activities of the Chambers.

According to the Standing Orders of the Council of Federation and the State Duma their sessions are considered competent, if they are attended by more than a half of the total number of Members of the Council of Federation and the Deputies of the State Duma.

Quorum requirements across countries highlight variations in legislative procedures and governance principles. Pakistan and Singapore both set their quorum at one-fourth of the total membership, reflecting similar legislative frameworks

for ensuring parliamentary presence. India, with its one-tenth quorum rule, allows for greater flexibility in legislative functioning compared to Pakistan and Singapore. Countries like the U.S., Germany, and Russia emphasize the presence of a majority for business, demonstrating stricter enforcement for legislative legitimacy. The U.K. and Canada, by contrast, have relatively lower quorum thresholds (40 and 20 members, respectively), signifying a pragmatic approach to accommodate smaller parliamentary settings or expedite proceedings.

In other countries, the quorum diverges based on historical, legal, and structural considerations. Malaysia and Bangladesh emphasize moderate thresholds (26 and 60 members), ensuring sufficient representation while avoiding excessive disruptions. Turkey's nuanced quorum system accounts for both attendance and decision-making thresholds, reflecting a dual-layered approach to parliamentary integrity. Conversely, France lacks a fixed quorum for regular debates, relying instead on specific rules for critical decisions, like constitutional amendments. These diverse practices illustrate how nations balance legislative efficiency and accountability through their quorum rules, tailored to

their unique political and constitutional needs.

In Pakistan, quorum deficiencies not only disrupt legislative business but also squander public funds allocated to parliamentary sessions. Strengthening enforcement of attendance rules, introducing digital attendance tracking, and penalizing absenteeism could ensure greater accountability. Furthermore, incentivizing consistent member participation and fostering a culture of responsibility can improve legislative effectiveness and prevent waste of resources.

Quorum is more than a procedural requirement; it embodies accountability, democratic representation, and the legitimacy of legislative processes. While the ruling party is primarily responsible for maintaining quorum, the opposition's role in holding the government accountable is crucial. However, using quorum as a political tool to disrupt proceedings undermines the institution's credibility. For Pakistan, the way forward lies in learning from global practices, addressing systemic challenges, and prioritizing national interest over partisan agendas. A robust parliamentary framework ensures that elected representatives fulfill their duties, upholding the trust of the electorate and the principles of democracy.



In brief

APCA hold protest F.P. Report

KARAK: All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA) Karak protested against shelling and baton charging government employees in Peshawar by provincial government, on Friday. APCA Central Vice President Malik Mushtaq Khattak recorded the protest by tying black bands on the arms of government employees of all departments and announced the protest of February 10. I also announced full participation in. They went to various offices across the district and tied black bands on the arms of clerks and class four employees and gave instructions to go on strike by giving up their pens and work. In addition, in a special conversation with the media, they strongly condemned the incident and announced the February 10 protest in Islamabad. Also announced a full participation. Meanwhile, the accused who desecrated the grave of a martyr and the Pakistani flag in the Sabirabad area of Karak were arrested and a case was registered. According to the details, two accused Gulzar Khan and Khadim Gul, residents of Lawaghar Chanikhel, were arrested. The accused had desecrated the grave of martyr Hazratullah son of Arlan Badshah, resident of Lawaghar Chanikhel, and attacked him with stones. The Pakistani flag was uprooted and the bouquets were thrown.

Upgradation of schools F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: The series of measures to improve the quality of education and the building condition of the schools is going on in this regard, CEO Education Toba Tek Singh Aqeela Intkhab visited various schools, on Friday. On this Occasion, Deputy District Education Officer Mustafa Iqbal Lak, Assistant Education Officers Muhammad Zubair and Shajeeh-ul-Hassan were also with him. The CEO Education distributed school uniforms to the children and expressed satisfaction over the renovation works in the schools and appreciated the performance of officers, head teachers and teachers. AEOs are doing well in monitoring. She further said that all the officers and teachers need to work together as a team to raise the quality of education further. CEO Education assured that the provision of facilities and quality in educational institutions will be improved all resources will be used to create.

Mega farmers' day held F.P. Report

H A F I Z A B A D : Agriculture department held Mega Farmers Day to provide necessary advises to growers for getting better yield of wheat and other crops at village Kassoki. Addressing the gathering of farmers, agriculture officers and experts said that Kisan Cards and Green Tractor Scheme of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif would pave a way not only to increase record per acre agriculture yield but also socio-economic condition of growers also be improved in the province. They said that agriculture sector was backbone of national economy that is way the government was focusing on providing maximum facilities to farmers for increasing agriculture production for achieving destination of self-reliance in food as well as providing raw material to industrial sector.



PESHAWAR: People holding a walk to mark 'World Education Day'.

Abbaseen Foundation College to prioritize marginalized community

F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: Chief Executive Abbaseen Foundation Pakistan Professor Dr Mukhtiar Zaman is delighted to announce the inauguration of the Abbaseen Foundation Degree College, soon to become the Abbaseen Foundation University, the first of its kind to be established in a remote village like Shamshatoo, in Nowshera of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Professor Dr Mukhtiar Zaman, Chief Executive, the Abbaseen Foundation Pakistan. The Abbaseen Foundation UK and Pakistan is a partnership that supports some of the poorest people in the world who live in rural North West Pakistan, to find a path out of poverty that can take them on a journey to a better future. The two foundations have worked together to provide education, health, nutrition, and humanitarian relief for more than 20 years.

Prof. Dr. Mukhtiar Zaman said, "Our services are only possible through the donations of our generous supporters in the UK, Pakistan and other parts of the world and the pace to develop the Degree College has been accelerated through a very generous donation from Dr Qadir Bakhsh MBE and Rukhsana Bakhsh, who are longstanding supporters of the work of Abaseen Foundation.

Prof. Dr. Mukhtiar Zaman welcomed Mrs. Rukhsana Bakhsh, an Educationalist, and guest of honour from the United Kingdom, to the inauguration ceremony. He expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the Abaseen Foundation UK Trustees, Board of Governors Members in Pakistan and the girls who will benefit from the degree college for the



very generous donation and encouragement to go faster to develop and open the college. He also expressed deep gratitude for the support of all the donors, both in Pakistan and in the UK.

Mrs. Rukhsana Bakhsh responded by saying 'I am delighted and feel privileged to have been invited to the inauguration and unveiling of the plaque ceremony of the Abbaseen Foundation Degree College, soon to become the Abbaseen Foundation University, Insha'Allah.

We, as a family, have always felt honoured to have been associated with 'Team Abaseen Foundation'. Shamshatoo and its residents. Two aspects of the Abaseen Foundation, are unique. Their altruistic and visionary leadership has developed and pioneered a 'whole village approach' in terms of: Firstly, catering for the needs of all of the communities of the village, from children, through to youth and elderly, both male and female, on the backdrop of abject poverty.

Secondly, developing and providing a wide range of services and facilities, including education, school meals, health, housing, vocational training, employment, welfare and supporting the wellbeing of orphans. Their aspiration to establish a university in this remote village is unique, unrivalled and incomparable, aiming to provide higher education at the

doorstep of Shamshatoo children, girls in particular.

The "Shamshatoo Project" should be emulated and copied in all remote areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and indeed the whole of Pakistan. We are also proud to have supported some of the following initiatives so far:

Supporting the Degree College and the proposed University initiatives. Contributing towards the construction of 2 out of 9 houses for local residents, dedicated to Rukhsana's and Qadir's parents. Contributing towards the extension of a classroom, dedicated to the late Miss Taj Bakhsh.

Sponsoring a girl for two years (£500 per year) towards her degree education. Providing small donations as and when during Ramadan appeals.' Helen Bingley, OBE, Chief Executive of the Abaseen Foundation in the UK, extended her personal appreciation and gratitude to Dr Qadir Bakhsh MBE and Mrs Rukhsana Bakhsh on this occasion and said 'thank you to both of you for pushing us faster than we imagined was possible to deliver this very important project, and for your generous donation that enabled this.'

Helen also said 'thank you to the selfless volunteers, generous donors, and passionate fund raisers in the UK, who raise hundreds of thousands of pounds every year, for various projects in Shamshatoo, KPK, in Pakistan.

Swat Press Club and District Bar Association join hands

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The Swat Press Club and District Bar Association have agreed to collaborate on addressing regional issues and advocating for the rights of the oppressed. A meeting was held between the two organizations, chaired by Swat Press Club President Niaz Ahmed Khan and District Bar Association Swat President Fahim Naeem Advocate.

The meeting was attended by prominent figures, including General Secretary Muhammad Shafiullah, Swat Union of Journalists President Syed Shahabuddin, and former General Secretary Fazal Khaliq Khan. Lawyers Arshad Khan Advocate, Akbar Ali Swati Advocate, and Ashraf Khan Advocate were also



present.

The joint agreement aims to enhance mutual relations between the two institutions and tackle regional issues. Fahim Naeem Advocate praised Swat journalists for their role in highlighting regional problems and giving voice to the oppressed. He expressed hope that journalists will continue to strive for justice and solutions to the problems faced by the

people of Swat.

The District Bar Association assured full support from the legal community in shedding light on regional problems and the difficulties faced by marginalized groups. This partnership is expected to strengthen the collective efforts of journalists and lawyers in advocating for justice and human rights in Swat.

Police arrests 7 including dacoits, arms recovered

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Police conducted targeted operations against robbers in different areas of Gello, Ghouspur, Kashmore, Gehalpur, Kashmore and Kandh Kashmore districts and other areas of the Larkana region.

According to details, seven alleged robbers involved in various crimes including looting, dacoity, police encounters, thefts, terrorism were arrested along with weapons. The arrested robbers include Dhani Bakhsh Mazari, Muhammad Iqbal alias Balu Mazari, Muhammad Yousuf Mazari, Shaikat Ali Malik, Bojala Mazari, Baqar Mazari, Ghulam Mohiuddin alias Shikari Mazari. Meanwhile, the Kashmore district police is conducting targeted operations in different areas in which armored vehicles, all SHO's, CIA, Madaggar Fighters and Rapid Response Teams are also participating.

Deputy Inspector General of Police Range Larkana Nasir Aftab Pathan appreciated the performance of the range police and said that we have resolved to eradicate the robbers throughout the range, for which all police parties have been formed, and we firmly believe that soon the law and order situation will be improved by cracking down on criminals in the range police.

Law, order situation flayed

F.P. Report

BANNU: District Bar Association has expressed serious concern over the poor law and order situation in Bannu. The closure of the main gates of the inner city and Sadar police stations after evening and their being confined to police stations is a question mark and leaving the public at the mercy of thieves, robbers and bandits is a clear proof of the failure of the police officers.

Due to the incidents in the city and adjoining areas every day, not only have the citizens stopped coming out of their homes after night but they have also started preferring to offer Isha prayers at home. Bannu should not be allowed to become Karachi under any circumstances. Police officers should come out of their bungalows and offices and ensure the safety of the public and senior police officers should be posted in police stations.

These views were expressed by the General Secretary of the Bannu Bar Association, prominent lawyer Shoaib Khan Saduzai Advocate. Provincial General Secretary of the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Malik Haroon Khan Advocate, Aurangzeb Kaki Advocate and other senior lawyers and leaders while briefing the media representatives after the meeting.

Govt employees observe pen-down strike in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The government employees of different departments observed a complete pen-down strike and boycotted duties for the second consecutive day in protest against the proposed pension reforms. The strike was held on the call of All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA).

The visitors suffered hard due to government workers' strike in various offices. The All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA) district president Sehat Jan along with Alamgir Khan and drivers' association district president Muzzamil Shah visited various offices and asked the employees to boycott their duties in protest against the government.

Talking to local journalists, Sehat Jan said the KP government had already reduced pension of government employees in 2022. He said the government against wanted to reduce the commuted pension on the dictation of IMF. He said the AGEGA leadership was on one page and would continue its struggle until its demands were met.

CCTV cameras' training: A month-long CCTV Cameras' installation training arranged by the district administration in collaboration with the youth affairs' department concluded at the district assembly hall. A total of 80 students participated in the training who

were awarded with certificates during a function. The deputy director information technology finance department Kiramat Shah, Nawab ud Din of finance department, district youth officer Malik Shahzad Tariq and Principal Muhammad Ilyas distributed certificates among the trainees.

Speaking on the occasion Malik Shahzad said the youth affairs department would arrange such courses on tehsil level to equip youths with the latest technology. He asked youths to get technical knowledge as it was important for getting jobs inside and outside the country. The guests were also given shields.

Facilities demanded: The residents of Dherai Denjari in Jandol sub division on Friday complained that they had no electricity and clean drinking water facilities in this modern world. Led by social activist Haji Said Muhammad, the residents said the road connecting their village with the market had turned to ruins.

They said the natural springs had dried up due to prolonged dry spell. The residents said that they had to fetch water from distant places. They said that several houses had no power supply. They demanded a water supply tube well, repair work on the link road and installation of solar system in the village graveyard.

World education day observed

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Like other parts of the province, the "World Education Day" was also observed in Kohat on the special directions of the Commissioner Kohat Division and Deputy Commissioners with the theme "Leveraging Digital Solutions for equitable Education System" for the year 2025 on Friday.

The Department organized various events and competitions in several government and private educational institutions with the aim of highlighting the importance of education and the role of education in the prosperity of the society.

The officers of the education department and heads of educational institutions in their addresses mentioned the education-friendly policies of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and said that the present provincial government is providing all possible facilities to the teachers and the education department to improve the quality of education. In this regard, they appreciated the services and tireless efforts of the MNAs, MPAs, elected representatives and the district

administration, especially the Commissioner Kohat and the Deputy Commissioners for the promotion of education and strengthening the institutions.

Special walks were also held on this occasion and prayers were also offered for the integrity, solidarity and prosperity of the beloved country.

Arrangements reviewed: In light of the orders of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, an important meeting was held with the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali in the chair on conducting mass marriages in his office today.

The meeting besides others, was also attended by the Tehsil Chairman Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, Assistant Commissioner Lachi, District Social Welfare Officer, District Zakat Officer and other authorities concerned.

The meeting was briefed in detail on the arrangements so far made for conducting the mass marriages and certain important decisions were taken in this respect. In the meeting, responsibilities were assigned to all the relevant departments and institutions in this regard.

Strategies for improving ease of business in Pakistan

Ghazala Anbreen

INVESTMENT is an engine of economic growth. Sadly, in our country there are many challenges and hurdles that the business people have to face starting their business. A long chain of bureaucratic procedures is involved which dissuades rather than attracts the investors both at domestic and foreign levels.

Pakistan's investment to GDP ratio reached 13.1 percent in 2024 and it has been facing numerous challenges in attracting good investments which are essential to revive economic growth. For inviting the investors, both at private and international level, it is necessary to understand the nature of challenges and identify what can be the sector specific investments.

There is a need to focus on identifying investment opportunities in Agriculture, Industry, labor, Manufacturing and IT sectors. There is also a need to discuss impediments in the growth of these sectors in Pakistan with incentives introduced by the Government for promoting investment. There are different policy and regulatory frameworks for investments in Pakistan for example, Pakistan Investment Policy 2023, Special Economic Zones Act, 2012 and SIFC 2023. IMF estimated that Pakistan's annual Financial Gap for achieving the SDGs is approximately \$3.72 b for the

period from 2020 to 2030. It highlights the significant financial challenges the country must overcome to meet its development targets.

Ease of Doing Business is an index which is published by the World Bank measuring how easy it is to conduct a business in a country. It ranks economies from 1 to 190. The higher rankings indicate a more facilitating environment to carry out a business in some country for business operations. Pakistan ranked 108 among 190 economies in the ease of doing business. In 2018 this ranking was 136.

World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index evaluates economies on the basis of ten indicators as for instance, starting a business, dealing with Construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts, resolving insolvency. The indicators where Pakistan has performed better are starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, paying taxes and trading across borders.

