

**Constable martyred**  
**F.P. Report**

D I KHAN: A police constable was martyred in a firing incident in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan by unidentified assailants on Saturday. Police said, Constable Khan Badshah lost his life when unknown attackers fired at him Kulachi tehsil. The assailants managed to flee the scene after committing the crime. Law enforcers have launched a search operation to apprehend the culprits.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 364

Regd. No. 241

RAJAB 26 1446 -- SUNDAY, JANUARY 26 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

## Hamas frees 4 Israeli hostages in swap for 200 Palestinian prisoners

JERUSALEM/CAIRO/GAZA (Reuters): The Palestinian militant movement Hamas released four female Israeli soldier hostages on Saturday in return for 200 Palestinian prisoners, in keeping with the ceasefire agreement in the 15-month-old war in Gaza.

The four Israelis were led onto a podium in Gaza City amid a large crowd of Palestinians and surrounded by dozens of armed Hamas men. They waved and smiled before being led off, entering Red Cross vehicles to be transported to Israeli forces.

Soon after, buses carrying released Palestinian prisoners were seen departing from the Israeli Ofer military prison in the occupied West Bank. Israel's Prison Service said all 200 had been released.

The releases on either side were greeted by cheering crowds, including Israelis gathered in Tel Aviv and Palestinians assembled in Ramallah. The swap was the second to take place under the truce, following an initial release on the ceasefire's first day, Jan. 19. The truce calls for Hamas to release 33 women, children, elderly, sick and wounded hostages over a six-week first phase, with Israel freeing 30 prisoners for each civilian and 50 for each soldier.

The four Israeli soldiers freed on Saturday — Karina Arieve, Daniella Gilboa, Naama Levy and Liri Albag — had all been stationed at an observation post on the edge of Gaza when Hamas fighters overran their base and abducted them during the Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel that precipitated the war. Their parents clapped and cried out in joy when they saw them on screen, watching the handover live from a nearby military base across the border. In Tel Aviv, hundreds of Israelis gathered at a rallying point now widely referred to as Hostages Square, crying, embracing and cheering as the release was aired on a giant screen.

The women were reunited with their families soon after and then flown aboard helicopters to a hospital in central Israel. Photos published by the Israeli military showed them embracing tightly with their parents, in smiles and tears. The 200 Palestinians freed on Saturday include militants, some serving life sentences for involvement in attacks that killed dozens of people, accord-



ing to a list published by Hamas.

Israel says those convicted of killing Israelis will not be permitted to return home. Around 70 will be deported to Egypt, Palestinian officials said, and from there to another country, possibly Turkiye, Qatar or Algiers. Another 16 were sent to Gaza and the rest were released to the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where cheering crowds waving Palestinian flags gathered in Ramallah to greet them.

Joy in Israel over Saturday's release was clouded by disappointment over a female civilian hostage who was expected to be freed but was not included. Arbel Yehud, 29, had been abducted with her boyfriend from their home in Kibbutz Nir Oz. An Israeli military spokesman said the failure to release her was a breach of the truce, while Hamas said it was a technical issue. A Hamas official said the group had informed mediators that she was alive and would be freed next Saturday.

In Gaza, which lies largely in ruins after 15 months of fighting and bombardment, hundreds of thousands of people displaced from northern areas have been hoping to return home from Sunday. A Palestinian official told Reuters that mediators were working on resolving the matter. The ceasefire agreement, worked out after months of on-off negotiations brokered by Qatar and Egypt and backed by the United States, has halted the fighting for the first time in more than a year. The only previous truce lasted just a week in Nov. 2023, during which around half of the hostages

were freed.

After the current ceasefire's first phase, the sides are expected to negotiate the exchange of the remaining hostages, including men of military age, and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. But that deal is far from assured. Following Saturday's release, 90 hostages remain in Gaza, according to Israeli authorities, who have declared around a third of them dead in absentia. Twenty-six are still slated for release in the first phase.

Families of hostages due to be released in later phases are worried that the ceasefire could break down before their fate is resolved. Some Israeli officials critical of the truce say Israel must resume fighting to prevent Hamas from returning to power in Gaza. Hamas says it will not free all hostages until the war ends for good.

Israel launched its campaign in Gaza following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack, when militants killed 1,200 people and took more than 250 hostages to Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. Since then, Israel's campaign has killed more than 47,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to health authorities there. More than 400 Israeli soldiers have also died Gaza combat. Hamas has not revealed how many fighters it has lost. Israel estimates that more than a third of Gaza's death toll is militants. But the group has returned to the streets openly during the ceasefire, a challenge to Israeli authorities who say they will not end the war until Hamas is eradicated.

## PM praises young Pakistani players

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the young Pakistani players were bringing laurels to the country and the nation with their talents and reiterated that the government was taking every possible step to provide facilities to the Pakistani athletes.

The prime minister met Snooker Champion Muhammad Asif and congratulated him on winning the SAARC Snooker Championship recently held in Sri Lanka. He also presented a prize cheque worth Rs. 2.5 million to Muhammad Asif, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

"You have brightened the name of Pakistan in the game of snooker and the entire nation is proud of you," the press release quoted the prime minister as saying. He further said that by winning the World Amateur Snooker Championship and the SAARC Snooker Championship thrice, he (Asif) had proven his skills in the world and brought honour to Pakistan.

During the meeting, Muhammad Asif expressed gratitude to the prime minister for recognizing him at the national level. He opined that the government's patronage in sports played a key role in promoting games, adding that it was an honour for him that the prime minister acknowledged his achievements. The prime minister directed the relevant authorities to work with Muhammad Asif to take measures over the training of snooker players in the country to further promote this game among the youth.

## First Mpxox case of 2025 reported

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The first Monkeypox (Mpxox) case of 2025 has been reported in Pakistan, with Border Health Services staff identifying a suspected case during routine screening at Peshawar Airport.

According to a spokesperson for the Ministry of Health on Saturday, the suspected individual tested positive for Mpxox, bringing the total number of reported cases during the health emergency to 10. The patient's travel history indicates a recent trip to the Gulf region.

Dr. Mukhtar Bharthi, National Coordinator for Health, stated that effective measures are being implemented to protect the public from Mpxox. He emphasized that a robust screening system is in place at all airports and that compliance with International Health Regulations (IHR) is being ensured. Both federal and provincial governments are committed to tackling Mpxox effectively.

Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Advisor Ihtesham Ali confirmed that the first Mpxox case of 2025 was reported at Peshawar Airport. Upon detection, a public health team immediately arrived at the airport.

The advisor disclosed that the patient, a 35-year-old male who had recently traveled from Dubai, was transferred to the Police Services Hospital, and samples were sent to the Public Health Reference Lab, where the Mpxox diagnosis was confirmed.

The provincial health advisor also mentioned that a letter has been sent to the Peshawar Airport manager to provide details of passengers who were in close proximity to the patient. Once the information is received, relevant District Health Officers (DHOs) will be notified to initiate contact tracing.

So far, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has reported a total of 10 Mpxox cases, with 2 cases in 2023, 7 in 2024, and the first case of 2025. The Health Advisor urged the public to maintain social distancing and remain vigilant to prevent the spread of the disease.

# Security forces kill 30 terrorists in operations

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Security forces killed 30 terrorists during three separate counter-terrorism operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Saturday.

According to a statement issued by the military's media wing, the security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Lakki Marwat district. "After the troops effectively engaged the terrorists at their location, eighteen khwarij were sent to hell, while six khwarij got injured," the statement said.

In another operation in the province's Karak district, security forces "successfully neutralised eight terrorists." In a third encounter that took place in the general area of Bagh, Khyber district, security forces gunned down four terrorists including ring leaders Aziz ur Rehman aka Qari Ismail and Mukhlis, while two terrorists sustained injuries.

"Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area against the security forces as well as killing of innocent civilians," the ISPR said. The military's media wing added that sanitisation operations were being conducted to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area as the "security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country."

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday commended the security forces for neutralizing four terrorists during an operation in Khyber district. The president praised the bravery of the security forces for successfully eliminating four Khwarij including a key terrorist leader during an intelligence-based operation, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

"Security forces are carrying out

operations to eradicate the specter of terrorism," the president said, adding the entire nation stood united against terrorism. The president further said that operations against Fitna al Khwarij would continue till the complete eradication of terrorism.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also appreciated the officers and personnel of the security forces for a successful operation against Khwarij in Bagh area of District Khyber. He praised the professional skills of the officers and personnel of the security forces for neutralizing four Khwarij including their key leaders.

"We will continue the fight against the menace of terrorism till it is completely eradicated from the country," he reiterated. He further said that he along with the entire nation, stood shoulder to shoulder with the security forces in the fight against terrorism. The prime minister reiterated that they would foil the nefarious designs of terrorists to spread chaos and unrest in the country.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday praised the Pakistan's security forces for their successful operation against Khwarij terrorists in the Bagh area of Khyber District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The operation resulted in the elimination of four terrorists, thwarting their nefarious plans. In a statement, the Interior Minister commended the security forces for their timely and effective response, saying that they have once again demonstrated their professionalism and bravery.

He expressed appreciation for the security forces' efforts in foiling the terrorists' plans, stating that the nation stands united with them in the fight against terrorism. Mohsin Naqvi emphasized that the country is united against Khwarij terrorists and stands firmly with the security forces. He noted that the nation takes pride in the security forces' professionalism and courage.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif presenting a cheque of Rs. 2.5 million to Muhammad Asif in recognition of his brilliant performance in winning recent SAARC Snooker Championship.

## Imran calls for meeting with negotiating team

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Imran Khan, the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has called for an immediate meeting with the negotiating team to address the ongoing political situation.

According to reports, Salman Akram Raja, stated that the PTI founder Imran Khan believes negotiations are crucial to gaining clarity on the events of May 9 and November 26. Imran Khan emphasised that these talks should not be misunderstood as a sign of weakness but as a necessary step towards understanding the political turmoil surrounding PTI.

Salman Akram Raja also confirmed that letters addressed to the judiciary had been prepared, with copies sent to Adiala Jail for Imran Khan's signature. Additionally, Raja revealed that on the request of PTI leader Ali Amin Gandapur, Junaid Akbar has been assigned a new organizational responsibility in the province. Aaliya Hamza will also be given a key role, with an official notification to follow soon.

Raja further explained that PTI intends to bring forward materials related to the May 9 and November 26 events to the public. This move, according to Raja, is designed to expose the facts surrounding these incidents and strengthen PTI's position. As per Raja, Imran Khan has also reaffirmed that the party will not back down from its mandate, which they

## PTI challenges 26th Amendment in SC

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Saturday moved the Supreme Court (SC) against the 26th Constitutional Amendment. The PTI moved its plea in the SC through Sameer Khosa, in which the 26th Constitutional Amendment was challenged. It has been argued in the application that the parliament can't amend the fundamental features of the constitution, stressing that freedom of the judiciary is an essential part of the constitution.

It further said that no amendment can be made against the freedom of judiciary, adding that the challenged amendment is against the basic principle of distribution of powers described in the constitution. The application further pleaded that all actions taken under the 26th Constitutional Amendment be nullified and the Judicial Commission (JC) should be barred from appointing the judges until the final verdict on the amendment.

claim has been unjustly taken from them.

**PTI 'demands' parliamentary committee for CEC appointment:** The PTI has demanded the formation of a parliamentary committee for the appointment of a new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC).

The move comes as the tenure of incumbent CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja is set to expire on January 26 (today). According to government sources, consultations will be held between the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader Omar Ayub to discuss the matter. Sources added that the CEC's appointment will be made in accordance with the Constitution, and that Raja can continue to perform his duties until a new appointment is made under

the 26th Constitutional Amendment.

In an earlier development, opposition Leader Omar Ayub decided not to consult PM Shehbaz Sharif regarding the appointment of the new Chief Election Commissioner. Sikandar Sultan Raja, the incumbent CEC is set to retire on January 26.