Pakistan Investment Policy, 2023 intends to enhance the investment climate in Pakistan by introducing reforms for attracting foreign and domestic investor. For transforming Pakistan business environment, bringing efficiency and trans-

parency through investment liberalization, investment facilitation and retention, investment promotion, investment protection, focus on high quality investments and sustainable and inclusive growth.

The aim of Pakistan Vision (2025) (One Vision, One Mission) is to transform Pakistani economy by the year 2047 into one of the top ten economies of the world and to achieve the upper middle-income status by 2025. The key pillars of this vision include achieving sustained indigenous and inclusive growth, developing human and social capital, governance, institutional reforms and modernization of the public sector, energy, water and food security, private sector and entrepreneurship led growth, developing a competitive knowledge economy, modernizing transport infrastructure.

The key Features of Strategic Trade Policy Framework (STPF) include enhancement of exports, product diversification, trade related investment, realistic exchange rates to support exports. By attracting FDI Pakistan can boost economic growth, create jobs and increase technological expertise. There are different policy and regulatory frameworks for investments in Pakistan for example, Special Economic Zones Act, 2012 and SIFC 2023.

The institutions for promotion of investment in Pakistan are

Board of Investment (BOI), Provincial Investment Committees, Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) focuses on sectors like agriculture, manufacturing and services. Punjab has established many Special Economic Zones by offering tax incentives and infrastructure supports. Sindh Investment Department promotes investment in sectors like energy, infrastructure and agriculture. Regarding Public Private Partnerships, Sindh has been a pioneer in projects like roads, bridges, water supply.

KP Board of Investment and Trades (KPBOIT) focuses on investment in tourism, mining and energy sectors. Baluchistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBOIT) intends to attract investments in mining, energy and fisheries. Gwadar Port Development is an initiative for boosting trade and investment in the region.

Pakistan ranked 129 out of 142 countries in rule of law according to the World Justice Project. This position reflects significant legal and institutional challenges that directly hinder both domestic and foreign investment, primarily due to concerns over ineffective dispute resolution and regulatory inconsistencies which collectively create an unfavorable business environment.

The aspect details of Agriculture Sector as regards its contributions reveal that its con-

tribution to GDP is 24%. Contribution to Direct Exports is 25% while export Earnings are \$8 billion and it generates employment at the rate of 42% of the labor force. The weaknesses include lack of value addition, low productivity, water shortages, less growth because of deficient prospects of modern farming. Among opportunities are latest scientific techniques and Agro-processing. The threats can be in the form of climate change and issues in water management. In like manner the analysis of the industry sector reveals that it contributes to 20% of the GDP. Among weaknesses are slow progress for productivity enhancement, not going for product diversification, high duties and taxes, energy shortages, dearth of technological advancements, volatile exchange rate.

Labor Sector strengths include - 12% of skilled labor force, 15% interest rate, 25% of direct exports, export earnings as \$8 billion and this sector employs about 42% of the labor force. However, there are certain shortcomings as well. For instance, almost 40% electricity is generated through imported fuel. There is a skill mismatch. Among opportunities are included technical advancements and emerging industries. Threats can be in the form of depreciation of Pakistani currency. Coming to the analysis of manufacturing sector, we would know that it

contributes to 13.58% of energy and has a share of 60% of Pakistan's total exports. It employs 16.1% of the country's labor force. Threats which are posed are outages Zones (SEZs) competition, export potential redundant technology, Lack of technological upgradation, economic instability.

The analysis of the IT sector shows that among its strengths are the fact that Pakistan offers a huge market with 193 million mobile users, 138 million broadband subscribers and 142 million internet subscribers and a booming freelancing industry. Among the grey areas are concentration of IT exports, skills mismatch, ease of doing business issues and no regulatory framework. The prospects include the premise that it is financially attractive and has a 2.7% contribution to GDP. It can be a global destination for investment. Among hazards are intense competition from other markets and fluctuating economic conditions predominantly.

Summing up the entire discussion it can be conjectured that among major reasons for low investments in Pakistan are bureaucratic hurdles, judicial inefficiency, infrastructural constraints, energy crisis and high taxation and contradictory monetary policy and most importantly security issues. Unless and until these hurdles are removed, we cannot ensure a conducive environment for the business to flourish in our country.



WEST BANK: Palestinian women sitting across from rubble of a house where two Palestinians were killed during an Israeli raid in Burqin village near Jenin.

Syria’s new leaders turn to Islamic law in effort to rebuild Assad’s police

DAMASCUS (Reuters): Syria's new authorities are using Islamic teachings to train a fledgling police force, a move officers say aims to instill a sense of morality as they race to fill a security vacuum after dismantling ousted president Bashar al-Assad's notoriously corrupt and brutal security forces. Police they brought into Damascus from their former rebel enclave in the northwestern region of Idlib are asking applicants about their beliefs and focusing on Islamic sharia law in the brief training they offer recruits, according to five senior officers and application forms seen by Reuters.

Ensuring stability and winning the trust of people across Syria will be crucial for the Sunni Muslim Islamists to cement their rule. But the move to put religion at the centre of policing risks seeding new rifts in a diverse country awash with guns after 13 years of civil war and alienating foreign governments they have been trying to woo, regional analysts warn. "There are many Syrians who will find this concerning," said Aron Lund, a fellow at Century International, a Middle East-focused think tank, when asked about Reuters' findings. "Not just minorities - Christians, Alawites, Druze - but also quite a lot of Sunni Muslims in places like Damascus and Aleppo, where you have a fairly large secular, cosmopolitan population that's not interested in religious law."

The religious foundations of the police training are also making Western governments wonder how big a role Islam might play in Syria's constitution, which the former rebel

faction now in power plans to revise, said one diplomat, who was not authorized to speak publicly on the matter. "It's not a good sign, but it also depends on how strictly it will be implemented," the diplomat told Reuters.

Syria's de facto leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, has sought to reassure Western officials and Middle Eastern governments worried about their own Islamist movements that his faction has renounced its former ties to al Qaeda and will rule with moderation, including protecting minorities.

The group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), has a track record of pragmatism, backing away from enforcing some strict interpretations of Islamic law in areas it controlled during the war. Syria's Interior Ministry, which oversees police, and Information Ministry did not respond to questions about the focus on religion in police recruitment and training, or whether there are plans to incorporate Islamic law into the legal code.

The senior police officers interviewed by Reuters said the intention was not to impose it on the general population but rather to teach recruits ethical behaviour.

Hamza Abu Abdel Rahman, who helped set up the group's police academy in Idlib before transferring to Damascus, said an understanding of religious matters, "what is permissible and what is not", is crucial for recruits to "act justly". Assad's myriad security forces were widely feared for tyrannical and predatory behaviour, ranging from arrests of dissidents who ended up tortured or killed to demanding bribes to resolve minor

infractions. The extent of public anger against them was evident in the days after Assad was toppled on Dec. 8. Most of the capital's police stations were ransacked by looters, with equipment and records pillaged or destroyed. Police said half of the roughly 20 stations have since reopened, but they are each staffed by around 10 officers, mostly brought in from Idlib, instead of their previous complement of 100-150 officers.

At three stations visited by Reuters in late December, a handful of exhausted officers were trying to deal with a welter of issues, from complaints of rampant crime to a garbage collector who brought in two bags of hand grenades he found on the street. When the rebels seized power, they announced they were disbanding Assad's Interior Ministry and security forces, including the police. More than 200,000 people have registered to join a new police service they are establishing, said Hesham Hilal, who is leading courses for recruits at a police academy in Damascus.

Police who defected to the rebel side before Assad's fall are welcome to apply for the new force, the senior officers told Reuters. Those who did not have been asked to complete a "reconciliation" process, including signing a document accepting the change of regime and handing in their gun. It is not yet clear whether any will be allowed to join the new force. Seven officers who manage police stations or are involved in recruitment said they needed more members and welcomed applications from people of any faith.

Teen fatally shoots a female student and himself at school

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP): A shooting in a Nashville high school cafeteria left a female student dead and another student wounded, nearly two years after another deadly school shooting in the city that ignited an emotional debate about gun control in Tennessee.

The 17-year-old shooter, who was also a student at Antioch High School, later shot and killed himself with a handgun, Metro Nashville Police spokesperson Don Aaron said during a news conference. Police identified him as Solomon Henderson. Police Chief John Drake said the shooter "confronted" student Josselin Corea Escalante, 16, in the cafeteria and opened fire, killing her.

The wounded student was grazed by a bullet. He was treated and released from the hospital, Drake said. Another student was taken to a hospital for treatment of a facial injury that happened during a fall, Aaron said. Metro Nashville Police, federal and state agencies are examining "very concerning" online writings and social media posts connected to 17-year-old Solomon

Henderson" as they work to establish a motive, police said in a statement. Investigators at this point have not established a connection between Henderson and the victims, and police said the gunfire may have been random, according to the statement.

Two school resource officers were in the building when the shooting happened around 11 a.m., Aaron said. They were not in the immediate vicinity of the cafeteria and by the time they got down there the shooting was over and the gunman had killed himself, Aaron said. The school has about 2,000 students and is in Antioch, a neighborhood about 10 miles (16 kilometers) southeast of downtown Nashville.

At a family safety center close to a hospital, officials helped shocked parents reunite with their children. Dajuan Bernard was waiting at a Mapco service station to reunite with his son, a 10th grader, who was being held in the auditorium with other students. He first heard of the shooting from his son, who "was a little startled," Bernard said. His son was upstairs from the cafeteria but said

he heard the gunfire. "He was OK and let me know that everything was OK," Bernard said. "This world is so crazy, it could happen anywhere," he said. "We've just got to protect the kids, and raise the kids right to prevent them from even doing this. That's the hardest part."

Fonda Abner said her granddaughter had called her a couple of times but that she only heard commotion and thought it was a pocket dial. They spoke briefly before being cut off. "It's nerve-racking waiting out here," Abner said. United Family Fellowship, a church in Antioch, was hosting a vigil night "for anyone in the community who needs a space to pray, process, and find comfort," the church said on Facebook. Adrienne Battle, superintendent of Nashville schools, said that public schools have implemented a "range of safety measures," including partnerships with police for school resource officers, security cameras with weapon-detection software, shatter-resistant film for glass, and security vestibules that are a barrier between outside visitors and the main

entrance.

"Unfortunately, these measures were not enough to stop this tragedy," Battle said. She said there are questions about whether stationary metal detectors should be considered. "While past research has shown they have had limitations and unintended consequences, we will continue to explore emerging technologies and strategies to strengthen school safety," Battle said. In October, a 16-year-old Antioch High School student was arrested after school resource officers and school officials discovered through social media that he had taken a gun to school the day prior. When he was stopped the following morning, officials found a loaded gun in his pants, police said.

School shooting comes nearly two years after a shooter opened fire at a separate Nashville private elementary school and killed six people, including three children. The tragedy prompted a monthslong effort among hundreds of community organizers, families, protesters and others pleading with lawmakers to consider passing gun control measures.

Trump revokes protections for former Secretary of State

WASHINGTON (AP): President Donald Trump has revoked government security protection for former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his top aide, Brian Hook, who have faced threats from Iran since they took hard-line stances on the Islamic Republic during Trump's first administration.

A congressional staffer and a person familiar with the matter, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss personal security details, confirmed the change, but neither could

offer an explanation. They said that Pompeo and Hook were told of the loss of protection and that it took effect at 11 p.m. that night. It's another sign of steps Trump is taking just days into his return to the White House to target those he has perceived as adversaries.

A day earlier, Trump, a Republican, revoked the security clearance and Secret Service protection from John Bolton, who was fired as Trump's national security adviser during his first term. Bolton later wrote a book

whose publication the White House unsuccessfully sought to block on grounds that it disclosed national security information. Bolton, who has been targeted for assassination by Iran, said in a statement that he was disappointed but not surprised by the decision. Trump also revoked security clearances for dozens of former intelligence officials who signed a 2020 letter saying the Hunter Biden laptop saga bore the hallmarks of a "Russian information operation."

Trump had soured on Pompeo some months ago, saying publicly that he would play no role in his new administration. In a social media post this week, he fired Hook from his presidentially appointed position on the board of the Wilson Center, a think tank. Asked about the decision to end Pompeo and Hook's security, Trump replied to reporters: "Do you want to have a large detail of people guarding people for the rest of their lives? I mean, there's risks to everything."

China says it will work with Netherlands

HONG KONG (Reuters): China's Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang said at a meeting with Dutch King Willem-Alexander in The Hague that China stands ready to increase mutual trust and that it would work together to maintain stability and smoothness of the global supply chain.

The meeting was reported by China's foreign ministry. It comes days after the Dutch government said it would expand export controls on advanced semiconductor equipment from April 1. Dutch national export licence requirements for semiconductor equipment were first introduced in 2023 under pressure from the United States to limit shipments to China, and they have been expanded several times.

Ding said that despite the changing international situation, the relations between the Netherlands and China have always maintained a good momentum. "China is ready to work with the Netherlands to enhance understanding and mutual trust, strengthen exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and promote the continuous development of the open and pragmatic comprehensive cooperative partnership," Ding said.

China and the Netherlands have their own advantages in different parts of the global production and supply chain and there is "great potential for strengthening cooperation, which is in the interests of both sides and conducive to world peace, stability, development and progress," he said. Ding said China stands ready to work with the Netherlands to jointly "maintain the stability and smoothness of the global production and supply chain." Computer chip equipment maker ASML has said it did not expect the Dutch government's expansion of export controls to impact its business.

People leave NZ in record numbers

WELLINGTON (Reuters): People leaving New Zealand hit record levels in the 12 months to November 2024, in another sign of the weakness in the country's economy that moved to a technical recession in the third quarter.

Data released by Statistics New Zealand showed that 127,800 people left the Pacific nation in the 12 months to November, up 28% on the prior 12-month period. This was provisionally the highest number of people leaving in an annual period ever, according to the statistics bureau. Of those leaving, more than 50% were New Zealand citizens, according to the data.

New Zealand, which has a population of just 5.3 million, has seen its economy struggle over the last couple of years as the central bank increased the official cash rate to dampen historically high inflation. Michael Gordon, senior economist at Westpac, said that a lot of people come to New Zealand for work opportunities and when these dry up people leave.

"It's about work opportunities, especially here (New Zealand) versus Australia. Australia's economy is still running reasonably strongly," Gordon said. "There are more opportunities over there now so we are seeing quite high outflows of Kiwis." However, people leaving does continue to be offset by inward migration. Statistics New Zealand said net migration - the number of people moving to New Zealand permanently minus those leaving New Zealand - was at 30,600 in the 12 months to November 2024. Net migration peaked in the 12 months ended October 2023 at 135,700.

Gordon added that net migration was now back at historic averages and that over the longer term net migration would support the country's economy. "It's something to keep in mind, that for a big chunk of the world, New Zealand is an attractive place to live, but also for us (New Zealanders) there are also places that look more attractive like Australia, or going to the US or the UK," Gordon said.

US SC removes hurdle to anti-money laundering law

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The US Supreme Court declined to block enforcement of an anti-money laundering law that forces millions of business entities to disclose the identities of their real beneficial owners to the Treasury Department, though it still will remain on hold and its fate could be decided by President Donald Trump.

The justices put on hold a nationwide injunction issued on Dec. 3 by Texas-based US District Judge Amos Mazzant who, at the behest of small businesses, had concluded that Congress overstepped its powers under the US Constitution in passing the Corporate Transparency Act in 2021. The law's enforcement remains blocked and companies still are not required to report information as a result of a separate order issued on Jan. 7 in another case by Texas-based US District Judge Jeremy Kernode.

Lawyers at the conservative Center for Individual Rights, representing the small businesses in the Supreme Court case, cited the other ruling in saying it was now up to the new Republican president's administration to decide what to do. Trump returned to the presidency. "We remain confident that the law's invasive reporting requirements and draconian penalties will be ruled unconstitutional," Todd Gaziano, the center's president, said in a statement.