In a formal letter addressed to the Speaker of the National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq, Omar Ayub underlining the urgency of the matter, noted that the tenure of the current Chief Election Commissioner will end on January 26. According to the constitution, it is necessary for the prime minister and the opposition leader to consult on the appointment of the CEC and members.

**Gohar, Shibli bails extended**  
**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Anti-Terrorism Court has extended the interim bail of PTI leaders until February 4. Duty Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra presided over the hearing regarding bail applications related to the protest. PTI leaders, including Shibli Faraz, Barrister Gohar, Sardar Masroof, Falak Naz, Niaziullah Niazi, and Ansar Kayani, appeared in court, represented by Advocate Riasat Ali Azad.

## Every clause of Kurram peace pact will be implemented: Chief Secy

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry has made it clear that each and every Clause of the 14-Point Agreement reached in Kohat regarding Kurram district will be implemented in letter and spirit and there will be no concession with anyone in this regard. He however said, we will need everyone's cooperation for it. He while ordering to start demolishing the bunkers again, said that one side has already submitted its weapons collection plan while the plan of the other side is still awaited so it should also submit its plan at the earliest.

He expressed these views while addressing a joint sitting of the Grand Jirga and peace committee members and the elders of the District Kurram at Commissioner House Kohat on Saturday. On this occasion, GOC 9, Div Major General Zulfiqar Ali Bhatti and Commissioner Kohat Syed Motasim Billah Shah, former parliamentarians, members of Grand Jirga and elders also spoke while Inspector General Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan, DIG Kohat Abbas Majeed Marwat, Deputy Commissioner Kurram Muhammad Ashfaq, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram and other relevant officers were also present on this occasion.

## Pakistani survivors Dakhla incident to be repatriated: FO

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is coordinating the repatriation of 22 Pakistani survivors of the recent maritime incident near the Dakhla port in Morocco, these individuals will be returned to Pakistan in batches, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said on Saturday.

The Pakistan embassy in Rabat has been working closely with Moroccan authorities to oversee the relief efforts and finalize the complex repatriation procedure. The embassy's consular team in Dakhla has been instrumental in planning the return of the survivors. The Foreign Ministry's Crisis Management Unit (CMU) has been actively engaged in monitoring the situation, providing necessary support to the affected individuals, and maintaining active communication with their families.

He said national identity verification remained a critical component of this process which was completed expeditiously in coordination with the Interior Ministry and the relevant departments. Separately, the Foreign Ministry is also facilitating the return of 11 Pakistani nationals from Mauritania. These individuals have voluntarily chosen to return home and will be part of a separate repatriation process. The welfare of Pakistani nationals abroad remains an important priority of the government and it will continue to work to extend all possible facilitation in this regard, he said adding further updates will be shared as the repatriation efforts move forward.

## Yemen's Houthis release 153 war detainees

DUBAI (AP): Yemen's Houthi rebels unilaterally freed 153 war detainees Saturday, the International Committee of the Red Cross said, one of several overtures in recent days to ease tensions after the ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Previous prisoner releases have been viewed as a means to jumpstart talks over permanently ending Yemen's decadelong war, which began when the Houthis seized the country's capital, Sanaa, in 2014. However, the Houthis' release comes just after they detained another seven Yemeni workers from the United Nations, sparking anger from the world body. Those released previously had been visited by Red Cross staff in Sanaa and received medical checks and other assistance, the organization said while announcing the release. The Houthis had signaled Friday night they planned a release of prisoners.

The Red Cross said it "welcomes this unilateral release as another positive step toward reviving negotiations." "This operation has brought much-needed relief and joy to families who have been anxiously waiting for the return of their loved ones," said Christine Cipolla, the ICRC's head of delegation in Yemen. "We know that many other families are also waiting for their chance to be reunited. We hope that today's release will lead to many more moments like this." Abdul Qader Al-Murtada, the head of the Houthis' Committee for Prisoners' Affairs, said in a statement carried by Houthi media that those released were "humanitarian cases" that included the sick, wounded and the elderly.



# Lanjar responds to Chinese investors' legal concerns with urgent inquiry

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar has taken notice of the Chinese investors' decision to approach the Sindh High Court, issuing instructions to the IGP Sindh to immediately appoint an senior inquiry officer for a comprehensive investigation into the matter.

This is aimed at further strengthening the unwavering trust of Chinese investors in the Sindh Government and Sindh Police.

He stated that the Sindh government is committed to ensuring the security of Chinese nationals according to the set SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), and it is a top priority for the government to ensure all related matters and actions are properly executed.

Therefore, it must be ensured that at the provincial level, the "foolproof security" of Chinese nationals involved in both CPEC and non-CPEC projects is a joint responsibility of the Sindh government, Sindh Police, and local sponsors or hosts. He further emphasized that the goal of the Sindh government and Sindh Police is to facilitate and provide security to Chinese investors through mutual cooperation.

However, it is also essential that sponsors are regularly informed and that officers of the SPU (Special Protection Unit) take steps to monitor security measures.

Additionally, it is necessary to address any potential gaps, shortcomings, or deficiencies in the security measures for Chinese nationals. Implementing the measures outlined by law and SOPs is critical to eliminating any security gaps.

He stressed that if Chinese nationals face security-related complaints, senior officers must not only review the situation but also ensure a prompt resolution, as Chinese citizens turn to the Sindh Police for assistance regarding security concerns.

# Pakistan, Bangladesh strengthen ties in healthcare collaboration

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has highlighted the close and friendly diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh during a luncheon held in honour of the delegation from the Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS) at a local hotel on Saturday.

Welcoming the delegation, the minister said that under the vision of Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the first female Chief Minister of Punjab, the government is striving to provide state-of-the-art healthcare facilities to the people. He shared details about ongoing health initiatives, including the construction of the 915-bed Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research in Lahore, the largest government-run facility of its kind in Pakistan's history.

He said that the visit shared commitment of Pakistan and Bangladesh to advancing medical education and healthcare, paving the way for strengthened collaboration in the health sector.

Additionally, he mentioned that Modern Nawaz Sharif Institutes of Cardiology are being established in Lahore and Sargodha to improve access to cardiac care. The Chief Minister's flagship programs, such as the Children's Heart Surgery Program, the Transplant Initiative, and the Dialysis Program, were also highlighted as part of the government's commitment to public welfare.

Senior Vice President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) and Vice Chancellor of Fatima Jinnah Medical University, Professor Khalid Masood Gondal, expressed gratitude to Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique for attending the event and congratulated the newly elected office bearers of BCPS.

During the luncheon, the delegation, led by BCPS President Professor Muhammad Shahidullah, discussed healthcare initiatives, modern reforms, and matters of mutual interest with the minister. The delegation also visited the Pakistan College of Physicians and Surgeons Lahore Center to review its educational activities, which they appreciated.

The event concluded with an exchange of gifts between the provincial health minister and the Bangladeshi delegation, symbolizing the goodwill between the two nations.

The luncheon was attended by prominent medical professionals, including Vice Chancellor of King Edward Medical University Professor Mahmood Ayaz, Professor Rashid Latif Khan, and other senior faculty members. The Bangladeshi delegation included Vice President Professor Kohinoor Begum, Secretary Professor Major General (Retd) Ali Mian, and council members Professor Tehmina Begum and Muhammad Kamal Hussain.

# Musarrat says Bushra standing resolutely with Imran

LAHORE (PPI): Senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Musarrat Jamshed Cheema, said on Saturday that PTI founder Imran Khan had sent a message to the entire nation that in the struggle for true freedom, those who look beyond their personal interests and think of the country do not need any position.

In a statement by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Lahore office, she said: "This is how leadership emerges in nations. Imran Khan has also emphasized that this is not the time for internal conflicts but for unity, so we can achieve a peaceful struggle for Pakistan where justice prevails and everyone emerges victorious."

She further added that Bushra Bibi is standing resolutely with Imran Khan, and those spending millions and billions to create negative narratives would once again face failure. Speaking to the media outside Adiala Jail, accompanied by lawyers, Musarrat Cheema praised Bushra Bibi's unwavering support for Imran Khan during challenging times.

Bushra Bibi has sent a message to those who try to portray her as a weakness for Imran Khan through conspiracies and expensive propaganda, asserting that until Imran Khan is released, she will endure the hardships of imprisonment alongside him. Her determination is a slap on the face to the so-called powerful ruling families.

Musarrat said that a certain "princess," who was given a chief ministership of a province just to entertain her, should also understand that no matter how much she tries to defame Bushra Bibi, she will fail, as these conspiracies will never materialize.

She stated that Allah has chosen Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi to stand together in life, and their mutual love, trust, and faith begin where the opponents' assumptions end. Their unyielding struggle will always be remembered.

Musarrat also highlighted that Imran Khan has paid tribute to the efforts of the Insaf Lawyers Forum (ILF). She shared that they informed Imran Khan that the entire nation had its eyes on Adiala Jail, and mothers, sisters, and daughters are fervently praying for his success. She concluded by saying that the nation has full faith that Imran Khan will win and lead the country towards true freedom.

## PINS launches official website

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Institute of Neurosciences (PINS) has officially launched its website.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony on Saturday, Professor Asif Bashir, Executive Director of PINS, highlighted the importance of the step in introducing the institute to a global audience.

Professor Bashir emphasized that the website will soon feature additional functionalities, including links for scheduling patient appointments and accessing lab and radiological reports. He noted that these advancements will provide patients with improved treatment options and make medical information more accessible.

# Govt re-energizing sports fields in Punjab: minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Faisal Ayub Khokhar has said the Punjab government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, is revitalizing sports fields of the province. During his special guest appearance at a private school's sports gala here on Saturday, he said that "Khelta Punjab" was the vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, and efforts to make this a reality were in full swing.

The sports minister stressed the importance of extra curricular activities alongside academics for the mental development of the youth. He stated that when sports fields were bustling with activity, hospitals will remain deserted, indicating that physical and mental well-being can significantly reduce healthcare burdens.

Faisal Ayub Khokhar revealed that over 120,000 athletes had already registered under the "Khelta Punjab" programme. This initiative has also introduced club-level competitions for the first time in Pakistan's history, with more than 15,000 clubs having registered under the programme. He emphasised the essential role of sports in promoting a healthy, disciplined lifestyle among the public.

He believed that "Khelta Punjab" will bring new talent to the forefront and help elevate the country's name globally. He also acknowledged that promoting sports at the grassroots level required adequate infrastructure and facilities which was a priority for the Punjab government. To support athletes and improve sports facilities, the Punjab government has established an Endowment Fund for the welfare of athletes, he informed.

Additionally, the construction of sports complexes and gyms was progressing rapidly, he revealed.

Minister Ayub Khokhar also pointed out that the sports development fund had seen a significant 134 per cent increase in this year's budget, showcasing the government's commitment to developing sports in the region.

# Karachi's roads and helpless citizens

**Marya Haleema**

KARACHI: Karachi, a city bustling with life, is no stranger to challenges. Its streets are filled with countless stories, each shaped by the city's unending chaos. Among its many issues, traffic stands out as a persistent headache, one that often tests the patience of its citizens.

Last week, I had an experience that perfectly captured this struggle. It was a regular weekday, and like every other working professional, I started my commute home in the evening. The day held a special significance as a "Day of Gratitude" was being celebrated across the city. Little did I know that this celebration would turn my hour-long commute into a nightmarish journey.

The usual route I take was suddenly blocked due to protests and festivities. Even the alternative roads designated by the government

were shut down without prior notice. As cars piled up, the chaos spiraled out of control. Tempers flared, horns blared, and frustration filled the air. By the time I finally reached home, the clock had struck 9:30 PM—far beyond my usual arrival time.

Sitting in the suffocating gridlock, I couldn't help but think about the ripple effects of these roadblocks. Ambulances were stuck with their sirens wailing, food deliveries were delayed, and children returning from after-school activities sat helplessly in cars. The frustration wasn't limited to individuals—it was shared across the city, creating a collective sense of helplessness.