The justices acted after the New Orleans-based 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals allowed the injunction to take effect ahead of a Jan. 13 deadline that most companies had faced to submit their initial reports to the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, known as FinCEN. Democratic former President Joe Biden's administration had asked the Supreme Court to stay the injunction. It said millions of entities had already complied with the reporting requirement before Mazzant's ruling that blocked the law's enforcement nationally even though the small businesses did not ask for that result.

Conservative Justice Neil Gorsuch agreed that the injunction should be put on hold but said he would go a step further and take up the case now to decide if an individual judge in one state may issue such a nationwide injunction. Liberal Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented, saying she saw no indication why a further delay in implementing the law would harm the government, which she said had itself delayed enforcement for nearly four years after its enactment.

The injunction was obtained by the National Federation of Independent Business, which along with several small businesses challenged the law through the Center for Individual Rights. A beneficial owner

is defined as an individual who directly or indirectly owns or controls a company. This law required corporations and limited liability companies, or LLCs, to report information concerning their beneficial owners to FinCEN, which collects and analyzes information about financial transactions to combat money laundering and other crimes.

The measure's supporters have said it was designed to address the growing popularity of the United States as a venue for criminals to launder illicit funds by setting up entities like LLCs under state laws without disclosing their involvement. "The act's reporting requirements are important to the government in preventing, detecting and prosecuting crimes such as money laundering, tax fraud and the financing of terrorism," the Biden administration's Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar wrote in a brief to the Supreme Court. Mazzant ruled that Congress has no authority under its powers to regulate commerce, taxes and foreign affairs to adopt the "quasi-Orwellian statute" and that it likely violated the rights of states under the Constitution's 10th Amendment. Prelogar, in her brief to the Supreme Court, argued that the judge's ruling was too sweeping and wrong, citing the authority of Congress under the Constitution's so-called Commerce Clause to regulate economic activities that affect interstate commerce.

Italy’s top court upholds Amanda Knox’s conviction

ROME (AP): Italy's highest court confirmed a slander conviction against US defendant Amanda Knox for accusing an innocent man of murdering her British flatmate 17 years ago in a sensational case that polarized trial watchers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Knox had appealed the conviction based on a European Court of Human Rights ruling that said her rights had been violated by police failure to provide a lawyer and adequate translator during a long night of questioning just days after 21-year-old Meredith Kercher's murder in the university town of Perugia.

Judge Monica Boni read the verdict aloud in a courtroom that was empty except for a few reporters and guards. The lawyers for both Knox and the man she wrongly accused, Patrick Lumumba, had gone home during deliberations. The ruling seemingly ends a 17-year legal saga that saw Knox and her Italian ex-boyfriend convicted and acquitted in flip-flop verdicts in Kercher's brutal murder, before being exonerated by the highest Cassation Court in 2015.

The slander conviction against Knox had survived multiple appeals, and Knox was reconvicted on the charge in June after the European court ruling

cleared the way for a new trial. Reached by telephone, Lumumba said he was satisfied with the verdict. "Amanda was wrong. This verdict has to accompany her for the rest of her life," he said.

Knox's lawyer, Carlo Dalla Vedova, expressed surprise at the court's decision. "We are incredulous," Dalla Vedova told reporters in the courthouse by phone. "This is totally unexpected in our eyes, and totally unjust for Amanda." Knox called it a "surreal" day in a post on X.

"I've just been found guilty yet again of a crime I didn't commit," her post said. "And I was just awarded the Innocence Network Impact Award, 'created to honor an exonerated person who raises awareness of wrongful convictions, policy issues, or assists others post-release.'" Speaking recently on her "Labyrinths" podcast, Knox said: "I hate the fact that I have to live with consequences for a crime I did not commit." She said consequences included difficulties in obtaining visas to some countries because of a criminal conviction.

Her defense team says she accused Lumumba, a Congolese man who employed her at a bar in the central Italian university town of Perugia, during a long night of questioning

and under pressure from police, who they said fed her false information. The European Court of Human Rights found that the police deprived her of a lawyer and provided a translator who acted more as a mediator. Knox, now 37, does not risk any more time in jail. She has already served nearly four years during the investigation, initial murder trial and first appeal. But Knox had continued the legal battle with the aim of clearing her name of all criminal wrongdoing.

Knox returned to the United States in 2011, after being freed by an appeals court in Perugia, and has established herself as a global campaigner for the wrongly convicted. She has a podcast with her husband and has a new memoir coming out titled, "Free: My Search for Meaning." Knox was a 20-year-old student in Perugia when Kercher was found stabbed to death on Nov. 2, 2007, in her bedroom in the apartment they shared with two Italian women. The case made global headlines as suspicion quickly fell on Knox and her boyfriend of just days, Raffaele Sollecito. But another man, Rudy Hermann Guede, from the Ivory Coast, was eventually convicted of murder after his DNA was found at the crime scene.

160 national security staffers are sent home

WASHINGTON (AP): President Donald Trump's national security adviser sidelined about 160 National Security Council aides, sending them home while the administration reviews staffing and tries to align it with Trump's agenda. The career government employees, commonly referred to as detailees, were summoned for an all-staff call and told they will be expected to be available to the council's senior directors but would not need to report to the White House. The council provides national security and foreign policy advice to the president.

Brian McCormack, chief of staff to national security adviser Mike Waltz, delivered the news in a two-minute phone call, telling the detailees they "are directed to be on call and report to the office only if contacted by the NSC leadership." "As anyone who has had the privilege of working here in the White

House knows, it's a tremendous honor to support the executive office of the president and the presidency itself," said McCormack, according to a recording of the call obtained by The Associated Press. "We also know that every president is entitled to have a staff and the advisers that they need to implement the goals that the American people elected him to pursue."

Trump, a Republican, is sidelining these nonpolitical experts on topics that range from counterterrorism to global climate policy at a time when the United States is dealing with a disparate set of complicated foreign policy matters, including conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. Such structuring could make new policy experts brought in to the NSC less likely to speak up about policy differences and concerns.

Waltz had signaled before Inauguration Day that he would look to return

holdover civil servants who worked in the council during President Joe Biden's administration to their home agencies. That was meant to ensure the council is staffed by those who support Trump's goals.

By the end of the review, Waltz will look to have a "more efficient, flatter" NSC, one official said. The officials declined to comment on the ultimate number of personnel - nonpolitical detailees as well as political appointees - whom Trump and Waltz would like to see as part of the council once the review is completed.

Officials said they have already begun bringing detailees from agencies with expertise that the new administration values, including some who had served during the first Trump administration. Some directors have made decisions to inform detailees they will be sent back to their home agencies.

Trump’s immigration policies will sow chaos

Michael Hiltzik

ON Jan. 7, the phones of immigration advocates in Bakersfield began lighting up with calls from immigrant farmworkers. The messages said the US Border Patrol was conducting an indiscriminate dragnet in the area, pulling over vehicles presumed to be carrying immigrants to work and taking dozens into custody.

To the advocates, this didn't seem right. The Border Patrol - a unit of US Customs and Border Protection - had not been seen operating in anyone's memory in Bakersfield, some 300 miles from the patrol's California offices in El Centro, a few miles from the Mexican border.

Although there are two detention centers in Bakersfield run by ICE - Immigration and Customs Enforcement - none of the detainees could be found in either one. The Border Patrol, a sister agency of ICE, staged its raids not at ICE installations, but out of a parking lot at a facility of the Interior Department, which has nothing to do with immigration or border security. The Border Patrol eventually asserted that it had conducted a four-day "targeted enforcement" operation aimed at undocumented immigrants with criminal records, ultimately detaining 78 individuals mostly for crimes such as drug trafficking, burglary and child abuse.

It's fair to say that almost no one familiar with the immigration ecosystem in Kern County, where Bakersfield is located - not immigration lawyers, United Farm Workers officials or employers - believes a word of this. The UFW and other sources estimate that some 200 people were detained in just the first two days, and 1,000 in all may have been detained and released. Rather than "targeted" enforcement, the Border Patrol conducted "random stops of vehicles exclusively founded on racial profiling of individuals," Ambar Tovar, director of legal services for the UFW Foundation, told me.

The officers raid locations where they knew they would find farmworkers gathering - such as at a Home Depot, where immigrant laborers come to seek day work, and along California Route 99, the highway traveled by immigrant farmworkers heading to their jobs. At some spots, where they were asked to show warrants naming targeted individuals, the officers simply drove away without answering. "They definitely seemed to be targeting agricultural workers and

day laborers," said Casey Creamer, president of California Citrus Mutual, the trade association for citrus growers.

Creamer said there have been no indications that immigrants in Kern County were responsible for a wave of violent crime, the ostensible justification for the raids. "The people who got targeted get up to go to work at 5 or 6 a.m.," he said. "They work hard and then go home to their families. That's incompatible with violent crime. Drug dealers aren't going out to harvest citrus."

One aspect of these raids elicits broad agreement: Their effect was to sow fear. "It's had a very chilling effect on the whole community," said Antonio De Loera-Brust, a spokesman for the UFW. "There's a lot of fear, a lot of anxiety for everyone with an undocumented loved one, which is a significant portion of the Latino community in Kern County." Creamer estimates that about 25% of immigrant workers in the area stayed home from work in the first day of the raids, and 75% afterward. That continued until Jan. 10, when word spread that the Border Patrol had left the county and gone back to El Centro. Until then, he said, "the raids sent shock waves through the entire Central Valley," the breadbasket of California and of the entire country. At the Mercado Latino Tianguis outside Bakersfield, a popular shopping spot for the Latino community, customers all but disappeared during the raids and about one-third of the businesses closed. The Border Patrol didn't respond to my request for further information about the raids.

It's hard to overestimate the impact that raids like these could have on California agriculture, which, like other states, is highly dependent on immigrant labor. The raids occurred as the harvesting of California oranges, mandarins and lemons was entering a peak period for fresh fruit. California accounts for about 90% of the domestic supply of oranges, mandarins, lemons and grapefruit.

About 20% of the estimated 24,000 citrus farm employees in California work in Kern County, Creamer says. In this case, he adds, the immediate impact was muted because the raids occurred over only four days and the schedule of citrus harvesting can be somewhat flexible. Yet "in the small farming towns outside Bakersfield, at gas stations and in the miles and miles

of fields, everyone seemed to know about the arrests," my colleagues Rachel Uranga and Andrea Castillo reported, "sowing fear among migrant families, many of whom had children or spouses that were born here" and consequently are American citizens.

Pupils from immigrant families stayed home from school. About 1 million children in California - 10% of the school-age population - have least one undocumented immigrant parent and about 115,000 are themselves undocumented. The Homeland Security Department hasn't disclosed who authorized the raids and why they took place. Although they were launched before Donald Trump's presidential inauguration, they impressed many as a harbinger of attacks on immigrants to come during his administration. They hint at Trump's preoccupation with illegal immigration.

The raids caught the community's elected representatives flatfooted. "I have received numerous calls from constituents expressing fear for their families' safety, and I do not support inciting concern," Rep. David Valadao (R-Hanford), said in a statement issued the Monday after the raids ended. "We can all agree known criminals should be expelled from the United States, but it is crucial that future operations are communicated clearly to avoid causing any further alarm among our farmworkers."

Gregory Bovino, chief of the Border Patrol's El Centro sector, boasted on social media about what he called "Operation Return to Sender," stating that 60 agents had been deployed in marked and unmarked vehicles. Bovino further asserted that his sector's "responsibility" stretches from the Mexican border north to the California-Oregon state line. That's true, up to a point. The Border Patrol claims the right to stage warrantless searches within 100 air miles of any external boundary of the US, including national boundaries and shorelines. That's a zone in which two-thirds of the US population lives, encompassing all of Florida, Hawaii, Maine, New Hampshire and Michigan; most of New York and more than half of California, including all its major cities.

What struck immigrant advocates about the raids was the sheer thuggishness of the operation, which dovetailed neatly with the uncompromising rhetoric about

immigration sounded by Trump during his campaign and in his inaugural speech Monday. Agents transported detainees from Bakersfield to El Centro, a drive that can take as long as six hours, instead of processing them locally, where they would be available for local legal advice and representation. Detainees said they were released in El Centro without transportation home.

Two UFW members were pressured into signing a form attesting to their voluntary departure from the US, then shipped over the border from El Centro to Mexicali, De Loera-Brust says. "That effectively waived their rights to a hearing or due process or legal representation, and allowed the Border Patrol to dump them in Mexicali," he said. "At that point, there's not much we can do. By the time we got our members a lawyer, they were already in Mexico and there was no case for our lawyers to argue."

The union says neither individual had a criminal history or an outstanding criminal warrant. "They were undocumented, but they were otherwise completely law-abiding, hardworking folks, the primary breadwinners for their families, leaving behind undocumented spouses and US citizen children who were born in this country," De Loera-Brust said. Agents in an unmarked car pulled over Ernesto Campos, the owner of a Bakersfield gardening service who was naturalized as a US citizen more than 10 years ago. According to a video Campos shot on the scene and that was aired on Bakersfield TV station KGET, the agents demanded that Campos' passenger, an undocumented employee step out of the truck. Campos informed them that the passenger already had an asylum hearing scheduled. Campos shut off his engine and gave the agents his driver's license.

Nevertheless, according to an exchange captured on the video, an agent slashed Campos' truck tires, which can be seen deflated on the video. When Campos asked why the agent had immobilized his vehicle, the agent replied, "I'm not going to argue with you, bro. You did what you did, I did what I did." He verified that Campos was a US citizen, but he was arrested on suspicion of "alien smuggling." Campos was released about four hours later. The border Patrol didn't respond to my request to identify the agent and explain his conduct.

The Los Angeles Times

What does Trump’s withdrawal from WHO mean for global health?

ON his first day back in the Oval Office, President Donald Trump revived his long-standing feud with the World Health Organization (WHO), signing an executive order to pull the US out of the global health body.

The decision, reminiscent of similar actions during Trump's first term in 2020, takes on renewed significance in light of current global health challenges. It marks a dramatic shift for Washington, which has historically been the WHO's largest donor and a key partner in international health initiatives. Trump has long criticized the WHO, accusing it of mismanaging global health efforts and failing to adequately represent American interests. His stance has not wavered.

World Health ripped us off. Everybody rips off the United States, and that's it. It's not going to happen anymore," Trump said at the signing of the executive order. The order cited the WHO's "mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic" which originated in China, as well as its "failure to adopt urgently needed reforms" and "inability to demonstrate independence from the inappropriate political influence of WHO member states."

This criticism mirrored grievances Trump expressed in 2020 during his first term, when he also sought to exit the WHO, citing its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. He accused the organization of failing to adequately obtain, vet, and share information about the virus promptly and transparently. He also claimed that, through mid-January 2020, the body echoed Chinese authorities' misleading assertions that there was no human-to-human transmission of the virus, despite mounting evidence.

Alleging that the WHO displayed "an alarming lack of independence" from China, he criticized its opposition to travel restrictions, saying it "actually fought" US efforts to limit the spread of the virus. Trump's initial bid to leave the WHO was reversed under President Joe Biden, but this renewed action underscores enduring political tensions between the US and the UN health body. Critics argue the move reflects a broader shift toward prioritizing domestic policies over global cooperation.

The US' prominent role within the WHO makes this decision even more consequential. Washington has

Beyza Binnur Dönmez

served as a cornerstone of the WHO since its founding in 1948. As the organization's largest single donor, the US contributed 18% of the WHO's 2023 budget, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars annually. These funds have supported critical initiatives, from eradicating diseases to responding to health emergencies in underserved regions. Trump's order also took issue with the US' leading role funding the organization, calling Washington's financial contributions "unfairly oner-

and private donors might step in to bridge the financial and leadership void, this shift could alter the agency's priorities, potentially steering focus away from areas where US influence once played a key role.