This wasn't the first time something like this had happened. Similar experiences have become an unfortunate norm for me and countless others. Whether it's a protest, a celebration, or a sudden VIP move-

ment, the city's roads often become a battleground. What's worse is the treatment meted out to those who dare to question the closures. Citizens and even traffic police are subjected to rudeness and hostility, all in blatant defiance of the rules meant to govern us.

There's also the economic toll of such chaos. Businesses suffer when employees arrive late or deliveries are disrupted. Students miss out on precious class time. The daily lives of ordinary people are thrown into disarray, leaving them to bear the brunt of poor planning and a lack of accountability.

Every other day, a new reason emerges to block the roads. Political, religious, and social groups all play their part, refusing to consider the inconvenience they cause to the working class and other citizens. These sudden disruptions are more than just an inconvenience; they're a harsh



LAHORE: Labourers busy in construction work of MPA Hostel Punjab Assembly. —APP Photo

## Anti-encroachment operation continues swiftly

LAHORE (APP): A vigorous drive against encroachments is continuing across the provincial capital, aimed at restoring public spaces and ensuring the smooth flow of traffic and daily activities.

Assistant Commissioner City Babar Ali Rai led anti-encroachment efforts at DC Complex and the iconic Anarkali Food Street. He also conducted operations at key areas including Jain Mandir Chowk, Fareedkot Road, Mozang, and Safa Wala Chowk, successfully removing illegal encroachments.

Similarly, under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Wahga Muhammad Amir Butt, 19 kanals of government land in Manhala was reclaimed. This was part of broader efforts to remove encroachments along Manhala Road, Faisal Bazaar, and GT Road. In Ravi Zone, Assistant Commissioner Tariq Shabbir led operations at Chah Miran Bazaar, clearing the area of illegal structures and vendors.

Assistant Commissioner Nishtar Muhammad Saleem Aasi also supervised anti-encroachment actions, contributing to the city-wide effort.

Assistant Commissioner Cantt Fatima Arshad led operations to clear encroachments from prominent areas such as Guru Mangat Road, Ali Road, MM Alam Road, and Firdous Market.

In Allama Iqbal Town, Assistant Commissioner Khawaja Muhammad Ameer Mahmood conducted operations against encroachments along Raiwind Road and reviewed efforts at Thokar Niazi Baig Flyover and Sher Shah Road. Under the leadership of Assistant Commissioner Raiwind Zainab Tahir, an anti-encroachment operation was carried out at Adda Plot in the West Wing Market.

Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza emphasized that the anti-encroachment drive will continue without discrimination until encroachments are completely eliminated. He further stressed that the cooperation of citizens is vital in making the city free of encroachments. The DC also urged all relevant agencies to work in coordination for the successful removal of illegal structures and vendors across the city.

# Tessori meets Qatar's Consul General

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori met with Qatar's Consul General, Nayef Shahein MR Alsulaiti, accompanied by prominent Qatari investor Abdul Aziz Mubarak, at Governor House.

According to a statement by the Sindh Governor House, during the meeting, the Qatari investor expressed a strong interest in investing in various sectors of the province.

The discussions focused on strengthening bilateral relations and translating investment opportunities into practical projects.

Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori assured the delegation that the current government is dedicated to providing all possible support and facilities to investors.

He highlighted that comprehensive assistance is being offered to investors under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

Consul General Nayef Shahein MR Alsulaiti acknowledged the province's immense investment potential and appeal. Prominent businessman Abdul Aziz Mubarak expressed their keen interest in investing in key sectors within Sindh.

# Crackdown on hanging power wires launched

LAHORE (APP): Acting on the directions of Commissioner Lahore Zaid bin Maqsood, joint teams of the district administration have initiated action against "hanging wires" across the provincial capital.

According to Commissioner's Office spokesperson, the teams, led by Assistant Commissioners (ACs), conducted operations in various areas including Main Market, Hussain Chowk to Firdous Market Chowk, and MM Alam Road.

On MM Alam Road, where an underground duct system is already in place, efforts are underway to remove all hanging wires except for the power cables. The district teams, under the leadership of ACs, are disconnecting all cables around electricity poles.

The joint teams, including representatives from Pakistan Telecom Access Providers Association (PTAPA), Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL), and district administration, are actively targeting hanging wires in these areas.

Wherever underground ducts exist, licensed telecom company cables will be routed through these ducts. In areas lacking underground ducts, cables from licensed telecom operators will be clamped to ensure proper alignment. Additionally, district teams are cutting and seizing cables from unregistered and illegal telecom companies.

Hanging wires have long been a source of multiple issues in the city, particularly in some localities.

These wires around electricity poles pose risks for accidents and contribute to the unsightliness of the areas. The removal of illegal hanging wires will not only improve safety but is also expected to boost the business of registered telecom companies. Bringing unregistered companies under the law is crucial.

In a divisional meeting, the Pakistan Telecom Access Providers Association (PTAPA) expressed support for action against unregulated hanging wires, emphasizing the importance of streamlining the sector.

This ongoing operation aims to create a safer, more organized environment in Lahore, reducing hazards and enhancing the city's overall aesthetic.

# PAA assures passengers after misreporting of animal on runway

**Muhammad Naeem Khan**

The pilot was uncertain whether it was a jackal or a dog. As a precautionary measure, the ATC instructed an incoming Emirates flight to perform a go-around while a ground team thoroughly searched the reported area. After confirming that no animal was present, the Emirates flight landed safely shortly thereafter.

It is also important to clarify that a circulating video showing a small dog being caught has nothing to do with the development that is being misreported.

The PAA emphasizes that this was a routine safety measure taken in accordance with standard operating procedures to ensure passenger and flight safety. Misreporting this incident as a "close call" or suggesting that two planes avoided some kind of mishap is absolutely absurd and entirely baseless.

Such sensationalist reporting is misleading, causes unwarranted panic among the public, and undermines trust. The PAA urges media outlets who reported on the incident to verify facts with relevant authorities before publishing news to maintain accuracy and responsibility in reporting.





# PTI govt deprives people of KP of development, says Engr Amir Muqam

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam said here Saturday that Pakistan Tahrir e Insaf (PTI) has deprived people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of development and failed to deliver on all fronts despite its 11 years rule.

Addressing a press conference on occasion of rejoining of former Provincial Minister Rehmat Salam Khattak of PMLN, Engr Amir Muqam said that PTI Govt had halted work on scores of developing projects launched by the previous PMLN Govt which was great injustice to the people.

He said had PTI Government not halted Chakdara-Madain and Khwazakhela-Bisham Motorways and Dir-Chitral expressway it would have been completed today benefiting people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He questioned that where was PTI's KP leaders when Imran Govt was ruling the country to address the issues of net hydel profit arrears.

Engr Amir Muqam said that addressing the issue of Kurram was the prime responsibility of KP Govt and assured full support of the Federal Govt in its resolution.

Engr Amir Muqam recounted the major achievement of Nawaz Sharif Govt especially in construction of motorways, making the country's load shedding free, defeating terrorism, bringing peace to KP and Karachi.

He said that Shahbaz Sharif Govt's prudent economic policies has slashed price hike to four digit, stock exchange achieved record growth and saved the country's from an imminent default.

Engr Amir Muqam maintained that instead to compete in development and performance with other provinces, the PTI leadership has started protest demonstrations at Islamabad to get relief for convicted PTI founder.

He said the people of Pakistan knew that PTI leadership was making politics on the name of their convicted leader by chanting hallow slogans for his release.

Engr Amir Muqam said that Govt has started negotiations on the request of the PTI with sincerity and an open heart.

However, PTI did not reciprocate well to the Govt positive measures and unilaterally announced closing of talks, which spoke about its non-seriousness.

Engr Amir Muqam welcomed Rehmat Salam Khattak for rejoining of the PMLN.

PMLN leader Capt Retired Muhammad Safdar highlighted Nawaz Sharif Govt achievements and hinted that Nawaz Sharif would soon start mass contact campaign from Abbottabad in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were deprived of quality education and healthcare facilities besides clean drinking water and that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was pushed towards backwardness during 11 years rule of PTI.

He said poor governance and rampage of corruption had kept Khyber Pakhtunkhwa underdeveloped.

On the other hands, he said that PMLN Govt had constructed Hazara Motorway, Lowari Tunnel Chitral, Nawaz Sharif Kidney Hospital Swat, Turbella IV, Danash Schools System and made Pakistan's defence impregnable.

He said that youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wanted jobs rather agitation and could not be deceived further on hallow slogans.

Rehmat Salam Khattak expressed happiness for rejoining of PMLN and assured to utalize his energy for strengthening of the party.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur chairing a meeting with delegation of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

## 'Pak-BD ties grow stronger'

PESHAWAR (APP): High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan, Iqbal Hussain Khan Saturday said that his country is moving towards democracy after current changes and relations with Pakistan would further strengthen with each passing day.

He was addressing media persons in PPC here. Bangladesh Press Attaché, Muhammad Tayyab, President Peshawar Press Club, M Riaz and senior journalists were also present on the occasion.

Iqbal Hussain Khan said that Bangladesh people firmly belief in democracy adding that country is fast moving towards democracy after current changes. He said that change of the setup in Bangladesh would lead country towards better future, development and freedom of press.

He said that speed for democracy is very strong in Bangladesh where people love freedom of press and expression. He said that elections would be held in Bangladesh in December 2025 or start of 2026.

Highlighting old cultural and traditional similarities between Pakistan and Bangladesh, he said that there are many vistas of future cooperation between two countries in sectors of trade, commerce, tourism, health, education and gemstone sector.

Appreciating universities of Pakistan for their educational standard, he said that exchange of students would also benefit countries of both people. He said that currently ten patients are admitted in hospital of Peshawar for kidney transplant that proves country's excellence in healthcare system.

# Muqam for immediate measures to eliminate power load shedding

PESHAWAR (APP): The Federal Minister assured full support in resolving the issues faced by PESCO to enhance the company's performance and ensure uninterrupted power supply to the public.

The meeting was attended by National Assembly Member and Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Energy, Idrees Khan, PESCO CEO Engineer Akhtar Hameed Khan, and other officials.

During the meeting, PESCO CEO Akhtar Hameed Khan provided a detailed briefing on electricity load-shedding, ongoing issues, and developmental projects in the province.

He highlighted the severe staff shortages within PESCO, noting that 201 officer positions and 13,802 staff positions remain vacant, leaving a total of 14,003 unfilled positions.

The Minister was informed about significant progress in reducing PESCO's system losses, which have decreased by Rs 4.5 billion.

Additionally, he added that efforts were ongoing to recover Rs 246 billion in dues. On the operational side, he said 525 PESCO feeders currently experience zero load-shedding, while load-shedding durations have been reduced on many others.

The meeting also discussed the establishment of the Hazara Electric Supply Company for the Hazara Division and it was informed that the staff deployment process had been completed, and it would soon become operational.

# Taimoor Ali Shah completes PhD

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a significant academic achievement, Taimoor Ali Shah has successfully completed his PhD in Management Sciences with a specialization in Finance from Qurtuba University of Science and Technology, Peshawar. His research focused on innovative approaches in financial management, contributing valuable insights to the field.

The graduation ceremony, held at the university's campus, was attended by fellow students, faculty members, and family and friends, all there to celebrate Shah's monumental achievement.

Dr. Bilal Afridi, the director of the Institute of Professional Studies Peshawar (IPS), was also present during Mr. Taimoor Shah's defence. He praised Mr. Taimoor's thesis and wished him well in his promising future. During his doctoral journey, Shah not only excelled in his studies but also engaged in various conferences and workshops, presenting his research findings and earning recognition from peers and scholars alike.

Speaking at the ceremony, Shah expressed his gratitude towards his mentors and peers, stating, "This achievement is a culmination of hard work, dedication, and the unwavering support of my family and professors. I hope to apply what I've learned to contribute positively to the financial landscape in our community."



Professors at Qurtuba University praised Shah for his diligence and significant contribution to the department's research profile. His work is expected to inspire future scholars in the field of finance.

# Judicial Academy completes training for judges

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy has successfully completed a three-day training for the first batch of Civil Judges/Illaqa Qazis on "fast-tracking of inheritance cases".

A Judicial Academy press release said on Saturday the initiative, spearheaded by Hon'ble Chief Justice Peshawar High Court, Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim, aims at expediting the resolution of inheritance cases, a significant backlog in the province.

The Peshawar High Court has taken a proactive approach by establishing special courts at the divisional level to address the growing number of inheritance cases.

These courts will gradually be established at district and tehsil levels. To ensure the effective functioning of these courts, the Judicial Academy is providing specialized training to judges.

The training focused on equipping judges with the necessary skills, knowledge, and understanding to efficiently and effectively resolve inheritance disputes. Twenty-four Civil Judges/Area Judges from various districts participated in the training.

The concluding ceremony of the training was graced by Hon'ble the Chief Justice Peshawar High Court, Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim, as the chief guest. Other dignitaries in attendance included; Barrister Ikhtiar Khan, Registrar Peshawar High Court, Jehanzeb Shinwari, Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy, Zia Ur Rehman, Faculty Dean, and directors and officers of the Academy.

In his Address, Hon'ble

the Chief Justice PHC underscored the significance of his vision to expedite the resolution of inheritance cases, which he identified as a major challenge within the province. He noted that a substantial backlog of 18,000 to 20,000 inheritance cases currently exists, and the establishment of special courts at the divisional level is a key step towards addressing this issue.

He urged the judges to work diligently and impartially to ensure timely and just resolutions.

The Chief Justice outlined various initiatives aimed at improving judicial performance and the welfare of judges. These include addressing the shortage of judges, implementing welfare projects such as endowment funds, and providing opportunities for international training for district judiciary judges.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for LG Arshad Ayoub visiting child protection pavilion at PDA Food & Culture Family Festival.

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) has arranged three days Food & Cultural Family Festival from 24-26 January at Central Park Regi Model Town here to provide quality entertainment to the residents of Peshawar and promoting critical social issues, including child protection.

Minister for local Government and Rural Development visited the Child Protection pavilion where, the Directorate of Social Welfare (MDs) with the support of UNICEF, set up dedicated Child Protection Pavilion to highlight ongoing child protection interventions through Child Protection Units and

Child Protection Vans.

The stalls aimed at raising awareness, sensitize the public, and generate dialogue about the challenges faced by vulnerable children, particularly those living on the streets.

Artwork by street children was also displayed alongside IEC materials on the importance of psychosocial support, community-based child protection case management, and other interventions.

Moreover, a dedicated space for families and children to experience and learn about the benefits of psychosocial support services was setup. Through this stall, the department aims to educate and advocate with public on preventing child protection violations and bringing these pressing issues to the forefront in a culturally engaging environment, to inspire public dialogue and action.

Creative art work corner was established to engage children visiting the vent in a innovative way.

Children put forward their creativity on blank canvases to express themselves and face paintings activity was done by the artist.

Sohail Ahmad, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF in his remarks mentioned children are faced with numerous protection concerns in various spaces where they live,

learn and play. The increasing engagement of children with on-line content also poses complex challenges to parents and caregivers to ensure their safety and protection. While there are many groups of children who are living in greater deprivations than others, children on the streets is particular example who demand an urgent attention and support mechanism.

He appreciated the efforts of Social Welfare Department to proactively seek various platforms and opportunities for amplifying advocacy on children's issues and emphasized that such interactions with children and caregivers through such cultural festivals certainly is an impactful way of socializing them with children's rights. He said to promote how to prevent violence against children and connections between society and government for access to services like 1121 Child Protection Helpline and Child Protection Units at the district levels was necessary.

The Directorate of Social Welfare extends heartfelt gratitude to UNICEF for support in advancing child protection.

A special thanks was also due to the Director General of PDA for providing a creative platform to engage families and communities in such a meaningful and impactful way.

# PDA arranges three-day Food and Culture Family Festival

## 68 professional beggars detained

PESHAWAR (APP): In an ongoing campaign against professional beggars, 68 individuals were detained in Peshawar and transferred to Dar-ul-Kafala. According to a statement issued by the office of Commissioner Peshawar Division here on Saturday, the operation was being conducted under the supervision of Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud, as part of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur's public agenda. Among those detained were 32 children, 25 women, and 11 men. The Commissioner emphasized that the operation would continue even during weekends to make provincial capital free of beggars.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi in a group photo with participants of five-day national workshop.

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi, has said that journalism is the fourth pillar of the state, and its value should be recognized by professional journalists as well as intellectual and sensitive circles of society.

The provincial minister expressed these views as the chief guest at the closing ceremony of a five-day national workshop jointly organized by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Peshawar, and the Women Media Center Karachi here on Saturday.

On this occasion, he was accompanied by Provincial Minister for Social Welfare, Special Education, and Women Empowerment Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Peshawar, Professor Dr. Muhammad Naeem Qazi, Chairperson of the Journalism Department Dr. Mehnaz Gul, other faculty members including Dr. Bakht Zaman, Media and Protocol Officer Ali Imran, and senior journalist Nasir Hussain.

Meena Khan Afridi announced the release of 1.5 million rupees for the immediate construction and installation of the production lab for the Journalism Department at the University of Peshawar.

He also expressed hope that the university's female journalism students would play an active role in raising awareness about emerging societal issues using the production lab.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Peshawar appreciated the minister's efforts for the university and said that his team is working towards the provincial government's policy of self-reliance.

In her message of gratitude, Dr. Mehnaz Gul welcomed the immediate release of funds for the production lab and assured that the students, faculty, and staff would make efforts to communicate the government's policy initiatives and public-friendly decisions to the people as a gesture of goodwill.

This, she said, would provide an opportunity for positive and constructive journalism to flourish.

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi, has said that journalism is the fourth pillar of the state, and its value should be recognized by professional journalists as well as intellectual and sensitive circles of society.

## Preparations begin for exams

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Educational Board has started preparations for the upcoming exams falling under its jurisdiction.

An official notification said on Saturday that instructions have been sent to private and government examination centers to ensure the installation of CCTV cameras for monitoring the purposes.

The notification stated that matriculation exams across the province are scheduled to begin on March 5. Strict surveillance measures will be implemented in examination halls during the exams.

The board authorities have emphasized in their notification that CCTV cameras should be installed in all examination halls to ensure proper monitoring throughout the exam period.





## In brief

### Bank looted in Karak F.P. Report

KARAK: Robbery in the private United Bank of Isak Khamari area of Tehsil Banda Daud Shah, escape with lakhs of rupees. (UBL Bank) A large-scale operation against the accused who looted in broad daylight, military helicopters and drone cameras On Friday, armed suspects robbed Rs 4.7 million from UBL Bank in Isak Khamari area of Tehsil Banda Daud Shah and fled. Major police action immediately responded and sealed the area and a major search operation was launched. After receiving information about the escape of the accused, the police set up checkpoints on various routes and the process of identifying them with the help of CCTV cameras is underway. The police have launched a man-hunt to arrest the accused who fled towards the mountains. Military helicopters and drones are being used to speed up the search operation and track down the suspects. In this operation, the suspects have been surrounded with the help of a helicopter and the chances of their arrest have increased. Police officials say that they will take all possible steps to arrest the suspects soon and provide more security to the public. .

### PTI female worker arrested F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Attock police arrested the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) female worker, Basat Tahir, on charges of involvement in violent incidents during the party's protest on November 26. According to the police, Basat was implicated in the violent clashes that took place during the PTI protest against the police on that day. The police statement revealed that she had participated in the violent events that led to clashes between protestors and law enforcement officers. The police further confirmed that Basat was the daughter of a former Member of National Assembly (MNA), Major (ret'd) Tahir Sadiq, and the niece of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. Separately, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan claimed that the government had shown a lack of commitment to initiate dialogue. Speaking to the media outside the Anti-Terrorism Court in Islamabad, Khan said: "The PTI had approached the government with sincerity and goodwill to initiate dialogue. "We sat for discussions with genuine intent and open hearts," he said.

### Development schemes okayed F.P. Report

SARGODHA: District development committee on Saturday approved 94 development schemes for district development. According to a spokesperson, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sargodha Muhammad Wasim chaired a meeting regarding the approval of district development schemes in which all officers and officials of local government and representatives of other concern departments, Director development Mehtab Yasin and all Assistant Commissioners (AC) were present. DC approved 94 schemes including 92 of local government and two of highways worth 88 crore of rupees. The meeting also approved the up gradation of two schools of education department and re-construction of very old and poor condition education collage.



KALAM: Tourists enjoying a day on snow at Panjota Picnic Point during their visit.

## Unauthorized rickshaws became headache

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Thousands of unregistered tez raftar, chengchi on urban routes in Mardan, and the reign of motorcycles, however, the young drivers made up for it, abnormal increase in the incidents of accidents, meaningful silence of the Excise Department and the local police.

The life of citizens is in the hands of young drivers, unregistered motorcycles have become toys for young children. Law agencies and parents are helpless, according to the details, thousands of unregistered tez raftar, chengchi and motorcycles rule the busiest markets and routes of Mardan city and the efforts are still made by young drivers who break the traffic rules without any fear, due to which there has been an extraordinary increase in the number of accidents, in which many innocent lives have been lost, while many citizens have been injured, the main cause of these accidents is the negligence and speeding of young drivers.

The Excise Department and the local police have given exemptions to underage drivers of unregistered tez raftar, rickshaws and motorcycles. Citizens have demanded the higher authorities to take strict action against unregistered tez raftar, chengchi and underage drivers including motorcycle owners to prevent further loss of precious lives.

**Student shot killed:** A twenty-one-year student shot killed by an armed person sitting in front of the Commerce College on Nisata Road in the urban area of Mardan after verbally repeating. The BS fifth semester student twenty-one-year Saudia died on the spot due to gunshot wounds along with his partner, the accused managed to escape after committing the crime, the bodies were shifted to DHQ Hospital.

On the report of the deceased's father, a case of murder was registered in the Sadar police station, and the police started an investigation. According to the details, the 21-year-old student of BS Semester 5 of Commerce College, Mardan, Muhammad Sudais, son of Falak Naz resident of Gharibabad, Mayar Mardan on Nasta

Road urban area of Mardan, yesterday after giving the paper, as soon as he came out an armed man named Habib, who was already waiting,

After the verbal abuse, the student was killed on the spot, in the meanwhile, Muhammad Shehzad son of Nasir Khan resident of Sharifabad Bypass Road Mardan got into a murderous rage after forbidding the armed man from firing and fired at him as well from which 24-year-old Muhammad Shahzad, who is said to be a friend of the victim, also died on the spot due to bullet injuries. The deceased had come from Saudia a few days ago, after which the marriage was fixed a few days later, according to the police report, Mohammad Sudais and a man named Habib had a fight two weeks ago, on which the murderer was waiting outside the college to teach the deceased a lesson.

MPA says almost four thousand PTI's workers held: Member Provincial Assembly and leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Ifthikhar Ali Mashwani has claimed and alleged that more than four thousand (4000) activists of PTI are behind the bars in different police stations of Punjab province.

The PTI provincial lawmaker Mr. Ifthikhar Ali Mashwani expressed these views on the occasion of his visit to Mardan Press Club to congratulate the newly elected office-bearers of journalistic body. He lamented and accused that two months were completed of the arrest of PTI workers who were laying behind the bars in different police stations of Punjab province wherein they were also being cruelly and harshly treated by the police officials.

He blamed that the civil marshal law had been imposed by the incumbent rulers as the country had not been run as per the constitution of Pakistan, adding that there was no rule of law in the country. To a query about the dialogues, going on between the government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party, he alleged that the federal government was not serious about the said talks.

## Digital X-Ray machine installed at THQ

F.P. Report

BUNER: Long awaited facility of digital X-Ray has provided under public private partnership in the tehseel headquarter hospital Pacha Kalay Pir Baba. The newly posted medical superintendent Dr. Kiramat confirmed to this correspondent that patient would avail digital X-Ray against payment rupees 200 only as compared rupees 500 hundred out side the hospital.