To mitigate the impact, the WHO is planning an investment round to diversify its funding base, seeking more sustainable contributions from member states and private entities, Jasarevic said. Domestically, the US could also face consequences. A withdrawal might leave Americans more vulnerable

The sudden funding shortfall could jeopardize key health programs such as vaccination campaigns, disease surveillance, and emergency responses - many of which depend heavily on US support. The departure could also weaken international coordination against global health threats, particularly in low-income regions reliant on WHO assistance.

ous" and "far out of proportion with other countries' assessed payments." Over the past decade, Washington's member dues and voluntary funding far surpassed those of other member states.

The WHO's budget for 2024-2025 stands at \$6.8 billion, with US contributions accounting for 22% of the mandatory funding - far outpacing any other donor. "Together, we ended smallpox, and together we have brought polio to the brink of eradication," WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic said in response to US' decision. "American institutions have contributed to and benefited from membership in WHO." If the withdrawal proceeds, its effects could ripple across the global health landscape, weakening international coordination, shifting alliances, and impacting Americans in return.

The sudden funding shortfall could jeopardize key health programs such as vaccination campaigns, disease surveillance, and emergency responses - many of which depend heavily on US support. The departure could also weaken international coordination against global health threats, particularly in low-income regions reliant on WHO assistance. While other countries

to global health emergencies, as reduced international cooperation could hinder efforts to contain outbreaks before they cross borders.

The withdrawal process is not immediate. It requires formal notification to the UN, followed by a transition period of up to a year, according to the WHO. Following the signing of the executive order, the WHO expressed hope that the US would reconsider its decision, highlighting decades of partnership and shared achievements.

In the meantime, the organization plans to diversify its funding sources to maintain stability. As the world grapples with urgent health challenges - ranging from pandemics and climate-related diseases to healthcare inequities - the US withdrawal raises critical questions about the future of global health governance. It remains unclear whether the WHO will be able to sustain its mission without its largest donor or if the decision will prompt other nations to re-evaluate their commitments to multilateral health cooperation. The coming months will shed light on the repercussions of this dramatic move - not just for the WHO, but for the global health landscape as a whole.

AA

Three possible explanations for Putin’s bravado

Alexander J. Motyl

DOES Russia's president know that his "special military operation" against Ukraine has turned into disaster for Russia? Or does he really think that he's winning? Russia has failed to reach its intended goals - the so-called "de-Nazification" of Ukraine and its transformation into a demilitarized Russian vassal. In fact, the exact opposite has occurred. Ukraine remains firmly committed to democracy and sovereignty. Ukrainians have become intensely patriotic and anti-Russian. Their armed forces are now arguably Europe's best, having managed to keep Russia's army at bay for three years.

Worse, Russia has suffered more than 800,000 dead or wounded, and at the current rate of attrition - roughly 1,500 per day - it will soon approach a million. Thousands of Russian tanks, artillery systems and aircraft have been destroyed. Russia's refineries, gas, petroleum and ammunition depots and critical infrastructure are being systematically degraded, forcing Moscow to rely on North Korea for weapons and soldiers. Parts of Kursk Province are still occupied by Ukrainians, and the Russian economy is headed for a disastrous per-

formance in 2025, as even Russian officials acknowledge.

Things are no less critical on the international front. Sanctions have crippled certain Russian economic sectors. NATO has expanded to include Finland and Sweden and is making serious noises about admitting Ukraine. Syria's pro-Russia dictatorial regime has fallen, Iran has been crippled and China has effectively become Russia's lord and master.

None of this looks like winning. Indeed, it looks like losing. And yet Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to assert that all is going well. There are three possible explanations for his bravado. First, he could be lying, as he, like so many politicians, is wont to do. Conditions are terrible and there's no one you can blame for the disastrous state of affairs. So, obviously, you pretend that retreat is advance and that defeat is victory. Soviet and Russian policymakers, not to mention agents of the secret police such as Putin, were especially adept at constructing Potemkin villages that created the illusion of normality amid death and destruction.

Lying has its pitfalls, as it

assumes that the public is too foolish to see the reality around it - legless soldiers, rampant inflation and the like. But Putin may not care whether his lies are believed. He may, like the late Soviet leadership, be concerned only with telling people what to say in public, so as to reinforce the Potemkin illusion. Second, it is possible that Putin doesn't know the true extent of the damage the war has wrought. Having constructed a "power vertical" with himself at the apex, he has almost certainly become victim of his own over-centralized systemic designs.

Typically, in such systems, underlings have a strong incentive to sugarcoat bad news as it moves up the ladder. Outright falsification and padding were typical of the Soviet system Putin knew so well. As a result, he may be reading reports and getting advice that paint a far rosier picture than the reality merits. If Putin's perceptions of reality deviate too much from the actual reality, he will obviously and inevitably make serious errors of judgment that could, either individually or cumulatively, result in disaster. His fateful decision to invade Ukraine in

2022 is arguably is one such instance, especially since he truly appears to have believed the invasion would be a cakewalk.

Third, Putin could be deluded, living in a parallel universe of his own, in which whatever he believes is true must be true. This would not be the first time a tyrant was so psychologically unbalanced and solipsistic in his regard of the world. Naturally, a deranged Russian leader, especially one armed with nuclear weapons, would be bad news for Russia, but also for Ukraine and the world. That Putin permits his sidekick Dmitri Medvedev to regularly threaten the West with incineration may suggest that the delusional explanation is not as outlandish as it at first appears.

What does this analysis imply for possible future negotiations with Russia? That Putin will play it tough, insisting that he has the upper hand. But his interlocutors should not be impressed. They will have to play it even tougher. Unfortunately, any hope of progress will require Putin to admit to Russia's weakness. That won't be easy, as it will require Putin admitting that he's a liar or has been lied to - in other words, that he is weak.

war in Ukraine, Rubio called it "unrealistic" for Ukraine to fully reclaim territory lost since the February 2022 invasion but stressed that the US should prioritize ending the war. (Trump previously promised to end the war just after taking office.)

Rubio noted his alignment with Trump on the need for a resolution and criticized the Biden administration for lacking a clear "end goal." "What (Russian President) Vladimir Putin has done is unacceptable, there's no doubt about it, but this war has to end, and I think it should be the official policy of the United States that we want to see it end," he added.

Last week, Rubio testified that both Russia and Ukraine must make concessions to resolve the conflict. He voted against \$95 billion in Ukraine aid in April and has called on Ukraine to negotiate a peace deal with Russia. The Biden administration opposed pushing Kyiv to negotiate a deal, saying such a decision must come from Ukraine itself. Trump himself is widely expected to cut or entirely eliminate aid to Ukraine.

Marco Rubio: Trump’s China hawk pick for secretary of state

Serdar Dincel

THE US Senate voted on Monday to confirm Senator Marco Rubio as the nation's new secretary of state, making him the first official in Donald Trump's administration to be approved since his return to the White House. The vote, just hours after Trump's swearing-in, was unanimous.

Rubio will take the post amid multiple global crises and conflicts, including Russia's war against Ukraine as well as ongoing wars in Gaza and Lebanon involving Israel. Rubio, a Republican senator from Florida since 2011, garnered bipartisan support for his nomination, with Senate Democrats praising his qualifications. Once a Trump rival, Rubio has since become an ally and will now take on a significant role in Trump's new administration.

Rubio, who ran for president in 2016 before dropping out and endorsing Trump, was also considered for Trump's 2024 vice presidential shortlist, according to media reports. Following his failed 2016 Republican Party presidential bid, Rubio bolstered his foreign policy expertise as the top

Republican on the powerful Senate Intelligence Committee, fostering bipartisan relationships. Poised to become the first Latino secretary of state, he is firmly against normalizing ties with Cuba, the communist-ruled island some 145 kilometers (90 miles) from Florida, and is known for his hard-line stance on China, Iran, and Venezuela. Florida has a large Cuban American community, one fiercely opposed to the island's communist government.

He is also a staunch supporter of Israel, and has consistently adopted hard-line positions. Earlier this year, he accused President Joe Biden of appealing to antisemites in the Democratic Party by criticizing Israel's actions in Gaza and urged the administration to revoke visas for foreign students involved in pro-Palestinian protests, labeling them "terrorist sympathizers."

Following an Iranian missile attack on Israel last October, he encouraged a strong Israeli response. Rubio's nomination was warmly received by Senate Democrats, with Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee, praising him during his confirmation hearing as "well-qualified."

He affirmed his strong support for NATO, citing a bipartisan law he co-sponsored which states that the US cannot leave the alliance without Senate approval or congressional action, a stance differing from that of Trump, known as a NATO-skeptic. Rubio also stressed the importance of taking a firm stance on China, calling the Chinese Communist Party a "potent" and "dangerous" adversary. "They're a technological adversary and competitor, an industrial competitor, an economic competitor, geopolitical competitor, a scientific competitor now, in every realm, it's an extraordinary challenge and one that I believe will define the 21st century," he said.

"We've allowed them to get away with things, and frankly the Chinese did what any country in the world would do given these opportunities, they took advantage of it, so now we're dealing with the ramifications of it." On Russia's

dollar gift. Republicans must figure out how to engage with low-dollar donors and speak in their terms, even if it translates to "only" \$5 here and \$5 there. Most voters are with Republicans on issues like the economy and immigration, but candidates and campaigns still need to go out of their way to bring them into the fold. On the left, there is much talk about economic populism and Democrats embracing the Bernie Sanders model for presidential politics in future races. But Republicans can and should take their own cues from the Sanders campaigns of 2016 and 2020, when the Vermont senator used low-dollar fundraising to become a national sensation. The Sanders campaign relied primarily on donations under \$50 a pop, attracting millions of voters who feel alienated by the Washington, D.C. establishment and seek attention from political forces like Sanders or Trump.

Despite the 2024 victory, it is not sustainable going forward for Republicans to trail Democrats by a three-to-one margin in any metric. Losing to a \$1.5 billion candidate is a short-term win, but what does it say about the long run? What happens if the Democrats get similar funding, but put up a much stronger nominee? The Republican Party must focus on building deeper relationships with small dollar donors and drawing new donors into the GOP so we increase the number of new donors. The foundation for low-dollar success needs to be laid now - before victory turns into inevitable defeat. Will Republicans learn in time?



Promoting access to universal education by 2047 Hashoo Foundation launches Pakistan 100 for 100' initiative

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Hashoo Foundation, in collaboration with Sunbeams, proudly launched the transformative Pakistan 100 for 100 Movement (PK100).

The movement aims to promote access to universal education for every citizen in Pakistan by its centennial in 2047.

As the technical lead partner, Hashoo Foundation is building on over three decades of dedicated efforts to promote inclusive access to education, marking a significant milestone in the nation's journey towards a brighter future.

The PK100 pilot project will launch in Islamabad, beginning with a Union Council-level approach and gradually expanding to a district-wide model.

This phased rollout will provide a replicable framework for nationwide implementation, laying the groundwork for universal access to quality education across Pakistan.

The launch event brought together eminent dignitaries, including

Murtaza Hashwani, Deputy Chairman and CEO Hashoo Group and Chairman Hashoo Foundation; Haris Qayyum Khan, CEO of Hashoo Foundation; and Ainee Nasir Jamy, Founder and Chairperson of Sunbeams, alongside leading academics, policymakers, and government officials.

At the event, Haris Qayyum Khan, CEO Hashoo Foundation, said: "The Pakistan 100 for 100 Movement is a natural extension of Hashoo Foundation's mission to leverage knowledge as capital for socio-economic uplift. PK100 represents a major leap forward in achieving our vision of an inclusive and equitable education system."

Reflecting on the initiative, Murtaza Hashwani, Chairman Hashoo Foundation, shared: "Hashoo Foundation has always been at the forefront of social development, with a legacy built on empowering individuals through education, skills, and opportunities.

This project is particularly close to my heart, as

it carries forward our decades-long commitment to education and aligns with our vision to invest in the youth, the leaders of tomorrow."

Ainee Nasir Jamy, Founder and Chairperson of Sunbeams, highlighted the urgency of this initiative, emphasizing the need to address the challenge of out-of-school children in light of the Prime Minister's declaration of a national education emergency. "According to recent reports, over 25 million children aged 5-16 are not attending school, making Pakistan home to the second-largest number of out-of-school children globally," she said.

"These alarming statistics underscore the critical need for systemic reforms, infrastructural advancements, and targeted interventions like the Pakistan 100 for 100 Movement."

About Hashoo Foundation: Since its establishment in 1988, the Hashoo Foundation has pioneered knowledge-based progress across Pakistan.

Its initiatives span education, health, climate

action, sustainability, and community development, with impactful partnerships with the UN, INGOs, government entities, and the private sector. Through its holistic approach, the foundation continues to create opportunities that transform lives and communities.

About Sunbeams:

Sunbeams is a transformative non-profit organization committed to providing quality education to underprivileged children across Pakistan. Since its inception 10 years ago with a single school in Lahore, Sunbeams has expanded to 150 schools across 12 districts, impacting 15,000 children.

On January 1st, 2025, Sunbeams launched the Pakistan 100 for 100 initiative, a bold mission to achieve 100% literacy in Islamabad by 2027 and nationwide by 2047.

Through affordable education, essential supplies, and community empowerment, Sunbeams aims to break the cycle of poverty and uplift entire communities.

Join us in building a brighter, more literate Pakistan.



KARACHI: Muhammad Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Chairman FPCCI and Advisor on Trade and Investment Pak-Vietnam, and Ahmed Kapadia, Chairman PAA after a meeting to discuss future collaboration plans between the two organizations. Ahmed Kapadia also presenting his book *Executive Doodles* to Ghazanfar Ali Khan.

AmEx beats revenue expectations on holiday season spending

NEW YORK (Reuters): American Express (AXP.N), opens new tab on Friday beat Wall Street revenue expectations, as more consumers swiped its cards during the holiday season for travel and online shopping.

A strong holiday season against the backdrop of a falling rate environment helped AmEx sustain spending volumes.

AmEx, which mostly caters to wealthy consumers, has been able to better navigate economic uncertainty compared to some of its peers, as higher-earning individuals are less sensitive to inflation and elevated borrowing costs.

New York-based AmEx's revenue rose 9% to \$17.18 billion in the three months ended Dec. 31, edging past expectations of \$17.16 billion, according to data compiled by LSEG.

Billed business, a measure of spending on AmEx cards, rose 8% to \$408.4 billion in the fourth quarter.

PPL achieves significant increase in gas production



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) has successfully increased gas production from its Shahdad X-1 well in the Gambat South Block, Sindh. This significant achievement was made possible through an innovative water shut-off operation, marking a first for the Gambat South Block, as well as the introduction of acid-soluble cement technology—a first for PPL.

Following the operation, the gas flow rate from Shahdad X-1 has surged from 2.2 MMscfd to 8.4 MMscfd, an increase of

over 280%. In addition, water production has been dramatically reduced, from 3,000 bbl/d to a mere 26 bbl/d, demonstrating PPL's expertise in optimizing well performance and resource recovery.

Originally drilled in 2012 and brought into production in 2015, Shahdad X-1 was initially producing 26 MMscfd of gas. However, by 2024, the well experienced a significant decline in production due to an increase in water production, caused by inter-layer crossflow. To address this issue, PPL commissioned a Production Logging Tool (PLT) survey in August

2024, which confirmed the need for remedial action.

In response, PPL worked with a coiled tubing service provider to deploy the acid-soluble cement technology, effectively isolating the water-producing zones and restoring optimal gas flow. This successful operation underscores PPL's technical innovation, operational excellence, and commitment to enhancing production from its mature fields.