He elaborated a private party is providing CRC facility with film and maintenance while the hospital provided space technicians and electricity at the rate of fifty fifty between the parties.

He argued this facility is easy to avail as compared a patient has to pay many times multiplied charges and to waste precious time at private medical centers.

He confided the digital X-Ray facility at THQ hospital Pacha wala is provider right from 8 AM to 8 PM while 24 hours plan is in progress subject to availability of two more technicians.

Dr. Kiramt claimed the dental unite segregated in two parts one for female the other for male with the facilities of female and male dental surgeons.He continued to say the Gynecology unite updated with a Gynecologist and ultrasound machine where every Gynecology case would be dealt against out fee rupees 20 while ultrasound charges just rupees 180.

Dr. Kiramat to a question about unavailability of various test at lab in THQ hospital Pacha, replied , facility for PCR test is available but small nature tests need a special machine for which

demand had already been made before the DHQ. He added,if the said machine is not provided from government resources,then he in contact a donor who is eager to provide it on humanitarian grounds.He made a claimed on record, the said machine will be available at lab in THQ hospital Pacha within a month.

Dr. Kiramat while respond to another question,claimed all of staff members are daily make sure facial attendance in his office device so as to be present on duty as per hospital Daggar rota. He sent a message to all those interested in the hospital affairs especially the visiting patients to boldly register their genuine complaints in writing and verbal as well and assured timely action,he concluded with a message please cooperate and keep the hospital clean.

## 2 separate protests held in Shahdadkot F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam held a protest demonstration against the increasing unrest and lawlessness in Qambar Shahdadkot district.

Addressing the demonstration, JUI leaders Hafiz Uzair Gul Jagirani, Muhammad Yunus Lakho and others said that the district police have proven to be completely unsuccessful in maintaining law and order, while the life and property of no citizen are safe. On the other hand, criminals are committing crimes on the roads, paths and streets of Qambar Shahdadkot district, but the policemen, who protect the people, are sleeping soundly due to intoxication, due to which the people of the district have become helpless.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Peoples Party (Shaheed Bhutto) held a protest demonstration at Koto Moto Chowk against the rude behavior and injustice of the Medical Superintendent of the government taluka hospital in Shahdadkot.

The workers, holding banners and placards, raised slogans against the hospital's MS, saying, "Remove MS, save human lives." Addressing the demonstration, PPP (Shaheed Bhutto) central leaders Lala Hafeez Pathan, Asad Sindhi, Mazhar Khoso, Sikandar Soomro and others said that the Taluka Hospital of Shahdadkot has become a place of torment for the poor instead of healing them, where instead of treating the poor, they are being pushed out of the hospital, while this hospital has become useless for the people.

## Minister pays tribute to soldier F.P. Report

QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Agriculture, Industry and Craft Mir Ali Hassan Zehri expressed deep grief and anger over the martyrdom of soldier Din Mohammad Mengal in the face of robbers in Sakran. In his condemnation, he said that brave Din Mohammad Mengal bravely fought with the robbers, which the entire nation, including the people of the district, is proud. The self-interested elements want to destroy the peace of the hub, but their malicious ambitions will not be allowed to succeed.

He also paid tribute to SHO Amin Sasoli, who was injured in the attack. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri prays that may Allah grant patience to the heirs of the martyr and place Shaheed Din Muhammad Mengal in his mercy. He also prayed for the injured SHO Amin Sasoli that may Allah grant him recover soon.

Mir Ali Hassan Zahri urged the administration to arrest the robbers as soon as possible and punish them as per law. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that the district Hub is the ideal district in terms of law and order. District Hub administration has taken excellent steps in terms of law and order, but some of the beneficiaries and defeated elements want to score points by destroying the peace of the district, but we and the entire district administration to protect their people and we are alert Day and night.

# Women, poor benefit as registration under BISP continues

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The registration process for women and underprivileged individuals under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) is in full swing across all areas of Lower Dir.

Mobile vans are being utilized to facilitate this initiative, launched by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government. The process is being supervised by Ruhullah Shakir, a former nominated candidate for the National Assembly Constituency NA-6 Lower Dir.

Speaking on the occasion, Ruhullah Shakir emphasized the government's commitment to ensuring that all possible facilities are provided to the people, particularly the most vulnerable segments of society. "This program reflects our dedication to supporting the underprivileged. We will continue to take steps to improve the lives of the people of Lower Dir and beyond," Shakir stated. This initiative has been widely welcomed by local communities, with hopes that such measures will provide significant relief to those in need.

**Functions held to mark International Day of Education:** The International Day of Education was marked at the district headquarter Timergara with different colourful functions held. The female elementary and secondary education department arranged a grand function at the government centennial girls higher secondary school Timergara.

The district education officer female Rehana Yasmin presided over the event while all female sub divisional education officers Nasim Begum, Yasmin Javed, schools' heads, teachers and students were in attendance. The students presented speeches, songs and tableaux related to girls' education and got applause from the audience.

Speaking on the occasion the DEO female Rehana Yasmin highlighted the importance of girls' education and said that only educated mothers could better nourish the coming generation. She asked schools' heads and teachers to devote themselves to imparting quality education to students of public sector schools. She said the International Day of Education was observed on Jan 24 each year across the globe to emphasize the importance of

education. She said that it was the age of modern technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI), so the coming generation should be made aware of its use, advantages and disadvantages.

The district administration in collaboration with the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) also arranged a function at Balambat. The additional deputy commissioner Bashir Khan presided over the function attended by seminary students, teachers and social activists.

Addressing the function the ADC Bashir Khan said that education was essential for personal development, economic growth and social progress. The function was addressed by ADC Bashir Khan, NCHD assistant director Muhammad Asad Khan, head of Ahya ul Uloom Balambat Mufti Irfanul Din, Attaullah Shaheen and others. The speakers said that education under the United Nations' declaration was the basic right of each child. They said that education was rightly called the key to success as without education no individual and no state could progress and develop. Similar functions were also arranged in other parts of the district to mark the Day.

**Orphan children from Alkhidmat spend day at Dir Scouts Headquarters:** Orphan children from the Alkhidmat Foundation visited Dir Scouts Headquarters of Frontier Corps (FC) North, spending a memorable day with the officers and soldiers.

A statement from Alkhidmat Foundation said on Saturday that during the visit, the children paid tribute at the Martyrs' Monument, laid floral wreaths, and offered prayers for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks.

The FC's well-trained contingent presented a salute to the young guests in their honor. The visit also featured a weapons exhibition, where the children were briefed about the weapons and technical equipment used by FC North. The children expressed keen interest in the displayed arms and tools. The young visitors thanked the Frontier Corps North and Dir Scouts' senior officials for organizing the event and expressed their desire for such visits to continue in the future.

## Snowless season hits Swat's hotel industry hard

MINGORA (APP):

The Swat Valley, renowned for its stunning landscapes, glaciers and snow-covered vistas, is grappling with an unexpected downturn in tourism due to lack of snowfall this winter. The inadequate snowfall especially in Kalam, Bahrain, Miandam and Malam Jabba has left both tourists adventure sports enthusiasts and the local hotel industry reeling, with limited visitors this season flocking to the area's famed winter attractions.

Swat's winter tourism, once synonymous with skiing, snowboarding, paragliding and mountain retreats, has been severely impacted by the warmer-than-usual cold temperatures these days and an absence of snow in popular tourist spots such as Kalam, Madain, Bahrain, Oshu, Mahudhand and Malam Jabba have marred hotel and transport industries. This unusual weather pattern has caused many planned winter vacations tours packages to be cancelled or rerouted to destinations such as Naltar Gilgit-Baltistan and Muree that offer a more reliable winter snowfall experience.

Hotel owners are reporting a significant drop in business this summer in Swat. "The snow is what attracts tourists to Swat, especially during the winter season," said Ali Khan, manager of Swat Continental in Mingora. "Without it, people are simply choosing to go elsewhere especially Naltar and Muree. We're facing tough

times right now." Some businesses have seen a staggering 60% decline in bookings compared to previous winters.

Local authorities and tourism operators remain hopeful that the lack of snow is a temporary anomaly, but environmental experts warn that these shifting weather patterns may point to larger, more concerning issues due to climate change. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, while the country typically receives an average of 267.6 mm of rainfall annually, areas with dense forests, such as upper Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), usually experience more consistent snow and rainfall.

However, unpredictable snowfall trends are becoming more frequent due to deforestation in Swat, which could undermine the region's tourism-driven hotels and transport based economy in future. Abu Zafar Sadiq, President of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, noted that three each tour packages from Islamabad to Swat and Muree were cancelled this month due to the lack of snowfall.

These days, Swat hotels were jam-packed in the past but not this year due to lack of snowfall, forcing us to cancelled our tours planned this weekend to Kalam and Malam Jabba. In response, hotel owners are diversifying their strategies to attract visitors. Some are offering off-season discounts, while others are organizing cul-

tural events to showcase the region's rich heritage.

Swat's natural beauty, even without snow, remains an allure, but the absence of winter's hallmark snowfall continues to challenge the tourism industry. Environmental experts are also calling for action to address broader climate-related concerns.

Engr Fakhre Alam, spokesman for Small Dams KP, suggested that small and medium-sized dams could help mitigate the effects of unpredictable weather. "Small dams could be built in just two to three years, while large dams can take 10 to 15 years. This is a visible solution to counter the challenges posed by climate change," he said.

Fakhre Alam further emphasized that Pakistan would need an additional 76 million acre-feet (MAF) of water by 2050 to meet its growing demands, with small and medium dams playing a crucial role in achieving this goal. He said that 37 small and medium dams have been constructed across KP, with several others under development to further secure water resources in the face of changing weather patterns.

As winter draws to a close, there is hope that the snowfall will return in time for the spring season. However, for many in Swat's hospitality sector, the future of the valley's tourism industry remains uncertain. The experts underlined the need of massive plantations imperative to counter the climate change induced weather patterns in KP.

## Saleem expresses disappointment over alliance with PML-N

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has expressed his discontent with the current political alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), describing the experience as disappointing.

In a meeting with a delegation of a local organization, the Governor stated that if the partnership continues to falter, it could mark the end of their alliance.

Governor Haider Khan emphasized that the present government is only functioning due to the support of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP),

adding that hasty government decisions have often led to complications.

He voiced frustration over the non-implementation of his party's demands, despite being a key ally in the coalition. "The alliance with the PML-N has not yielded the expected results," said Haider Khan. "If this alliance fails to deliver this time, we will part ways forever."

The Governor also addressed the current political deadlock, acknowledging the role both the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the government have played in stalling negotia-

tions. He stated that the performance of the government should ultimately be judged by the people of Pakistan.

In addition, Governor Haider Khan affirmed the importance of minority rights, underlining that Pakistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their background. He also praised the work of the USA-based organization for its humanitarian efforts and stressed the need to encourage such initiatives. "The great people working for the betterment of humanity deserve recognition and support," Haider Khan concluded.





WEST BANK: Palestinians displaced by an Israeli military operation evacuate from refugee camp carrying an elderly man over rubble.

## Haitians demand priority after government spends \$3.8m

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP): The money materialized as soon as Colombia's president confirmed his visit to southern Haiti. The Haitian government invested more than \$3.8 million to more than double the runway at the airport in the coastal city of Jacmel, repair its streets, renovate its town hall and restore electricity to a population living in the dark for at least three years.

The speed at which the money materialized and crews overhauled the city left many Haitians stunned in a country whose infrastructure is crumbling and where gang violence has displaced more than one million people. "The government doesn't have money to remove us from the camp or provide security in the country, but it does have 500 million gourdes to spend on itself for a couple of days?" wondered Antoine Jean-Baptiste.

The 44-year-old unemployed electrician lives in a makeshift shelter like thousands of other Haitians in the capital of Port-au-Prince after gangs razed their neighborhoods. He

questioned how much the government spent to fly to Jacmel since driving there is too dangerous because gangs control the main roads leading in and out of Port-au-Prince.

"They can't pay teachers. Hospitals are closed. Was it necessary to spend all that money for a president that was visiting?" Baptiste asked.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro landed on the extended runway and was greeted with a red carpet, armed soldiers and dozens of small Colombian flags flying above the streets that he traveled through to meet with Haitian officials at an upscale hotel. His visit lasted about four hours.

Alfred Métellus, Haiti's new minister of economy and finance, said the extended runway would help boost Jacmel's economy as he announced the investment during a press conference. He said Jacmel's prison also is being renovated, and that customers are returning to hotels in an area that once thrived with tourists. "About a week ago, there was zero activity," he said.

"We see there's a possibility to make Haiti rise again."

But those living in Port-au-Prince and other cities and towns wonder when it's their turn to see an investment, and why Haitians aren't a priority. "The 500 million gourdes could have been useful for providing security, reinforcing the army and recruiting more young, devoted Haitians to serve the country, not for a lousy visit of a president that has his own problems," said Mario Jean-Pierre, 40, who lives in a makeshift shelter after losing his home to gangs. "Our kids can't go to school, we're not working, families can't eat and we're not getting basic necessities to survive here." In Jacmel, some celebrated the investment with caution, especially the return of electricity. Wood-jerry Gabriel, a multimedia journalist who lives in Jacmel, said residents had been without power for three to five years, and that not everyone saw their electricity restored.

He said roads also were paved, the town hall painted and a nearby park deco-

rated and cleaned. "It was just showbusiness," he said. "I'm not confident it's going to last." Some also noted that not everyone in Jacmel benefitted from the investment. Former local legislator Wilner Content told Le Nouvelliste newspaper that the city's cleaning staff have not been paid for months.

"What kind of government is this?" said Jean-Baptiste, who used to work in downtown Port-au-Prince until his company shut down because of violence. "They can't even take care of their own people, but they want to look good in front of other governments." Jean-Pierre echoed that anger. He used to drive a small colorful bus known as a tap-tap, but the owner of it fled for the Dominican Republic to escape gang violence and he was left without a job. Jean-Pierre questioned when things would change for him and other Haitians struggling to live in a country where more than 5,600 people were killed last year. "Can't wait for something real to happen," he said.

## Cities get creative to clear leftover snow and ice after rare winter storm

NEW ORLEANS (AP): Days after a winter storm dropped ice and record-breaking snow, cleanup efforts were underway in several major Southern cities such as New Orleans, where crews were removing snow the same way they remove trash, drink cups and plastic beads after Mardi Gras.

Temperatures were gradually rising across the US South, bringing hopes that remaining snow and ice would melt away. "We have to be honest with ourselves - we're from Louisiana, we know crawfish, we know football, but we don't really know snow and ice and that's okay," said Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development spokesperson Daniel Gitlin. "It's going to go away and we're better off letting Mother Nature do what she needs to do right now."

Up to 200 miles (320 kilometers) of interstate was expected to remain closed due to treacherous patches of black ice, Gitlin said. Louisiana has nearly run out of its salt supply after treating roads, he added. In the Big Easy, a private waste management firm has been contracted to repurpose equipment that's typically used to clean up Mardi Gras beads and cups to clear snow from the

streets.

IV Waste President Sidney Torres said his company has deployed a 4,000-gallon (15,000-liter) "flusher" truck to spray water on the ground to soften the ice for removal in the historic and festive French Quarter. The truck normally sprays lemon-scented fragrance "to get rid of that funky liquor, urine, puke smell from the night before," Torres said. "We're finding new solutions and better techniques to dealing with this." Arkansas sent Louisiana snowplows, dump trucks, salt spreaders and other equipment, Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry said. The snowfall likely broke several records across the region, including in Florida where a preliminary report of 10 inches (25 centimeters) in one town would set a new all-time record for the state, if confirmed.

Snow totals reached 3 inches (8 centimeters) this week in Savannah, Georgia, the most that the state's oldest city has recorded since December 1989. The snow was lighter in metro Atlanta, where the southern suburbs saw more snow and ice than areas north of the city. In Covington, southeast of Atlanta, Jesse Gentes used a flame thrower to de-ice

the roads in his subdivision. In better weather, he typically uses the flame thrower for brush removal, he told WSB-TV.

Light freezing rain was forecast in the port city of Brunswick and surrounding Glynn County, where local officials had imposed an overnight curfew because of icy roads and frigid temperatures. Officials opened three warming stations where people could escape the biting chill, and nearly 4,000 residents of the county were still without power, according to PowerOutage.us. South Carolina reported at least one death in the storm. A 71-year-old man died from a medical condition while shoveling snow in Berkeley County, Coroner Darnell Hartwell said. About 3-4 inches (8-10 centimeters) of snow fell in the area, according to the National Weather Service.

The snow and ice had staying power and left a mess on the roads in coastal South Carolina. In Charleston, ice that melted and then refroze overnight closed the James Island Connector, a bridge that links the city to its western suburbs. Police said on social media that "while crews are working hard, it is unlikely to reopen soon." Schools and county offices

remained closed as officials in most areas south and east of the state capital, Columbia, asked people to stay home at least one more day.

It was a similar story in North Carolina, where slick roads remained a danger to drivers after snow melted and then refroze overnight. Schools were also affected, including in Cumberland County where Fayetteville is located, where the school system announced that students would have an "asynchronous" learning day allowing students to complete assignments at home. Several other school districts operated on a two-hour delay. Some school systems in central and south Alabama remained closed because of concerns about remaining ice on roads or the possibility of frozen pipes in schools. In coastal Baldwin County, sections of Interstate 65 and Interstate 10 were shut down because of ice. Across the South, airports were gradually recovering from the weather interruption. Nationwide, about 600 flights scheduled to fly into or out of US airports had been canceled by midday - a marked improvement over previous days when the storm was at its peak, according to the flight tracking service FlightAware.com.

## Bangladesh's high growth under ousted PM Hasina was 'fake': Yunus

DAVOS (Reuters): The head of Bangladesh's interim government, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, said that his country's high growth under ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was "fake" and faulted the world for not questioning what he said was her corruption.

Yunus, 84, an economist and the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner, took charge of the South Asian country's interim government in August after Hasina was forced to flee to neighbouring India following weeks of violent protests. Hasina

has been credited with turning around the economy and the country's massive garments industry during her 15 years in power, although critics have accused her of human rights violations and suppressing free speech and dissent.

Hasina, who had ruled Bangladesh since 2009, is being investigated there on suspicion of crimes against humanity, genocide, murder, corruption and money laundering and Dhaka has asked New Delhi to extradite her. Hasina and her party deny wrongdoing,

while New Delhi has not responded to the extradition request.

"She was in Davos telling everybody how to run a country. Nobody questioned that," Yunus told Reuters in an interview on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in the Swiss Alpine resort. "That's not a good world system at all." "The whole world is responsible for making that happen. So that's a good lesson for the world," he said. "She said, our growth rate surpasses everybody

else. Fake growth rate, completely." Yunus did not elaborate on why he thought that growth was fake, but went on to stress the importance of broad-based and inclusive growth, and the need to reduce wealth inequality.

Annual growth in the Muslim-majority country of 170 million people accelerated to nearly 8% in the financial year 2017/18, compared with about 5% when Hasina took over in 2009, before the impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine pulled it down.

## Philippines to pick venue for case against Beijing

MANILA (Reuters): The Philippines will soon decide on an international platform to sue China for alleged damage to the marine environment, its justice minister said, as it pursues a second high-profile legal challenge against Beijing over the South China Sea.

The Philippines won a landmark case at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 that found China's sweeping claim of sovereignty in the South China Sea had no basis under international law. It now wants to hold Beijing accountable for what it says is its harvesting of giant clams and substantial environmental damage to coral reefs in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. "We're in discussion and the decision has to come very soon," Justice Secretary Crispin Remulla said, referring to which legal forum to file the case.

"The sins are really so obvious," he said. "In the end, this is the best way to attack. There are many ways of solving a problem, but this is one of the most novel ways." China was incensed by the 2016 arbitration case and has refused to recognise it, doubling down on its efforts to assert its sovereignty claim with an armada of coast guard and fishing militia, hundreds of kilometres off its mainland.

Beijing, which has built manmade islands on top of reefs, some with missile systems and runways, has denied harming marine ecosystems in the region and has accused the Philippines of the same. Manila rejects that. A 2023 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found China's construction activity buried more than 4,600 acres (1,861 hectares) of reef.

The environmental dispute has become another flashpoint in a long-running territorial row between China and US ally the Philippines, which has seen repeated confrontations between vessels over disputed features in Manila's EEZ, including the Scarborough Shoal, the Second Thomas Shoal, and Sabina Shoal. Remulla said the case build-up is backed by "a lot of evidence" from the Philippine coast guard and other agencies on the frontlines of the South China Sea.

## Trump has canceled Biden's rules

WASHINGTON (AP): Donald Trump took office eight years ago, pledging to "drain the swamp" and end the domination of Washington influence peddlers. Now, he's opening his second term by rolling back prohibitions on executive branch employees accepting major gifts from lobbyists, and ditching bans on lobbyists seeking executive branch jobs or vice versa, for at least two years.

Trump issued a Day 1 executive order that rescinded one on ethics that former President Joe Biden signed when he took office in January 2021. The new president also has been benefiting personally in the runup to his inauguration by launching a new cryptocurrency token that is soaring in value while his wife, first lady Melania Trump, has inked a deal to make a documentary with Amazon.

All of that comes as the Trump Organization has instituted a voluntary agreement that forbids making deals with foreign governments, but not with private companies abroad. "Trump is opening the floodgates for conflicts of interest and exploiting his power in office in the hopes of making billions of dollars on the backs of taxpayers," Lisa Gilbert, co-president of the government watchdog group Public Citizen, said in a statement. "Instead of focusing on the needs of the American people, Trump's only interest is to secure a next deal to line his pockets."

That Trump and his family are looking to convert political success into profits is no surprise. While seeking reelection last year, Trump sold bibles, gold sneakers, photo books and diamond-encrusted watches.

## Hamas' tight grip on Gaza complicates plan for lasting peace

CAIRO (Reuters): In neighbourhoods levelled by 15 months of war with Israel, Hamas officials are overseeing the clearance of rubble in the wake of ceasefire. The group's gunmen are guarding aid convoys on Gaza's dusty roads, and its blue-uniformed police once again patrol city streets, sending a clear message: Hamas remains in charge.

Israeli officials have described a parade of jubilant Hamas fighters that celebrated the ceasefire in front of cheering crowds as a carefully orchestrated attempt to exaggerate the Palestinian militant group's strength. But, in the days since the ceasefire took effect, Gaza's Hamas-run administration has moved quickly to reimpose security, to curb looting, and to start restoring basic services to parts of the enclave, swathes of which have been reduced to wasteland by the Israeli offensive.

Reuters spoke to more than a dozen residents, officials, regional diplomats and security experts who said that, despite Israel's vow to destroy it, Hamas remains deeply entrenched in Gaza and its hold on power represents a challenge to implementing a permanent ceasefire. The Islamist group not only controls Gaza's security forces, but its administrators run ministries and government agencies, paying salaries for employees and coordinating with international NGOs, they said.

Its police and gunmen - who for months were kept off the streets by Israeli airstrikes - were stationed in neighbourhoods through the Strip. "We want to prevent any kind of security vacuum," said Ismail Al-Thawabta, director of the Hamas-run Gaza government media office. He said that some 700 police were protecting aid convoys and not a single truck had been looted - a contrast to the massive theft of food by criminal gangs during the conflict.

A spokesperson for the United Nations in Geneva confirmed there had been no reports of looting or attacks on aid workers since the ceasefire took effect. In recent weeks, Israeli airstrikes have targeted lower-ranking administrators in Gaza, in an apparent bid to break Hamas' grip on government. Israel had already eliminated Hamas' leadership, including political chief Ismail Haniyeh and the architects of the Oct. 7 attack, Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif. Despite the losses, Al-Thawabta said the Hamas-run administration continued to function. "Currently, we have 18,000 employees working daily to provide services to citizens," he said.