Lost & Found

I Zarghuna Altaf W/o Altaf Qadir khattak, Resident of Hayatabad Peshawar. I have lost my DHA Peshawar plot allocation letter. File no. B/RES/4608. size 500 sq yds phase 1. If someone finds the Document please Contact: 0334 8297709

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Haleem Civil Judge V/Ilaqa Qazi Buner at Dagger/Suit No 299/1. Institution 2/12/2024. Date of hearing: 8/2/2025. Perdad Khan VS Amir Akbar Notice to No .5.Anwar Ali. 7.Aman Ali sons.8.Mst Nasem Akhtar d/o Fazal Akbar resident of Bajkatta thesl Gagra district Buner.Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 8/2/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Public Notice

Public at large in informed that Pir Muhammad Khan S/O Muhammad Akram Khan is the owner of plot No 53 sector 4 C/V 1-kanal zone 4 Regi Model Town Peshawar. He has lost original documents of the said plot .If some one found he shall informed the undersigned .Moreover ,if any person attorney holder or any financial institution has any objection on it,he /it should contact the undersigned on given phone / cell number ,after publication of this advertisement with in 15 days. Otherwise duplicate papers shall be issued & later on no claim shall be entertained.

Housing officer (HO) phone / cell No: 03005875733 Regi Model Town zone 4 PDA Peshawar

Expansion and upgradation of airports across Pakistan in full swing: DG PAA

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) is reconstructing the second runway at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport (JIAP), as it has lived its useful life. The project is well underway and aims to enhance operational efficiency and safety at Pakistan's busiest airport.

Simultaneously, extensive expansion and upgradation projects are in progress at Sukkur, Skardu, and Dera Ghazi Khan Airports to enable operations of larger aircraft and better passenger experience.

Furthermore, a new greenfield airport is in the planning phase for Dera Ismail Khan, marking a significant step in advancing Pakistan's aviation infrastructure.

These announcements were made during the second e-Kacheri presided over by Acting Director

General PAA Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed.

He was accompanied by Deputy Director General Airports Sadiq UR REHMAN and Directors from key directorates.

The session addressed passenger concerns and operational challenges, reaffirming PAA's commitment to enhancing airport services and infrastructure.

Issues discussed included improving the queue management system at Islamabad International Airport, improving motorcycle parking facilities at Multan International Airport, and operational queries for Hyderabad and Parachinar Airports.

DG PAA issued specific instructions for immediate resolution, emphasizing

PAA's role as the steward of airport operations, dedicated to delivering safe, efficient, and passenger-friendly facilities.

The DG expressed gratitude to participants for their valuable feedback, stating that passenger insights are integral to driving continuous improvement in service delivery and operational excellence.



Wall St set for lower open with focus on economic data

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Wall Street's main stock indexes were set to open lower on Friday, with investors staying cautious ahead of economic data, while planemaker Boeing dropped after issuing a quarterly profit warning.

At 8:42 a.m. ET, Dow E-minis were down 105 points, or 0.23%, S&P 500 E-minis were down 10.75 points, or 0.17%, and Nasdaq 100 E-minis were down 37 points, or 0.17%.

In premarket trading, Boeing (BA.N), opens new tab lost 1.6% after warning that it expects a fourth-quarter loss of about \$4 billion. The company is expected to report quarterly results on Tuesday.

NextEra Energy (NEE.N), opens new tab dropped 1.6% after reporting a decline in its fourth-quarter profit, hurt by weakness in its renewables segment.

Later in the day, markets will assess a preliminary private survey on manufacturing and services activity for January and the University of Michigan's final estimate on consumer sentiment.

Tariffs are high on investors' minds after President Donald Trump referred to the policies multiple times at separate events this week but did little to lay out entire details of the surcharges he plans to impose on trade partners of the United States.

The president has said

tariffs on Mexico, Canada, China and the European Union could be announced on Feb. 1, but analysts say major plans could be announced on April 1 - the date by when federal agencies are expected to complete reviews of a range of trade issues.

Investors have negatively reacted to reports about potential tariffs, on worries that they could spark a global trade war, add to inflation pressures and slow the pace of interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve. The central bank is expected to leave interest rates unchanged next week at its first policy meeting of the year.

However, Ross Mayfield, investment strategist at Baird, said "our view has been from the beginning that the concern about Trump inflation was overstated."

"There could be a slight upward pull on inflation from certain tariffs and

maybe from immigration policies leading to higher wages, but there's also a downward pull from deregulation and more pro energy policies."

Investors were also taking a pause after the benchmark S&P 500 (.SPX), opens new tab closed Thursday's session at a record high for the second time in over a month after Trump called for taxes, oil prices and interest rates to be lowered at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

On a weekly basis, Wall Street's main indexes are set for their second straight week of advances, with the blue-chip Dow (.DJI), opens new tab on track for its biggest weekly jump since October 2022, aided by Trump's artificial intelligence investment plans, signs of cooling inflation and robust earnings from big banks in the previous week.

Among others, Texas

Instruments (TXN.O), opens new tab dropped 4.4% after forecasting first-quarter profit below analysts' estimates.

American Express (AXP.N), opens new tab reported a 12% jump in fourth-quarter profit. Its shares, however, fell 0.6%.

V e r i z o n Communications (VZ.N), opens new tab was up 0.9% on higher-than-expected fourth-quarter subscriber additions.

The following week will see quarterly reports from megacaps such as Microsoft (MSFT.O), opens new tab, Meta (META.O), opens new tab, Apple (AAPL.O), opens new tab and Tesla (TSLA.O), opens new tab.

U.S.-listed shares of Chinese companies such as JD.Com rose 3.1%, Xpeng added 2.7% and Alibaba climbed 1.1% after Trump suggested in an interview that tariffs against China could be avoided.



Weekly inflation goes down by 0.77pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), went down by 0.77 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on January 16 and decelerated to 0.52 percent on year-on-year (YoY) basis, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 320.21 points as compared to 322.71 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 0.52 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed

decrease of 1.04 per cent and went down to 311.47 points from last week's 314.75 points.

The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, declined by 0.97 percent, 0.83 percent, 0.80 percent and 0.70 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 14 (27.45%) items increased, 12 (23.53%) items decreased and 25 (49.02%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded major decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (32.99%), eggs (10.23%), onions (9.79%), potatoes (7.37%), LPG (2.70%), pulse gram (1.61%), chicken (1.00%), pulse mash (0.76%) and gur (0.50%).

The commodities which recorded major increase in their average prices on week-on-week basis included sugar (2.93%), bananas (2.70%), garlic (0.60%), rice basmati bro-

ken (0.47%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.33%), pulse moong (0.25%), cooked daal (0.21%), rice irri-6/9 (0.15%) and firewood (0.13%).

On-year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included onions (51.59%), eggs (39.15%), tomatoes (37.43%), wheat flour (36.29%), chilies powder (20.00%), electricity charges for q1 (18.11%), pulse masoor (11.01%), pulse mash (10.27%), rice basmati broken (8.56%), diesel (5.47%), lpg (1.79%) and petrol (1.18%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included ladies sandal (75.09%), potatoes (44.30%), pulse gram (37.98%), pulse moong (32.67%), powdered milk (25.89%), beef (22.37%), vegetable ghee 1kg (16.87%), garlic (16.28%), gas charges for q1 (15.52%), shirting (14.83%), vegetable ghee 2.5kg (14.54%) and firewood (0.13%).

Cutlery exports increase 9.43% to \$30.901 in 1HFY2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of cutlery witnessed an increase of 9.43 percent during the first half of fiscal year 2024-25, as against the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

The cutlery exports from the country were recorded at US \$30.901 million during July-December (2024-25) against the exports of US \$28.239 million during July-December (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the cutlery exports witnessed a nominal decline of 1.82 percent during the month of December 2024 as compared to the same month of last year.

The exports of cutlery from the country during December 2024 were recorded at US \$4.756 million against the exports of US \$4.844 million in December 2023.



In brief

Marathon to take place on Jan 26

ISLAMABAD (APP): Founder of the Islamabad Run with Us community, Qasim Naz announced on Friday that the fifth Islamabad Marathon will take place on January 26, with the participation of over 3,000 athletes from across Pakistan and abroad. The marathon has been divided into five categories: a full marathon, a half marathon, a children's race, a family race, and a senior race, said a press release, adding that the event has been gaining international recognition since its inception in 2020. He also stated that a prize of one million rupees has been allocated for winners in all categories. The marathon would be started from New Iran Enclave at 9 am, with the route extending to GT Road before returning to the starting point, the organizer said. He also added that a pitch system would be introduced to ensure transparency, enabling real-time tracking of athletes and accurate identification of winners. He said that the purpose of organizing the event is to showcase Pakistan's soft image and highlight the country's beauty to the world. The arrangements of medical and other facilities for participants would also be made, with full cooperation from the district administration and police to ensure the race runs smoothly, Naz said.

Sharma flops in Ranji Trophy

NEW DELHI (INP): Indian skipper Rohit Sharma's struggles with the bat continued as he failed to play a big inning in his first outing in Ranji Trophy after nine years. The right-handed batter returned to domestic cricket following his dismal outing in the Test home series against New Zealand last year, followed by his disastrous run against Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Rohit Sharma could amass just 31 runs across five innings of the series at an average of 6.2. He played three out of the five Border-Gavaskar Tests, having missed the first due to personal reasons while he 'opted out' of the final Test due to his form woes. India lost the five-game Border-Gavaskar Trophy series 1-3, leading the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to make all-round changes in its cricketing structure. Among the newly-introduced measures, the BCCI made it mandatory for players to participate in domestic cricket to be considered for selection in the Indian national side. Following the BCCI measures, Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and other top Indian players confirmed their availability for the second half of the ongoing Ranji Trophy. The Indian captain made his first appearance for Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy nine years after his last appearance in the tournament. However, Rohit Sharma disappointed in his first outing in his team's game against Jammu and Kashmir at BKC Ground, Mumbai. The Indian captain could manage to score just three runs off 19 deliveries before he was dismissed by young bowler Umar Nazir. Nazir bowled a length delivery, leading Rohit Sharma to get after him, however, the ball got a leading edge to hand Paras Dogra a simple catch at mid-off.



MULTAN: Pakistan Test interim head coach Aqib Javed addressing a press conference ahead of the second Test Cricket Match against West Indies at Multan Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan stick with spin as they chase West Indies series sweep

MULTAN (AFP): Head coach Aaqib Javed brushed aside criticism of Pakistan's reliance on spin bowling as they seek a clean sweep against the West Indies in the second Test starting on Saturday. Pakistan completed a 127-run win inside three days in the opening Test, with spinners Sajid Khan taking nine wickets, Noman Ali six and Abrar Ahmed five for their third straight win at home. West Indies left-arm spinner Jomel Marmouth also grabbed a career-best 7-32 as 34 of the 40 wickets in the match went to spinners. The second Test will also be played on a dry and grassless pitch in the central city of Multan. Former Pakistan players and analysts hit out at the spin-heavy strategy, saying the team would struggle on away tours where pitches may not be as conducive to spin.

Aaqib, a fast bowler from an era dominated by the great pacemen Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis,

insisted the spin assault would continue. "We found that the West Indies have a weakness in dealing with the spin bowling, so we exploited that and will do that again," Aaqib told a news conference on Friday. West Indies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite had no qualms about Pakistan's tactics. "Pakistan are playing at home and if they believe spinning pitches are their strength then that's fine and that's how cricket is played," Brathwaite said. "I have played on pitches which took turn from day one but not like this, which had cracks from day one," he said. "Believe in your plan" - West Indies will be without injured pace bowler Jayden Seales, who took three wickets in the first match and will be replaced by the experienced Kemar Roach. Pakistan are unlikely to make any changes. Brathwaite said his batters need more faith after the first Test, in which his team managed just 137 and 123 in their two innings, with Alick

Athanaze the only one to reach a half century. "It was a difficult pitch to bat in the last game," Brathwaite said. "I would say you need to believe in your plan from ball one and not think of the third or fourth ball." Pakistan are eighth and the West Indies ninth and last on the World Test Championship table. Another victory in Multan could see the hosts rise to seventh. Pakistan were forced to make radical changes last year after losing the first of three Tests against England, their 11th straight home Test without a win. The Aaqib-led selection panel dropped out-of-form batter Babar Azam and rested pace spearheads Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah. The tactics worked on the spin-friendly pitches in Rawalpindi and Pakistan went on to win the series 2-1. "If we had taken these decisions earlier we would have been in the race for World Test Championship final," Aaqib said.

Brathwaite aims for strong comeback in 2nd test against Pakistan



MULTAN (APP): West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite is determined to bounce back in the second Test against Pakistan, vowing to level the series.

Speaking a press conference at Multan Cricket Stadium, Brathwaite emphasized the need for his team to show resilience and confidence despite the challenges posed by spin-friendly pitches. He said that the team will try to put up a bigger score this time. The pitch in the previous match was very difficult, but the players need to trust themselves and play courageously adding that the aim was to win this match and level the series.

The skipper confirmed that veteran pacer Kemar Roach has been added to the team, bringing experience to their bowling attack. He acknowledged Pakistan's strategic use of spin-friendly home conditions but maintained optimism. "Pakistan was capitalizing on their home advantage with these spinning tracks and it works well for them, however, we have prepared for this challenge," he maintained.

Brathwaite praised left-arm spinner Jomel Marmouth for his exceptional performance in the first Test and expressed confidence in his ability to shine again. "Warrican bowled brilliantly in the first Test and we expect him to deliver once more. We were also prepared for another spinning track as we have worked on tackling spinners during our practice sessions."

The West Indies will look to adapt and overcome the tough conditions as they aim to turn the series around and leave Pakistan with a hard-fought draw.

We are close in the table, even with the big problems we have had. The next two games are finals. Chelsea and after that Brugge," Guardiola said. "Chelsea have improved a lot under Enzo. I recognised it from day one when we played in the summer. I was lucky to work with him in the last years."

Djokovic exits Melbourne to boos as Sinner sets up Zverev final

MELBOURNE (AFP): Novak Djokovic retired injured from his Australian Open semi-final against Alexander Zverev on Friday and left the court to boos, with defending champion Jannik Sinner to face the German for the title.

Top-ranked Sinner blew past Ben Shelton 7-6 (7/2), 6-2, 6-2 despite some late cramp in the second semi-final in Melbourne to set up a meeting between the Italian and second seed Zverev.

The Rod Laver Arena crowd jeered Djokovic, who played with a heavily taped leg, when he called it a day after losing a gruelling first set against Zverev, leaving his bid for a record 25th Grand Slam crown in tatters.

The 37-year-old Serbian great shook hands after going down 7-6 (7/5) and said he had been hampered by a muscle tear.

Djokovic, the last of the "Big Three" following the retirements of Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, hinted that he may have played his last Australian Open.

"There is a chance. Who knows?" Djokovic said when asked if he may have graced for the last time the Melbourne Park courts where he is a 10-time champion.

"I normally like to come to Australia to play. I've had the biggest success in my career here. So if I'm fit, healthy, motivated, I don't see a reason why I wouldn't come," he added. Djokovic has now gone five Grand Slams without winning the



title he needs to surpass Margaret Court's 24 and become the all-time leader.

In the other semi-final, Sinner had to save two set points in a tight opening act that lasted a marathon 71 minutes and he suffered in the latter stages after long rallies against his high-octane American opponent. "I had some tension today, slightly cramps," Sinner admitted. "But he was also suffering today a little bit in his legs." Once Sinner grittily snared the opening set on a tiebreak he took only another 85 minutes to win the next two sets against 22-year-old Shelton.

"For three sets, two and a half hours is quite a time. So happy to finish today in three," the Italian said. "But, you know, as I said, I'm very happy to be back in the finals and then we see what is coming Sunday."

"Stop blaming Novak" Djokovic had been ominously warming to the task before he suffered a leg muscle tear during his victory over Carlos Alcaraz in the quarter-finals.

"I actually thought I played really well, as well as I played the last 12 months," he said of his run at the first major of the year, where he had old rival Andy Murray in his coaching corner for the first time. "I liked my chances if I was physically fit and ready to battle." Zverev leapt to the defence of the Serb after some in the crowd made clear their feelings about his premature exit. "I think we should stop blaming Novak," he said.

"Novak has done absolutely everything he could on the tennis court in the last 20 years," he added.