The Hamas-run municipalities had begun clearing the rubble from some roads to allow vehicles to pass, while workers repaired pipes and infrastructure to restore running water to neighbourhoods. Dozens of heavy trucks ferried debris from destroyed buildings along the enclave's dusty main arteries. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not articulated a vision for Gaza's postwar future beyond insisting the Islamist group can play no role and stating that the Palestinian Authority - a body set up under the Oslo peace accords three decades ago that partially administers the occupied West Bank - also cannot be trusted under its current leadership. The Israeli government did not respond to Reuters' questions. Joost Hiltermann, of the International Crisis

Group, said Hamas' firm grip on Gaza presented Israel with a dilemma.

"Israel has a choice, to continue fighting in the future and killing people - and that hasn't worked in the past 15 months - or it can allow an arrangement where the Palestinian Authority takes control with Hamas' acquiescence," Hiltermann said. Hamas' military capability is hard to assess because its rocket arsenal remains hidden and many of its best trained fighters may have been killed, Hiltermann said, but it remains by far the dominant armed group in Gaza: "Nobody is talking about the PA taking over Gaza without Hamas' consent." While senior Hamas officials have expressed support for a unity government, Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the Palestinian Authority and a longtime adversary of Hamas, has not given his assent. Abbas' office and the Palestinian Authority did not respond to a request for comment.

Under the terms of the ceasefire, Israel must withdraw its troops from central Gaza and permit the return of Palestinians to the north during an initial six-week phase, in which some hostages will be released. Starting from the 16th day of the ceasefire, the two sides should negotiate a second phase, expected to include a permanent ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops. Reconstruction, expected to cost billions of dollars and last for years, would only begin in a third and final phase. The deal has divided opinion in Israel. While there was widespread celebration of the return of the first three hostages, many Israelis want to see Hamas destroyed for its Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel in which 1,200 people were killed and more than 250 taken hostage.

Even before the ceasefire took effect, members of Netanyahu's cabinet said they favoured returning to war to remove Hamas from power, once hostages have returned home. Three far-right ministers resigned. "There is no future of peace, stability and security for both sides if Hamas stays in power in the Gaza Strip," Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said.

A spokesman for Hamas' armed wing, Abu Ubaida, told Reuters the militant group would honour the terms of the ceasefire and urged Israel to do the same. Fifteen months of war have left Gaza a wasteland of rubble, bombed-out buildings and makeshift encampments, with hundreds of thousands of desperate people sheltering from the winter cold and living on whatever aid can reach them. More than 46,000 people have been killed, according to Palestinian health authorities. The ceasefire deal calls for 600 trucks of aid per day to reach Gaza. Al-Thawabta, the spokesman for the Hamas-run administration, said it was liaising with UN bodies and international relief organizations about security for aid routes and warehouses, but the agencies were handling the distribution of aid. A UN damage assessment released this month showed that just clearing away the more than 50 million tonnes of rubble left in the aftermath of Israel's bombardment could take 21 years and cost up to \$1.2 billion. As Hamas' security forces paraded on the streets, some residents had expressed pride that it had survived the onslaught.

## Cracks emerge in House GOP after speaker's threat

LOS ANGELES (AP): California Republicans are pushing back against suggestions by President Donald Trump, House Speaker Mike Johnson and other Republicans that federal disaster aid for victims of wildfires that ravaged Southern California should come with strings attached, possibly jeopardizing the president's policy agenda in a deeply divided Congress at the outset of his second term.

With Trump planning to visit the fire-ravaged state this week, resistance from even a few House members to his efforts to put conditions on disaster aid could further complicate an already fraught relationship between a reliably liberal California and the second Trump administration. Several Republicans who narrowly won California House seats in November have expressed dismay that the state relief could be hitched to demands in exchange for helping the thousands of Californians in their districts still reeling from this month's disaster.

"Playing politics with people's livelihoods is unacceptable and a slap in the face to the Southern California wildfire victims and to our brave first responders," Republican Rep. Young Kim, whose closely divided district is anchored in fire-prone Orange County, southeast of Los Angeles, said in a statement. In an interview aired, Trump said he may withhold aid to California until the state adjusts how it manages its scarce water resources. He falsely claimed that California's fish conservation efforts in the northern part of the state are responsible for fire hydrants running dry in urban areas.

"I don't think we should give California anything until they let the water run

down," Trump told Fox News' Sean Hannity. Local officials have said the conservation efforts for the delta smelt had nothing to do with the hydrants running dry as firefighters tried to contain blazes around Los Angeles. They said intense demand on a municipal system not designed to battle such blazes was to blame.

The wind-driven firestorms wiped out whole neighborhoods of Los Angeles County, left thousands homeless and killed more than two dozen people. Trump said earlier this week that discussions are under way in the White House to bring more water to perennially parched Los Angeles, alluding to rainfall runoff lost to the Pacific and the state's vast water storage and delivery system. "Los Angeles has massive amounts of water available to it. All they have to do is turn the valve," the president said.

California has long been a favorite target of Trump, who also referred to the fires in his inaugural address. In L.A., he said, "we are watching fires still tragically burn from weeks ago without even a token of defense." "That's going to change." Trump has made no mention of the multinational firefighting force deployed to contend with multiple blazes. Firefighters were gaining ground on the two major fires when a third blaze broke out north of Los Angeles and quickly burned through hundreds of acres of dry brush. Johnson, a Louisiana Republican echoing Trump's complaints, has said there are "serious" problems in how the state is managed. Those include insufficient funding for forestry programs and water storage. He also noted the public dispute between the L.A. fire

chief and City Hall over budget cuts.

Johnson said that Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass did not prepare the state or the city for what was to come. He particularly cited a 117-million-gallon reservoir left unfilled for nearly a year. Newsom has called for an independent investigation of the reservoir. Bass didn't directly respond to a question about possible conditions on disaster aid, saying in a statement: "Our work with our federal partners will be based on direct conversations with them about how we can work together." Some Republicans have suggested that the congressional relief package could become entangled with efforts to raise the nation's debt limit - and with the House so closely divided, even a few break-away votes from either party could alter the outcome.

That leaves GOP lawmakers from California in a political quandary: whether to forcefully stand up for their home state, often pilloried by the GOP as representing all that is wrong with America, while Republicans in Congress are eager to show a unified front and parlay their November election wins into what Trump has called a new "golden age" for the nation. Several California representatives agreed that the federal government must guard against the misuse of funds but argued that the money should not be held up or saddled with restrictions not placed on other states after tornadoes and hurricanes. The dilemma played out in social media posts by Republican Rep. Ken Calvert, who narrowly prevailed in November in his swing district east of Los Angeles.



## The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

\*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

# An exhausted empire

**S**AMUEL Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* has retained significant influence. However, it also continues to face criticism for its broad generalizations and controversial assumptions, along with the rising global interconnectedness of economies and cultures that challenge the inevitability of Huntington's vision. But there is an often overlooked yet critical argument in the work, where Huntington asserts: "The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion ... but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact: non-Westerners never do."

This statement fosters a deeper understanding of the historical dynamics of US hegemony. Huntington's statement emphasizes that Western global dominance in modern world history stems not from any inherent cultural or moral superiority but from its mastery of military technology, strategy and state organization. This proficiency allowed European powers to colonize extensive territories, outmaneuver rival nations and dominate global trade and the distribution of resources. Technological advancements, especially in organized warfare - such as firearms, naval forces and later air power - were pivotal in establishing and sustaining Western hegemony on the global stage.

The fact that Western dominance has historically been rooted in organized violence rather than cultural or ideological superiority, undermines claims that universal values such as democracy or human rights are the primary drivers of its global influence. Huntington's assertion explains why global military alliances such as NATO, the "Five Eyes" alliance, the quadrilateral security dialogue (the Quad) among the US, Japan, India and Australia and worldwide military bases, armed interventions in the Ukraine crisis, the Middle East and Afghanistan, as well as ruthless containment of China, are integral to the geopolitical strategy of the United States in the nexus between the "internal and external dimensions of its reliance on organized expansionist violence as its foreign policy tool". The current international order is designed to uphold the capacity and sustainability of US hegemony across economic, trade and security domains, as well as in cultural leadership, norm-setting and value projection. The architecture of this order was built with an unspoken yet clear underlying objective, explicitly articulated by George Kennan, a US diplomat: "We have 50 percent of the world's wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population ... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. We should cease to talk about vague and ... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better."

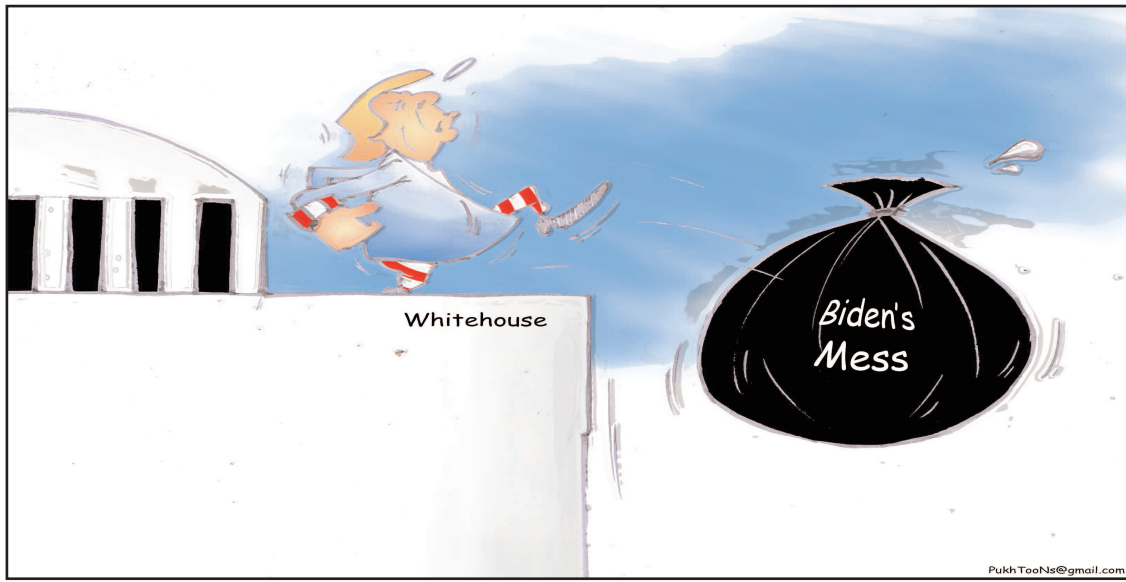
Kennan's candid statement revealed that the strategic objective of US foreign policy during the Cold War was less about engaging in an ideological battle against the "communist threat" and more about embedding a "reward mechanism" within the US-led international "rules-based order". This mechanism aims to preserve the vast economic and political inequalities of the international system and the immense privilege and power this global wealth disparity afforded the US. More importantly, this mechanism requires and perpetuates a reciprocal dynamic: the US has to align its internal social, political, economic and defense systems with the external imperatives of imperial armed expansion, while ensuring that its global strategies reinforce its internal structures of power. As Greg Grandin, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, rightly points out: "One of the things that has made America exceptional - compared to other crisis-prone and class-conflicted countries - is that it has long enjoyed a benefit no other modern nation in the world could claim: the ability to engage in ceaseless, endless movement outward." Greg's observation accurately captures the essence of the argument that the US pursuit of endless expansion - whether through militarism or markets - has been instrumental in alleviating domestic tensions and establishing resilient institutions. Recognizing the inseparable connection between US imperial expansion - military, economic and ideological - and its domestic stability provides key insights into how the US legitimized and sustained its global identity as the embodiment of the "American dream" and "American exceptionalism". By creating external outlets for economic surplus, fostering ideological cohesion, and promoting social stability and democracy at home, imperial expansion enabled the US to maintain its image as a unique and aspirational global power. This dynamic illustrates a positive connection between outward armed expansion and the preservation of the rewards mechanism, where military intervention and imperial expansion help maintain internal stability and support the broader geopolitical and economic interests of the dominant power.