Sinner is on the cusp of a first successful Grand Slam title defence after winning his maiden major crown in Melbourne last year. He had won the last four of his five career meetings with Shelton. The Italian was not at his best in the opening set, dropping his serve twice and having to dig deep to save two set points with Shelton serving at 6-5. But the 23-year-old easily took control of the tiebreak to move a set ahead.

He broke Shelton right at the start of the second and ran away with it. The American roused himself for one last effort in the third, lashing running forehand winners in an attempt to turn the tide. Sinner was not moving freely by now, but he saved two break points and when Shelton then dropped his serve to go 3-2 down, the Italian upped the ante and sprinted to the finish line.

England's Billings guides Thunder to Big Bash final



SYDNEY (Agencies): Sam Billings led Sydney Thunder to the Big Bash final with a four-wicket victory against city rivals Sydney Sixers in the Challenger.

The Kent and England wicketkeeper ended 42 not out from 29 balls to complete an anxious chase of 152 with seven balls to spare.

Thunder, who finished bottom of the table last season, will travel to Hobart Hurricanes for Monday's final. Hurricanes - who have never won the Big Bash - topped the table, while Thunder have reached their first final since lifting their only title in 2016.

Sixers, with home advantage at the Sydney Cricket Ground after finishing a place higher than Thunder in second, were indebted to Jordan Silk for their 151-7. After the home side were reduced to 76-5 in the 13th over, Silk made 43 not out from 30 balls, supported by 30 from Ben Dwarshuis, to keep Sixers competitive.

Thunder stuttered in the chase, particularly against

Yorkshire leg-spinner Jafer Chohan, who conceded only one boundary in his 1-22.

With 19 needed from 18 balls, Billings whipped Hayden Kerr over the leg side for six then Nathan McAndrew took two fours and a winning six off Dwarshuis to complete the victory.

"It's brilliant," said Billings. "I don't think we played a perfect game, but hopefully we're saving that for Monday."

Billings had praise for Thunder captain David Warner, the leading run-scorer in the tournament following his retirement from international cricket.

"It's infectious, his attitude, and the way he approaches the game," said Billings. "As an Englishman saying that, a few people back home will be questioning me."

"To play alongside him, you learn every day and see why he's one of the best players to have ever played this format of the game. To have that experience and leadership, he's played brilliantly this year."

Frankfurt sign Wahi as Marmoush replacement

FRANKFURT (AFP): Eintracht Frankfurt have found a replacement for forward Omar Marmoush, with the Bundesliga club announcing on Friday the signing of Marseille's France U21 forward Elye Wahi until 2030.

Marmoush, who scored 15 goals and laid on 10 assists in 17 league games for Frankfurt, departed the club for Premier League side Manchester City on Thursday for a reported fee of 68 million euros (£59 million (\$72.6 million)).

Frankfurt did not disclose how much they paid for Wahi, but German media reported he arrived for a fee of 20 million euros, rising to 25 million with bonuses.

The 22-year-old Wahi has three goals and an assist in 13 Ligue 1 games this season. He joined the French giants from Lens in August 2024.

"I wanted to take the chance and come here," said Wahi. "I want to repay the trust that has been placed in me with good performances and goals."

In recent seasons, Frankfurt have had a strong record of replacing departed forward talents. Randal Kolo Muani, Luka Jovic, Sebastian Haller, Jesper Lindstrom and Andre Silva have all left the club on big-money deals over the past five seasons.

Frankfurt, who sit third in the league, play away at Hoffenheim on Sunday.

Shaheen, Rauf and Saim make to ICC ODI Team of the Year 2024

LAHORE (APP): The terrific trio of Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf and Saim Ayub have been rewarded for their consistent performance throughout the year and inducted into the Men's ODI Team of the Year 2024, announced by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday. The ICC is due to announce the honors amongst men and women cricketers in all three formats during the next five days from January 24 to January 28 during. The ICC announced winners of the Men's ODI Team of the Year, Women's ODI Team of the Year and Men's Test Team of the Year today. Four Sri Lankan, three Pakistani, Three Afghani and one West Indies cricketers are amongst the ricketers to make a place in the eleven. ICC Men's ODI Team of the Year2024: Saim Ayub, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis (WK), Charith Asalanka (C), Sherfane Rutherford, Azmatullah Omarzai, Wanindu Hasaranga, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf, AM Ghazanfar. The rising opening batter Saim Ayub played 9 matches and scored 515 runs at an average of

64.37 and strike rate of 105.53 with the highest score of 113 not out. He scored 3 centuries and one half-century during the period. The ICC wrote, "What a breakout season it's been for the Pakistan southpaw, capped off by selection at the top of the order in the ICC Men's ODI Team of the Year. Saim only debuted in November, but arrived immediately, scoring a combined 125 runs from three One-Day Internationals in Australia, before scoring a maiden ODI ton in Zimbabwe shortly after. Three of his last five innings have produced centuries, including two in South Africa in December, a three-match series that saw him average 78.3." The left arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi played only 6 ODIs during the year but bagged 15 wickets at a bowling average of 17.6 with the best bowling of 4-47. Acknowledging Afridi's big impact, the ICC defined him as the one "Possessing one of world cricket's best bowling strike rates, he continued to prove himself as one of the most consistent performers at the international level."

While Haris Rauf grabbed 13 wickets in 8 matches at an average of 22.4 with the best bowling figures of 5-29 and was praised by the ICC for "finishing 2024 firing on all cylinders, taking 10 wickets across Pakistan's three-ODI series in Australia, which included his five-for in Adelaide – a contest the touring team ended up winning comfortably. No Pakistani cricketers could make to the ICC Men's Test Team of the Year 2024 and the Women's ODI Team of the year. The ICC will announce awards in the following four categories tomorrow (Saturday) including Women's T20I Team of the Year, Men's T20I Team of the Year, ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year and ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year. Babar Azam will compete for the coveted ICC Men's T20I cricket of the Year 2024 award. ICC Men's Test Team of the Year: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ben Duckett, Kane Williamson, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Kamindu Mendis, Jamie Smith (WK), Ravindra Jadeja, Pat Cummins (C), Matt Henry, Jasprit Bumrah. ICC Women's ODI Team of the Year:

Smriti Mandhana, Laura Wolvaardt (C), Chamarti Athapaththu, Hayley Matthews, Marizanne Kapp, Ashleigh Gardner, Annabel Sutherland, Amy Jones (WK), Deepti Sharma, Sophie Ecclestone, Kate Cross. The remaining 10 individual awards will be announced in the following sequence between January 26 and January 28. Sunday 26 January ICC Umpire of the Year ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Year ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Year ICC Emerging Men's Cricketer of the Year ICC Emerging Women's Cricketer of the Year Monday 27 January ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year Tuesday 28 January Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year.



In brief

AIOU celebrates int'l day of education

ISLAMABAD (APP): "Education is essential for peace and development. Peace is inherent in human nature, and education refines it. All religions, values, and societies in the world are balanced," expressed Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University, as the chief guest at an event held to mark the International Day of Education. He remarked, "If hatred begins with words, peace begins with education. What a person learns in this world changes their perspective, and it is through education that we determine how to interact with others." The theme for this year's International Day of Education is Artificial Intelligence and Education, and Allama Iqbal Open University, leveraging its modern educational system, is incorporating contemporary programs into student curricula. This ensures that Pakistani students do not lag behind in the race with developed nations and can contribute to the country's progress. The event was attended by Prof. Dr. Fazal Rahman, Dean of the Faculty of Education, along with all faculty members. A cake-cutting ceremony was held to commemorate the day, and Assistant Professor Dr. Afshan Huma presented her post-doctoral research on the subject of Peace Education.

Police capture 9 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police, during its actions against criminals on Friday, captured 10 accused including drug peddlers, liquor suppliers and illegal arms owners. According to a police spokesman, six accused were held with more than 6 kilograms charas. The Saddar Baruni Police recovered 1.7 kg charas from accused Saqib, while the Wah Saddar Police arrested the accused Arsalan Siddique with 1.42 kg of the contraband item and the Banni Police nabbed accused Amjad Noor with 1.303 kg charas. Likewise, the New Town and Ganjmandi Police recovered 560 grams charas each from accused Nazakat and Ehsan respectively, while the City Police arrested accused Zohaib with 540 grams of contraband item. Similarly, the Sadiqabad Police netted accused Sajid for having a 30 bore pistol and ammunition, Abdul Rehman with 15 litres of liquor. The Mandra Police also held accused Shahzeb with a 30 bore pistol and ammunition, while Bani Police recovered 5 litres of liquor from Bilal.

Police organize awareness walk

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani here on Friday organized a walk to sensitize the masses regarding the hazards and prevention of kite flying. The awareness walk was conducted in the areas of Wah Cantt and Taxila Police Stations. A large number of traders, students, citizens and Station House Officers (SHOs) participated in the awareness walk. The aim of the walk was to provide awareness to the citizens about the harms of the kite flying and its prevention. Special awareness pamphlets were distributed during the walk and awareness banners were also displayed at different points. The kite flying is a dangerous game and it's a crime. After the amendment in the law, kite flying is a non-bailable crime, which could be punished with imprisonment from 03 to 07 years and a fine of Rs 500,000 to 5 million.

Minister reviews plan for upcoming events to be held on Kashmir Solidarity Day

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON (States and Frontier Regions) Engr Amir Muqam on Friday said Kashmir Solidarity Day would be observed on February 5 to express wholehearted support of Pakistani nation to the just struggle of Kashmiri people for their inalienable right to self-determination.

Addressing the third inter-ministerial and inter-provincial coordination meeting for Kashmir Solidarity, the minister said that thousands of Kashmiris have lost their lives and thousands more are languishing in Indian jails.

However, atrocities and humiliations have not deterred them from a cause based on their legitimate aspiration of their right of self-determination as enshrined in the UN Charter and UNSC Resolutions.

Paying tribute to Kashmiri martyrs, he said the entire nation will observe Kashmir Solidarity Day with a renewed com-

mitment to support the just struggle of Kashmiris for their inalienable right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Engr Ami Muqam said the incumbent government under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was highlighting the Kashmir issue at all appropriate platforms including United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

He asked all parliamentary parties and people from all walks of life to participate on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5 to give a strapping message to India that the government and people of Pakistan were united on the Kashmir cause.

He said Pakistan would continue to extend political, moral and diplomatic support to the people of Kashmir till they achieve the right to self-determination as per UN resolutions.

The meeting discussed and reviewed the comprehensive plan for the upcoming events to be held on

February 5 Kashmir Solidarity Day. Federal ministries, all four provincial governments including Azad Jammu Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan briefed the meeting regarding the preparations and arrangements for Kashmir Solidarity Day.

In his remarks, Convener All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Ghulam Muhammad Safi said that Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan. He said Kashmiri martyrs are wrapped in the flag of Pakistan before burial.

Safi underscored the determination of the Kashmiri people to continue their struggle against Indian illegal occupation. Despite India's conspiracies and atrocities, they declared that the spirit of the Kashmiris remains strong and they would never bow to India.

He said APHC would organize special events on February 6 to express gratitude to the people and government of Pakistan for observing February 5 as Kashmir Solidarity Day.



ISLAMABAD: Azerbaijan's Minister for Defence Industry, H.E. Vugar Mustafayev, visits Pakistan Monument Museum on the occasion of Pakistan-Azerbaijan 8th Joint Commission Meeting. —APP Photo

Senate refers key bills to standing committee for review

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan on Friday referred the key bills including the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2025 and the Digital Nation Pakistan Bill, 2025, to the relevant standing committee for further examination, directing the committee to submit their reports within three days.

Additionally, the P a k i s t a n Telecommunication (Re-O r g a n i z a t i o n)

(Amendment) Bill, 2025 and the National Commission for Minorities Bill, 2025 were also referred to the respective committees for fine-tuning and detailed review. All the bills were moved by the Federal Minister for Law, Justice, and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar.

Earlier, the proceedings began with Senator Sherry Rehman, Parliamentary Leader of Pakistan People's Party moved a motion seeking the per-

mission of the House to suspend the question hour. The House consented to suspend the question hour.

Meanwhile, Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar presented the bill namely the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (Amendment) Ordinance, 2024 (Ordinance No. IX of 2024), as required by clause (2) of Article 89 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in the House.

Administration up for strict action against illegal slaughtering

RAWALPINDI (APP): The local administration will take strict action against sub-standard and illegal slaughtering to ensure the quality of the meat.

This was decided in a meeting of the Meat Board and Slaughterhouse members, which was held here on Friday with Dr Hassan Waqar Cheema, DC Rawalpindi in the chair.

According to the details, it was informed in the meeting that an average of 250 animals are slaughtered daily in the Rawalpindi slaughterhouse. Discussions were also held on the meat supply chain and animal health and hygiene.

The participants presented suggestions from their respective institutions so that a coordinated strategy could be developed to improve the quality of meat and eliminate illegal slaughtering. Addressing the participants, the deputy commissioner said that no compromise would be made on the quality of meat.

He clarified that illegal slaughtering must be discouraged and strict legal action will be taken against those

involved in it. He directed the concerned agencies to effectively monitor the slaughterhouses and ensure full implementation of the principles of cleanliness. The Deputy Commissioner also emphasized that illegal slaughtering is harmful to the health of the public and is against legal and moral requirements.

He said that the slaughterhouses should be run by expert staff and a detailed health inspection of all animals must be carried out.

During the meeting, representatives of the Livestock Department said that they were taking all necessary steps to improve the quality of meat. It was also decided in the meeting that a daily report of the slaughterhouses would be prepared to ensure complete transparency.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Nabil Riaz, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Dr Hassan Tariq, and representatives of the Livestock Department.

IFA takes action against unhygienic restaurants: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) continued its crack-

down on restaurants violating food safety regulations, sealing one popular fast food establishment and heavily fining two others, on Friday.

According to press release issued here on Friday, The IFA also destroyed over two maunds (approximately 160 lbs) of substandard oil and expired food items. During inspections across the city, the IFA issued corrective notices to 15 food businesses, requiring them to improve their hygiene and food handling practices.

One well-known restaurant was sealed after inspectors discovered it was using contaminated oil for frying. Heavy fines were levied against two other establishments for significant breaches of food safety regulations.

Dr. Tahira Siddique, Deputy Director of the IFA, highlighted several violations found during the inspections. These included unsanitary kitchen conditions with insects present, improper food storage, the use of rusty utensils for food preparation, failure to comply with previous IFA instructions, and disregard for basic hygiene principles.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan, Engr. Amir Muqam, presides over the Inter-Ministerial and Inter-Provincial Coordination meeting for Kashmir Solidarity Day (5th February).

Awais urges WB to provide funds for installation of Smart Meters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari Friday urged the World Bank (WB) to provide funds and investment for the installation of Smart Meters at Distribution Level Transformers to bring transparency and cater for unjust load management due to losses at a micro level.

"Smart meters are currently being installed at both domestic and grid levels, which has proven to be beneficial in many ways," the minister expressed these views during a meeting with World Bank Vice President for the South Asian Region, Martin Raiser, who, along with a delegation, met him here, according to a news release. Federal Minister for Petroleum Division Dr. Musaddiq Malik also participated in the meeting.

However, he said, without installing smart meters at the transformer level the desired efficiency and just load management for a particular area cannot be ensured as right now the entire feeder has to face equal load management providing no solace to efficient consumers. He said that these smart meters can also help manage peak load demand.

Awais Leghari also invited the World Bank to invest in Public Private Partnership mode in the smart metering in LESCO and MEPCO as service providers. He informed that

these Distribution Companies are next on the privatization list.

He informed the delegation that due to the 'Bijli Sahulat Package' there was 7% increase in Power Consumption in the industrial Sector in December 2024 as compared to last year for the same period indicating an appetite and appreciation by the consumers for any future auction of surplus electricity in the country.

The Minister also shared initiatives undertaken by the Power Division in the sector leading toward efficiency, financial discipline, autonomy in decision making and reduction in power tariffs for domestic and industrial consumers.

He informed that the Power Sector will soon enter into a multi-buyer and multi-seller market and the CPPA will no longer remain a single buyer as it has already been stopped to make any further agreement in this regard.

The principle of competitiveness and affordability will govern the Power Sector generation and distribution, he added. In this regard, Wheeling Charges are almost being finalized.

Awais Leghari also appraised the delegation about the recent initiatives for providing one-point electricity connections with distribution and billing collection rights to industrial estates and special economic zones

eliminating the monopoly and intervention of Distribution Companies' employees at all stages. The meeting expressed satisfaction over the current World Bank's portfolio of the Power Sector with an agreement to further expedite the utilization of funds at the Distribution Companies level.

The meeting also agreed to further increase the level of interaction at technical levels to provide the Power Sector with data necessary for better policy making and its implementation. The meeting agreed that longer-duration electricity packages will give the private sector enough time to plan their businesses accordingly.

The World Bank's Vice President for the South Asian Region while appreciating various reform initiatives undertaken by the Power Division stressed the need for timely utilization of funds earmarked for various projects by the Bank.

He also supported the Installation of a Smart Meter at the Distribution Level Transformers and informed the meeting that the World Bank Team can work its details with the stakeholders. Mr. Martian Raiser expressed the commitment of the World Bank to continue working with the Power Division and provide assistance in various sub-sectors for achieving efficacy and discipline.

Climate Ministry, ICESCO to host girls' green education conference

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Climate Change and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) have announced their collaboration to hold a conference focusing on climate education with an emphasis on green skills for girls in Pakistan.

The decision was made during a meeting between the Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, and Dr. Haddy Jatou Sey, the head of ICESCO, who met her on Friday to discuss key actions for the event.

During the meeting, Romina Khurshid Alam underscored the significance of empowering girls through education that integrates green skills, highlighting that Islam advocates for the right of women to access education and inheritance.

She expressed that the upcoming conference will be held under the theme "National Climate Educational Framework for Girls in the Islamic World," and will bring together federal and provincial govern-



ment representatives, as well as stakeholders, to participate in the event.

"The primary aim of climate education is to prepare citizens for the future and actively involve them in building a climate-resilient nation with a special focus on strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of women, especially young girls," Romina said.

The Prime Minister's aide revealed that she is working on the Africa House initiative in collaboration with Rwanda, which will serve as a gateway for Pakistan to connect with African countries. This partnership will focus on shared efforts to tackle climate change, resilience, and adaptation, she added.

Romina also highlighted the successful implementation of the She Power project, which has been funded by China and benefitted over 20,000 girls in Balochistan during its first phase. The second phase of the project is set to extend its support to 50,000 girls, with the distribution of hygiene kits among them.

The meeting emphasized the vital role of education, science, and culture in addressing climate change.

Romina reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling its climate change obligations and emphasized the country's ongoing efforts to adapt to the changing climate, including collaboration with global organizations such as ICESCO.

Dr. Haddy Jatou Sey reiterated ICESCO's dedication to supporting climate education, noting the importance of cooperation between international organizations, governments, and local communities to foster a global response to climate change. She expressed that ICESCO, with its extensive network of educational, scientific, and cultural resources, stands ready to contribute to empowering girls through green education.

Both leaders expressed a strong commitment to work together to create a sustainable future by leveraging education, innovation, and cultural exchange. They also agreed to establish a framework for future joint projects, which will include climate education programmes aimed at promoting sustainable development and climate resilience in the region.

The meeting concluded with a shared resolve to strengthen collaboration between ICESCO and Pakistan's Ministry of Climate Change, focusing on global efforts to combat climate change and empower future generations.

British Dy High Commissioner visits SCBA head office

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Mian Muhammad Rauf Atta has underscored that Pakistan viewed its longstanding bilateral relations with the United Kingdom with great pride. What is even more satisfying is that these relations are not only based on government-to-government ties but also stem from people-to-people interaction, he said while talking to Mr. Matt Cannell, Deputy High Commissioner, British High Commission, Islamabad, on his visit of the head office of the SCBA here Friday.

The Deputy High Commissioner was accompanied by senior officials that includes Hashim Chaudhary, Crown Prosecution Service, Liaison Advisor and Fahad Qaisrani, Senior Adviser Security and Justice. The DHC and his team was warmly received by the President and the 27th Cabinet of the SCBA.

The Deputy High Commissioner congratulated the President and the Members of the 27th Cabinet for securing comprehensive victories in

the recently held election of the SCBA against their respective positions. He hoped that the incumbent cabinet, led by its President, would work to uphold fundamental human rights and the rule of law.

The meeting saw the discussions encapsulating a range of topics that include initiatives to enhance future cooperation between the legal fraternities of both countries to foster mutual and robust relationships, proposals for initiating joint efforts for sustainable legal development programs and bilateral exchange programs to provide the opportunity to learn from each other's legal systems, best practices, and innovations through study tours and organizing joint workshops. While appreciating the aforesaid proposals, the Deputy High Commissioner termed the same as beneficial for the legal fraternities of both countries and assured his full support in this regard.

Both sides recognized the role of over 1.6 million Pakistani diaspora settled in the UK and its contribution

to the progress and development of the UK that deserves equal recognition and admiration. It goes without saying that Pakistanis are the most peaceful and harmonious people and have paid a very heavy price in the war against the menace of terrorism. Having said that, we disapprove and denounce terrorism, racism, and violence in all its forms and manifestations, anywhere and everywhere in the world, the President opined. The Deputy High Commissioner acknowledged Pakistan's sacrifices in the war against terrorism as well as the contributions of the Pakistani diaspora to the UK progress, particularly in technical expertise, education, and other sectors.

The honorable guest assured his full cooperation and, on behalf of the British Embassy, extended good wishes to everyone present at the meeting. He expressed hope that this Association would continue to promote the rule of law, the supremacy of the Constitution and adherence to fundamental human rights.

Fire breaks out at Kabul shoe factory

KABUL (Amu Tv): A large fire broke out at a shoe manufacturing factory in the Qabil Bai area of Kabul's Ninth Police District on Friday afternoon, according to local sources. Details about potential casualties or the extent of damage caused by the blaze remain unclear. Taliban have yet to comment on the incident or provide further information. Fires in industrial areas of Kabul are not uncommon, often attributed to inadequate safety measures and outdated infrastructure.

Minister meets Qatar Charge d'Affaires

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, the Acting Minister of National Defense of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, held a meeting with Mirdef Alqashouti, the Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of Qatar in Kabul. During the meeting, Minister Mujahid praised Qatar as a "friend and partner country," highlighting the importance of strengthening and maintaining robust relations between the two countries.

UN: Taliban denying education to 1.5 million girls

KABUL (Amu Tv): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has condemned the Taliban's ongoing ban on secondary education for girls in Afghanistan, saying it has deprived 1.5 million girls of their fundamental right to learn.

In a statement marking International Education Day, OCHA emphasized that education is "a human right, a public good, and a shared responsibility." The organization called for an end to the restrictions, which have now entered their third year.

"The ban on secondary education for girls in Afghanistan, now in its third

year, has denied 1.5 million girls their right to learn. This blatant violation must end," the statement read.

Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, sweeping restrictions have been imposed on girls' education, barring them from attending school beyond the primary level. The decision has drawn widespread international condemnation, with experts warning that it jeopardizes the educational and social future of millions of Afghan girls.

Alongside the U.N. statement, a social media campaign using hashtags like #InternationalEducationDay and #LetAfghanGirlsLearn has gained traction, rallying

global support for Afghan girls' right to education.

The international community has repeatedly urged the Taliban to reverse these restrictions and ensure equal access to education for all. The United Nations and human rights organizations have stressed that education is a fundamental human right that should never be denied.

Activists have said that the ban not only violates the rights of Afghan girls but also poses a major obstacle to the country's social and economic development. They warn that the long-term consequences could be devastating for future generations in Afghanistan.

UK diplomat urges dialogue to address issues with Taliban

KABUL (Amu Tv): The British chargé d'affaires for Afghanistan, Robert Chatterton Dickson, has called for resolving issues with the Taliban through dialogue, according to a statement released by the Taliban-run Arg.

During a meeting with Zakirullah Zakir, chief of staff for the Taliban's political deputy office, Dickson reiterated the United Kingdom's commitment to continuing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. He also pledged support for addressing the country's climate change challenges.

The statement quoted Dickson as emphasizing the importance of resolving problems through negotiations and encouraging Afghanistan to rejoin the international community.

In response, Zakir expressed the Taliban's desire for "positive relations" with the international community, asserting that Afghan soil posed no threat to the world.

The meeting comes amid growing concerns among regional and international stakeholders over the potential use of Afghanistan as a base for terrorist organizations. While the Taliban have repeatedly denied these allegations, the issue remains a major point of contention between the group and the global community.

Despite ongoing engagement, no country, including the United Kingdom, has officially recognized the Taliban rule since it seized power in August 2021.

Girls demand reopening of Schools

KABUL (TOLONews): On the occasion of the International Education Day, girls who have been deprived of education in the country are calling to be allowed to return to their classrooms.

This day arrives while girls above grade six have been banned from attending school for more than three years, and female university students are also prohibited from continuing their higher education.

Beheshta, who was a 10th-grade student when the Islamic Emirate regained power, said: "Unfortunately, all schools in Afghanistan are closed. We request the Islamic Emirate reopen schools for girls in the coming year so that we can achieve our dreams."

Samira, another student, told TOLONews: "The past three years have been heartbreaking for us because we couldn't reach our goals." The European Union has also emphasized that education is essential for Afghanistan's self-sufficiency.

The EU delegation in Afghanistan stated on X: "Quality education for all, regardless of gender, is essential for the prosperity & self-sufficiency of Afghanistan. The EU stands in solidarity with all Afghans as they strive for their fundamental right to education & a prosperous future."

Taliban reject ICC arrest warrant as 'politically motivated'

KABUL (AFP/APP): Afghanistan's Taliban government said on Friday an arrest warrant sought by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for its leaders was "politically motivated".

It comes a day after the ICC chief prosecutor said he was seeking warrants against senior Taliban leaders in Afghanistan over the persecution of women -- a crime against humanity.

"Like many other decisions of the (ICC), it is devoid of a fair legal basis, is a matter of double standards and is politically motivated," said a statement from the Foreign Ministry posted on social media platform X.

"It is regrettable that this institution has turned a blind eye to war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by foreign forces and their domestic allies during the twenty-year occupation of Afghanistan."

It said the court should "not attempt to impose a particular interpretation of human rights on the entire world and ignore the religious and national values of people of the rest of the world."

The Taliban swept back to power in 2021 after ousting the American-backed government in a rapid but largely bloodless military takeover, imposing a severe interpretation of Islamic law, or sharia, on the population and heavily restricting all aspects of women's lives. Afghanistan's deputy interior minister Mohammad Nabi

Omari, a former Guantanamo Bay detainee, said the ICC "can't scare us".

"If these were fair and true courts, they should have brought America to the court, because it is America that has caused wars, the issues of the world are caused by America," he said at an event in eastern Khost city attended by an AFP journalist.

He said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has overseen a war in Gaza sparked by Hamas attacks, should be brought before the ICC, which issued arrest warrants last year for the Israeli leader and three Hamas officials.

- 'Unconscionable persecution by Taliban' -

Afghanistan's government claims it secures Afghan women's rights under sharia but many of its edicts are not followed in the rest of the Islamic world and have been condemned by Muslim leaders. It is the only country in the world where girls and women are banned from education. Women have been ordered to cover their hair and faces and wear all-covering Islamic dress, have been barred from parks and stopped from working in government offices.

ICC chief Karim Khan said there were reasonable grounds to suspect that Supreme Leader Haibatullah Akhundzada and chief justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani "bear criminal respon-

sibility for the crime against humanity of persecution on gender grounds".

Khan said Afghan women and girls, as well as the LGBTQ community, were facing "an unprecedented, unconscionable and ongoing persecution by the Taliban". "Our action signals that the status quo for women and girls in Afghanistan is not acceptable," Khan said. ICC judges will now consider the application before deciding whether to issue the warrants, a process that could take weeks or even months.

- 'Crucial step' -

Women's rights activist Nilofar Ayubi, who lives abroad, told AFP it was "a historic moment for the women of Afghanistan and a positive step forward in our fight". Amnesty International said it was a "crucial step to hold accountable all those allegedly responsible for the gender-based deprivation of fundamental rights".

It also renewed calls for the ICC prosecutor to reconsider his 2021 decision to deprioritize investigations into war crimes allegedly committed by the US military, CIA personnel, and other international forces in Afghanistan.

The ICC, based in The Hague, was set up to rule on the world's worst crimes, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity. It has no police force of its own and relies on its 125 member states to carry out its warrants -- with mixed results.

CSTO to begin Tajikistan-Afghanistan Border strengthening plan



MOSCOW (Amu Tv): January 23, Imangali Tasmagambetov, Secretary-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), announced that a program to strengthen Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan will begin in 2025.

He stated that this program involves specific measures aimed at ensuring the security of CSTO member states.

During a meeting in Moscow on Thursday,

Afghanistan to Central Asia. According to the agreed plan, member states are tasked with allocating resources necessary to safeguard the Tajik-Afghan border.

Tasmagambetov emphasized that achieving peace and stability requires collaborative efforts among all member states. He also mentioned that agreements for equipping CSTO forces with advanced weapons and military equipment

have been signed.

Russian media reports indicate that the program to strengthen the Tajik-Afghan border will be implemented in three phases over a five-year period. This phased approach reflects the complexity and importance of the initiative in maintaining regional security.

CSTO member states and Central Asian nations, particularly Tajikistan, are increasingly concerned about the presence of ISIS and other extremist groups in the region. The potential spillover of violence and radical ideologies poses a significant threat to the stability and security of these countries.

The CSTO's initiative to fortify borders and enhance security is a crucial step in addressing these threats. However, member states must also focus on long-term strategies, such as countering radicalization and promoting regional cooperation, to ensure sustainable peace and stability in Central Asia and region.

Undocumented Afghan: Iran issues arrest warrants for 18 property owners



TEHRAN (Amu Tv): Authorities in Iran have issued arrest warrants for 18 property owners accused of providing housing to undocumented Afghan migrants, according to Iranian media reports.

Bahram Zamani, the deputy prosecutor of Zahedan, announced that the property owners face charges for facilitating the stay of what he termed "unauthorized" foreign nationals. "Those who facilitate the entry and residence of undocumented individuals could face one to three years in prison," Zamani said.

He added that the suspects were identified through military and security operations in the Nosratabad district of

Zahedan. "These 18 landlords were apprehended, judicial cases were opened against them, and they were sent to prison. The suspects have admitted their involvement and expressed regret for their actions," Zamani noted.

Iran's interior ministry estimates that nearly six million foreign nationals, both documented and undocumented, reside in the country, with a majority being Afghan citizens.

Nader YarAhmadi, an adviser to Iran's interior minister and head of the Bureau for Foreign Citizens and Migrants, disclosed that 593,775 individuals have been officially registered as group refugees, most of them Afghan nationals.

Refugees are issued identification cards, known as Amayesh cards for Afghans and identity cards for Iraqis.

YarAhmadi urged refugees who have not yet updated their registration to visit foreign nationals' residence and employment service offices by January 30, 2025, to ensure their information is up to date and to obtain identification cards.

The arrests underscore the Iranian government's ongoing efforts to regulate the presence of foreign nationals, as the country grapples with economic challenges and the impact of a prolonged influx of Afghan migrants following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan.

Over 100 gas poisoning cases reported

HERAT (Khaama Press): Officials at Herat Regional Hospital in western Afghanistan have reported 123 cases of gas poisoning in the province over the past two months.

Farhad Afzali, the chief physician at Herat Regional Hospital, stated on Thursday, January 23, that three individuals have died as a result of gas poisoning during this period.

According to him, among the reported cases, 68 were women who were transferred to the hospital due to gas poisoning.

Two days ago, three young individuals in Parwan and Herat provinces also lost their lives due to gas poisoning incidents.

Each year, with the onset of winter, gas poisoning incidents claim the lives of citizens in several provinces across the country, highlighting a recurring seasonal issue.

This comes amid the winter season, harsh cold weather, and a lack of electricity and heating in the country.

The rise in gas poisoning cases underscores the need for increased public awareness about safe heating practices, particularly during the winter season. Preventive measures and public education campaigns can help reduce these incidents and save lives.

Karzai calls for immediate reopening of schools for girls



KABUL (Amu Tv): Former President Hamid Karzai has called for the immediate reopening of schools and universities for Afghan girls, emphasizing the critical role of education in the country's development and prosperity.

In a statement marking International Education Day, Karzai described education as "the key driver of

a society's growth and well-being" and underscored its importance in achieving freedom and progress for Afghanistan.

"Education is vital for the prosperity and flourishing of society," he said. "Afghanistan can only overcome dependency on foreign powers and attain its rightful place in the global community through knowl-

edge and understanding." He expressed hope that the necessary conditions would be created for all Afghans to access education and urged all stakeholders to take immediate steps to reopen educational institutions.

Karzai's remarks come as the Taliban's ban on girls' education remains in place, affecting secondary schools, universities, and other higher education institutions. The restrictions, enforced since the Taliban regained power in 2021, have sparked widespread condemnation both domestically and internationally.

Experts warn that the ongoing educational restrictions not only constitute a violation of human rights but also pose significant barriers to Afghanistan's social and economic development.

Allama Iqbal scholarships: Second exam phase set for January 2025



KABUL (TOLONews): Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, stated on X that the second phase of the in-person and online exams for the Allama Iqbal Scholarships will be held on January 25 and 26, 2025.

He mentioned that nearly 21,000 Afghan students (both male and female) have registered for these scholarships.

According to Sadiq

Khan, Afghan applicants residing in Pakistan will take the exam in person in the cities of Quetta and Peshawar, while students living in Afghanistan will participate online.

"For Afghan students residing in Pakistan, the physical test centers will be located in Peshawar and Quetta. Meanwhile, students in Afghanistan will participate in an online test," said Sadiq Khan.

He added that the registration process for these

scholarships began in October 2024, and a total of 20,806 applications were submitted, out of which 15,791 were from male applicants and 5,015 from female applicants.

The provided numbers indicate that 14,244 applications were received for undergraduate programs, 5,946 for master's programs, and 616 for doctoral programs.

According to Pakistan's Special Representative, the exams and interviews will be conducted under the supervision of three evaluation committees to ensure a fair and transparent selection process.

Sadiq Khan also mentioned that accepted students will commence their preparatory academic programs at the National University of Technology (NUTECH) and the National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences (NUCES FAST) in early March 2025.

Sahibzada engages in key railway cooperation talks with Uzbekistan



KABUL(BNA): Mawlawi Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, the Deputy Minister of Public Works

of Afghanistan, visited Uzbekistan at the official invitation of the Uzbek government.

On the first day of his visit, Deputy Minister Sahibzada held fruitful discussions with key officials

from Uzbekistan Railways, including Director Nurzulov Zafarghiasevich and Deputy Director Hekmatullah Rahmatov.

The Islamic Emirate delegation expressed appreciation for Uzbekistan's ongoing support in railway cooperation. The talks focused on enhancing trade and exports via the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway line, a crucial conduit for economic exchange.

In addition, the Deputy Minister met with Uzbekistan's Minister of Transport, Ilham Mukhamedov, where both sides explored the implementation of the Afghan-Trans project and emphasized the need for swift coordination in launching practical work.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferring civil award of Sitara-i-Imtiaz upon Asif Bashir, in recognition of his valuable services in the field of public service.

Experts discuss social media impacts on youth

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, hosted a roundtable discussion titled "Digital Minds: Navigating Social Media and Mental Health" on 23 January 2025. The roundtable brought together prominent social media and psychology experts to deliberate on the complex relationship between social media usage and mental health, with a particular focus on its effects on younger generations.

Setting the tone for the session, Ms Nidaa Shahid, Associate Director CASS Lahore, discussed how social media has emerged as a game-changer in the 21st century, offering immense connectivity, while simultaneously posing serious mental health challenges.

The first discussant, Mr Fahd Husain, President Aik News Network, probed the complexities of social media stating that it has blurred the lines between truth and false. He further said that social media rewards emotional content over logical arguments. Additionally, the algorithms ensure that people are only exposed to the content they agree with, thus reinforcing biases and creating echo chambers. Ms Fatima Aslam, a clinical psychologist, provided insights into the psychological impact of social media



on adolescents. She said that since the advent of social media, the psychological issues being presented in youth have changed, with tech addiction becoming a leading cause of psychological stress. Social media platforms are designed to increase this addictiveness in order to create more revenues. Prof Dr Rafia Rafique, Director Institute of Applied Psychology Punjab University highlighted the four most common stressors of social media which includes comparison with people's online personas, usage of likes and comments as social currency, fear of missing out and online harassment. The youth of today have become addicted to the quick dopamine rush despite facing these challenges.

During the interactive session, participants actively contributed their perspectives on digital starvation as an antithesis of social media addition and

the need for balanced policymaking to regulate social media usage. It was highlighted that pace of technology is unlikely to be curtailed, therefore human psyche has to adapt to these changes.

In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President CASS Lahore, emphasised that while social media connects and empowers, it also contributes to rising mental health challenges, particularly among the youth.

With over a 100 million internet users in Pakistan, social media-induced anxiety, depression, and identity crises require urgent attention. He stressed the need to promote digital literacy and use social media as a force for positive change.

The roundtable concluded with a strong consensus among all participants on the importance of awareness, education, and collaboration in mitigating the adverse psychological impacts of social media.

SBP injects Rs10.31tr in market

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) injected Rs10,317.5 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) on Friday.

The SBP conducted Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on January 24, 2025 for 7-day and 28-day tenors and, as per results issued, accepted an amount of Rs9,611.5 billion offered through 30 bids. The central bank received 30 bids for 7-day tenor cumulatively offering an amount of Rs9,611.5 billion at the rate of return ranging between 13.04 to 13.10 percent while no bid was received for the 28-day tenor. The central bank accepted the entire amount offered through 30 quotes for 7-day tenor at 13.04% rate of return.

Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for the 7-day and 28-day tenors and further injected Rs706 billion into the market.

The central bank received 5 bids for 7-day tenor quoting an amount of Rs906 billion at the rate of return ranging between 13.08 to 13.12 % while no bid was received for 28-day tenor. The SBP accepted an amount of Rs706 billion offered through 5 quotes for 7-day tenor at 13.08% rate of return. Total amount offered at 13.08% was Rs600 billion out of which SBP accepted Rs400 billion on pro-rata basis.

KP dispatches medicines to Kurram

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has dispatched another shipment of 1500kg of medicines to Upper Kurram via helicopter, stated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Friday.

The CM emphasized his personal supervision of all relief activities in Kurram, ensuring that essential supplies were promptly delivered according to the needs of the affected areas. A total of 1,500 kilograms of medicines were being sent to Parachinar via helicopter, he announced, with the shipment handed over to the Medical Superintendent of Parachinar. The consignment included antibiotics, syrups, painkillers, and medicines specifically for children, ensuring comprehensive medical aid to the region.

CM Gandapur further assured that until ground access to Kurram was restored, medicines and other essential supplies would continue to be delivered via the Chief Minister's helicopter. He also stated that additional supplies, as per the requirements of the area, would be sent in phases to ensure ongoing relief efforts.

Pakistan Navy Ships visit Oman

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ships TABUK and RAH NAWARD visited the Port Sultan Qaboos, Muscat, Oman. Upon arrival at the port, Pakistan Navy ships were warmly received by the Omani authorities.

During the visit, Mission Commander, along with the Commanding Officers, held meetings with naval leadership of Oman, according to a statement issued by the Directorate General Public Relations (Pakistan Navy), Naval Headquarters, Islamabad, on Friday. He called on Director General Ops and Plans Royal Navy of Oman, Commander Maritime Security Centre and Commandant Said Bin Sultan Naval Base.

During these interactions, matters of mutual interest, Navy-to-Navy engagements, and cooperation in maritime security were discussed. Ambassadors, diplomats and Military Attaches of various countries also visited the ships.

Pakistan Navy Ships were opened for visitors, wherein large number of Pakistani community including students from Pakistan School, Muscat visited onboard PN ships. Following the port call, PNS TABUK conducted a Passage Exercise with a Royal Oman Navy ship AL SHAMIKH.

PHC directs ECP to decide on Senate elections

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to decide on Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 60 days.

As per details, the decision came in response to a petition filed by a candidate for the technocrat seat in the Senate elections. Justice S.M. Ateeq Shah, in a six-page verdict, ordered the ECP to make a decision on the Senate elections by the law. The petition was filed in response to the ECP's decision to postpone the Senate elections in the province due to a dispute over the administration of the oath to elected women on reserved seats.

The ECP had cited a pending case before the Supreme Court regarding the allocation of reserved seats as the reason for the postponement. However, the PHC has now directed the ECP to decide on the Senate elections within the stipulated timeframe. Earlier, a petition was filed in Peshawar High Court seeking an order for the Senate election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"The Senate has been incomplete without representation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province," petitioner's lawyer said in the high court. "If the detailed judgment of the Supreme Court in special seats case, has been issued," Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim asked the lawyer. "The decision has been released but not being implemented," the lawyer replied. The election commission's lawyer told the court that a review petition has been filed to seek the court's advice, how to move ahead. "A senator has six-year tenure but KP's senators are yet to be elected," petitioner's lawyer said.

Court seeks district judiciary progress report on block cases: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has set a deadline of 1st May for the disposal of all pending cases in district judiciary

since 2015. The court has directed all district and sessions judges to ensure that these cases are resolved by the given deadline and to submit a report on the progress made.

According to the Peshawar High Court, Chief Justice Peshawar High Court has directed all district and sessions judges to dispose of all pending cases since 2015 by May 1, without any delay. The judges have also been directed to submit a report on the disposal of these cases to the Monitoring and Implementation Team (MIT) of the Peshawar High Court.

The Chief Justice has emphasized that delays in justice erode people's trust in the judiciary, and that timely disposal of cases is essential to restore the trust. To ensure the timely disposal of cases, the Chief Justice has assigned a special task to the MIT and the District Judiciary Secretariat to monitor the progress made and submit reports to the Peshawar High Court.

Following the receipt of these directions, all sessions judges have instructed their respective courts to dispose of all pending cases since 2015 on a priority basis, without any delay or negligence. The judges have also been directed to submit daily progress reports on the disposal of these cases.

It is worth noting that the Peshawar High Court had last year reduced the summer vacations of judges and fixed all pending civil cases since 2015. The court had also constituted special benches to clear the backlog of old cases, resulting in a 90% reduction in the backlog of old civil cases. The court has now started working on disposing of old civil cases up to 2020.

PHC sought progress report on prison's reform implementation: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has sought progress report from the Provincial Home Department and the Inspector General of Prisons on the implementation of decisions made

during a high-level meeting held on 2nd November, 2024, regarding reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's prisons and jails, on Friday.

The meeting was chaired by PHC's senior Judge Justice Ijaz Anwar, which attended by Additional Chief Secretary Home, IG Prisons, and other officials. During the meeting, it was decided that high-profile prisoners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's jails would be transferred to Mianwali and Sahiwal jails in Punjab.

The Registrar of Peshawar High Court, in a letter addressed to the Additional Chief Secretary Home and IG Prisons, stated that the court seeks a report on the progress made so far regarding the implementation of the decisions made during the meeting. The letter further stated that the report should include details of the actions taken to transfer high-profile prisoners to Punjab's jails.

The meeting on November 2, 2024, also decided that prisoners from other provinces being held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's jails would be transferred. Additionally, it was decided that the construction of Phase II of Peshawar Jail would be expedited, and prisoners being held in Nowshera Jail would be transferred to Mardan Jail due to overcrowding.

The Peshawar High Court has sought a comprehensive report from the relevant authorities regarding the progress made so far in implementing these decisions. The report will be presented before Senior Peshawar High Court Judge Justice Ijaz Anwar for further action.

During the meeting on November 2, 2024, the Senior Peshawar High Court Judge had directed the relevant authorities to take immediate action to address the issues faced by prisoners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's jails. The letter had also ordered the stakeholders to take prompt action to implement the decisions made during the meeting.

KP CM directs MPs to closely monitor projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is targeting to jack up the volume of the Provincial Development portfolio to over Rs. one trillion within the next four years.

All this, is being made possible by the measures taken by the Provincial Government as was revealed during a meeting of the Cabinet held here on Friday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur. The meeting was attended by the cabinet members, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries, Senior Member Board of Revenue, and Administrative Secretaries.

The Chief Minister directed that all development and welfare projects be completed on merit and in a transparent manner within the stipulated time-frame to achieve the desired results. He directed the cabinet members to review departmental performance regularly and

actively oversee the progress of development initiatives.

The Chief Minister stressed the importance of maintaining quality standards and urged cabinet members to closely monitor projects in their respective districts and regions. Highlighting the significance of sustainable development and employment generation, the Chief Minister stated that these factors play a crucial role in the eradication of terrorism and ensuring long-term stability and peace in the province.

At the outset of the meeting, the cabinet was briefed in detail about the progress on development schemes arrayed under the title of Strategic High-Impact Flagship Targets (SHIFT).

These initiatives are dedicated to advancing inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development agenda, with a core focus on elevating the living standards of citizens-especially those in historically marginalized and underserved regions of

the Province. At the moment it included 51 projects of social, infrastructure and urban, economic development, environmental sustainability, governance and public administration and integrated sectoral approaches but more and more such projects will be continuously added to it with the passage of time. The total financial worth of these schemes is Rs. 500 billion at the moment.

The Cabinet conditionally approved the extension of Special Forum till June, 2027, subject to the release of funds by the Federal Government, in order to ensure optimum oversight and effective management of the ongoing and recently approved projects under permanent reconstruction. The permanent reconstruction project is aimed at rehabilitating the Temporary Displaced Persons (TDPs) in Merged Districts. In this respect, the Chief Minister emphasized that his government will make every effort for the uplift of the people of the Merged Districts.

Asad Qaiser contacts Fazl

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser held a telephonic call with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to discuss the country's political situation.

Former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser reached out to Maulana Fazlur Rehman. During the conversation, they exchanged views on the current political scenario and deliberated on their upcoming meeting.

Asad Qaiser stated that he would meet Maulana Fazlur Rehman next week to discuss political matters in detail. PTI leaders are expected to meet Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Monday or Tuesday to discuss the formation of an opposition alliance.

According to the sources, during the meeting, a message from PTI founder Imran Khan will also be conveyed to Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

Baloch terror leaders surrender

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Two most-wanted terrorist commanders, Najeebullah alias Darwaish and Abdul Rasheed alias Kamash, have surrendered their weapons. At a joint press conference in Quetta on Friday, attended by provincial ministers and DIG CTD, both terrorists announced their decision to join the national mainstream.

Talking to the media, terrorist commander Najeebullah thanked the Pakistan Army for providing him with the opportunity to integrate into the national fold. Najeeb said, "Seeing the handlers' true motives removed the blindfold of so-called freedom from my eyes. The Baloch liberation movements have devolved into gang wars."

He further revealed, "The so-called fighters in the mountains don't even have two proper meals a day, while terrorist commanders live lavishly abroad and ignore us. Our survival and security lie in the welfare of the state." Another terrorist commander, Jangez Khan, said, "Commander Miraj instructed me to fight against the army and promised money and weapons in return. Jangez Khan also revealed that he was offered Rs 100,000 and a motorcycle, but he regrets choosing the wrong path."

On the occasion, provincial minister Zahoor Ahmed Buledi said, "A heinous game of terrorism is being played in Balochistan. Misguided individuals fighting their own institutions must return to the right path."



ISLAMABAD: Students from Pakistan School Muscat visiting Pakistan Navy Ship in Oman.