The rise of Trumpism in 2016 should be seen as signaling the exhaustion of US imperialism. The imperial expansion and interventionist foreign policies that once helped diffuse domestic contradictions had been in retreat since the Iraq War, the Afghanistan War and the financial crisis. Now, the multifaceted challenges posed by the rise of emerging powers and the Global South - such as the BRICS - along with the Ukraine crisis and China's comprehensive rise, have forced a reckoning with domestic social and economic contradictions that were once displaced outward. In other words, the internal-external rewards mechanism - the "safety valve" of empire - has been exhausted. This inability to project and sustain outward expansion has exacerbated domestic crises, deteriorating systemic inequalities and political decay.

If the victory of Donald Trump in 2016 symbolized the emerging decline of US imperial overstretch and its impact on domestic politics, the question arises: Will his return to the White House represent a deeper structural crisis linked to the weakening of the US' ability to project power and channel domestic conflicts outward through expansion, resulting in a more inward-looking America-firstism? The new Trump administration is expected to reshape US foreign policy, resulting in the intensification of great power rivalry, the waning influence of neoliberal economics, and the retreat from neoconservative militarism. This transformation may be marked by a pendulum swing between two competing approaches: a revival of internationalism and exceptionalism on the one hand, and a resurgence of nationalist and authoritarian tendencies on the other. Furthermore, it is argued that the US under Trump represents, among other things, a renewed critical rethinking that imperial "organized violence" alone will not ensure continued American dominance. In this new context, the US' allies in Europe and Asia must prepare for a shifting international order, one where hegemonic superiority in outward organized violence no longer serves as the foundation of dominance.

### Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



# Western liberals have lessons to learn from Austria's far-right turn

**T**HE far-right Freedom Party (FPO), founded in the 1950s by a man who had been a senior officer in Hitler's elite paramilitary SS, is on the verge of taking power in Austria. On January 6, the country's President Alexander Van der Bellen reluctantly granted FPO leader Herbert Kickl - who is, like Hitler once was, referred to as "the people's chancellor" by his party - the mandate to form a coalition government after a centrist bid to assemble one without the FPO collapsed unexpectedly.

The FPO, which came first in the September election with 29 percent of the vote, is now in talks to form a coalition with the centre-right Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). Other than the FPO, this was not a preferred outcome for any Austrian faction. Like all other major parties, the ÖVP had entered the election on a promise to never form a coalition government with the party with Nazi roots. Yet after it became clear that a non-FPO alternative could not be agreed, the ÖVP swiftly changed its leader to walk back on this promise and participate in coalition negotiations.

The anticipated FPO-ÖVP coalition will not be the first one to involve the far-right party in Austria's recent history. In fact, the FPO was the junior partner in an ÖVP-led coalition government as recently as in 2019. But it would mark the first time that the FPO is the senior partner, and thus the main decision-maker, in an Austrian government. Political developments in Austria - a landlocked European nation of just nine million - rarely cause much of a ripple on the international scene. Yet, the potential rise to power of a proudly far-right party in Hitler's home country deserves special attention. Especially at a time when the hard right is making gains across the globe, and Russia is continuing its war of aggression at the heart of Europe, the FPO's success in Austria must be analysed closely. We must look at the situation in Austria to understand the failings of Western liberalism that got us here, and use this knowledge to come up with a strategy to prevent further gains by illiberal forces.

First and foremost, it needs to be recognised that an FPO government in Austria would be a significant win for Russia. When the FPO first got into government with ÖVP in 2017, it had a "friendship agreement" with Vladimir Putin's United Russia party. As interior minister, its current leader, Herbert Kickl, used his powers to order a raid on

Maximilian Hess

the country's own domestic intelligence service, which caused European security services to freeze out their Austrian counterpart.

Kickl's attack on Austrian intelligence was followed by some of Europe's most significant spying scandals, which all underlined how the new Austrian government paved the way for Russia to deepen its infiltration of and influence over European politics. In 2019, then-ÖVP leader and Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache was videotaped entertaining bribes from a purported Russian oligarch, which led to the downfall of the government. That government had also signed Europe's longest agreement with the Kremlin-owned energy giant Gazprom. The gas offtake deal running until 2040 is now set to be at the core of legal disputes around the end of Russia's gas deliveries via Ukraine to central Europe at the end of 2024. The FPO has admittedly refrained from engaging in the same level of overtly pro-Putin politics since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, but the ties between the far-right party and the Kremlin still run deep. The FPO foreign minister between 2017 and 19, Karin Kneissl, who infamously danced with Vladimir Putin at her wedding, is now based at a Kremlin-affiliated think tank in Russia. The party has also called for resuming the Russian gas trade. While there is no easy path for it to do so with Kyiv refusing to renew transfers, once in government, FPO would likely ally with the Slovak and Hungarian governments to put pressure on the Ukrainians to try and get its way.

Austria is also home to one of Europe's largest natural gas storage hubs, Baumgarten has historically been a key distribution point for Russian gas going west, but also serves Norwegian and other more northerly imports. As Eastern Europe will require more supplies from outside Russia for the foreseeable future, this strategic hub coming under the control of a government friendly to Putin is a significant risk to the continent's gas markets. The European Union, while undoubtedly aware of the threat, seems unable to do much to stop the rise of the FPO. Once the centrist negotiations collapsed, and the FPO entered into talks with ÖVP to form a government, European authorities began to make serious noises about potentially sanctioning Austria - which has been in recession for two years - for not keeping in line with its requirement to keep the national deficit under three percent

(this issue was all but ignored when other parties were in talks, despite a lack of consensus between them on how to address the problem). The FPO, however, swiftly responded to the EU's - admittedly weak - threat to trigger its excessive deficit procedure by announcing an agreement it reached with the ÖVP to cut 6.3 billion euros (\$6.6bn) in spending. Brussels swiftly agreed it would meet the bloc's deficit requirements.

On the other hand, the EU has been entirely silent on whether an FPO-led government would align with the bloc's values despite the FPO manifesto's call for Austrian "homogeneity" to be achieved through "re-migration". This stands in stark contrast to the EU's response to the 2000 entrance of the FPO to an Austrian government as a junior coalition partner for the first time. Back then, Brussels had levied sanctions threats. It subsequently formalised a process for holding member states to account if they violated EU principles or citizens' rights in response to the FPO's threat. The process, however, has never been used and appears unlikely to ever be. With the EU seemingly unable and unwilling to do more to change Austria's political trajectory, an FPO-led government in the country appears to be an inevitability. Like it is the case elsewhere in Europe, and even the United States, the rise of the far right in Austria is not solely of its own making, but a direct consequence of liberal, centrist failings.

Meanwhile, the centre-left Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) is equally tainted, with its last Chancellor Christian Kern also under investigation over his business dealings. Its third-place finish on 21 percent of the vote last September was its worst-ever performance. With the two main centrist parties in the country unable to convince voters that they can leave cronyism and corruption behind, the FPO filled the vacuum, portraying itself as a radical opposition to the establishment. It is, of course, nothing of the sort, with scandals of its own dating back to its late-1990s rebirth under charismatic firebrand Jörg Haider. But by swiftly breaking ties with its tainted leaders and standing on an increasingly popular platform of Euroscepticism, autonomy and social conservatism, it managed to finish the last election in the first place. The party even managed to repackaging its push for a discriminatory and racist policy like "re-immigration" as support for "a social state for true Austrians who

deserve it", making itself into a mainstream populist force standing against "corrupt" liberal parties.

Far-right forces began their rise elsewhere in Europe, under similar conditions, on the back of years, if not decades of perceived liberal failings and corruption. Germany's Alternative for Deutschland (AfD), which also endorses "re-migration" policies, for example, is poised to come in second in Germany's February election. European liberalism is in crisis - in Austria, in Germany, and beyond. And far-right forces walking towards power across the continent are threatening European gas markets, the future of Ukraine as it continues to fight off Russia's invasion, and the very values and principles Europe was once united around.

As such, liberalism in Europe is in desperate need of a new message. In this moment of crisis, we can perhaps turn to Austrian economist Leopold Kohr's essay "Disunion Now" for inspiration. Published in 1941 as the cost of the failure to unite against the far-right at the ballot box in Austria and Germany was approaching its horrific apogee, Kohr's essay offers the template for a possible response today. Kohr saw any potential "Europe of the nations" as doomed to fail unless it were based on autonomous entities as small as city-states. Kohr recognised that the desire for "homogeneity" enabled political cohesion. While he warned of the potential for this to lead to significant disputes, reminding readers that "the Duke of Tyrol declared war on the Margrave of Bavaria for stealing a horse", he argued that the small state nature would keep the costs isolated, writing that "the adjoining Duchy of Liechtenstein and Archbishopric of Salzburg never learned there had been a war on at all". Kohr's vision was based on creating not a "United States of Europe" but adapting Switzerland's model of cantonal sovereignty, which he argued would create the basis for a more stable federalised Europe.

Kohr's view is one European liberals must embrace. As the FPO's rise proves, they have already given up on using the federal powers they gave Brussels to oppose far-right governments. But as they offer no alternative to populist right-wing narratives, liberalism is set to continue losing at the ballot box. Developing a Kohr-ian alternative is the only suitable response to popular demands for more sovereignty and desire for local cohesion, and would in turn lay the basis for a more stable and thus effective Europe.

# Starmer must face them down

Polly Toynbee

**W**HAT a perverse act of defiance - two fingers up to government policy by a major company. Bidfood is one of the largest food distributors in the UK, with 26 depots supplying about 40,000 institutions and food service companies, including Manchester United, Subway and Five Guys. What's more, it supplies NHS trusts, the army, prisons and schools and the royal household. Yet it chooses this moment to derecognise trade unions, abandoning a longstanding recognition of the GMB and Unite. This reflects the rumbling resistance to the government's flagship working rights legislation that is now going through parliament.

The unions say that tearing up the recognition agreement came out of the blue: there had been no dispute at the company. Now the unions fear the company is doing it because it plans a P&O-style fire-and-rehire of its food delivery workers, reducing the terms of their contracts to preempt something that will be effectively banned when the new employment rights laws come into force.

Bidfood says that's a false scare, but gives no coherent explanation of this provocative action. When I spoke to company representatives, they gave me their statement, which only says they want "to work with our teams directly through our employee engagement forums, which we believe represent a wider range of our employees' views" and that "a number of employees" are "voicing concerns and frustrations over long delays in resolving issues" via the unions. A Bidfood GMB rep tells me that workers were offered a 33p an hour pay rise last year, but negotiated that up to 50p, so yes, a delay. Nationally, union bargaining power brings members 4.2% higher pay on average. This rep, like everyone, was blindsided by the unions' ejection: "We've always had good relations. Some managers are disgusted by this too."

Is this part of an "ugly rush" to sack staff before the new measures come into place? That was the warning thundered by the bombastic chair of the Confederation of British Industry, Rupert Soames, on the BBC's Today programme, in response to the increase in national insurance contributions and the minimum wage: "I think not only will they not employ, I think they will let people go. I think there could be quite an ugly rush before some of these things come into force."

A vigorous pushback against the bill was always predictable. It bans exploitative zero-hours contracts, ends fire-and-rehire and improves basic rights to holiday and sickness pay, and gives protection from unfair dismissal from day one. There will still be a probation period. Are the CBI really demanding the right to unfair dismissal? Dismissal by due process is allowed.

Expect union membership to rise: anti-union measures caused it to fall from 13m in 1979 to 6.7m in 2021. That contributed to the fall in pay as a share of GDP; in 1975, it accounted for 71%, and last year it accounted for 59%. The radicalism of this bill is its intent to tilt power back

from capital towards labour. Often overlooked is the bill's obligation on employers to allow unions in to address their workforce, hoping to recruit from the most vulnerable workforces in social care, fast food outlets, warehouses and deliveries.

The threshold for holding recognition ballots will fall, and workers will be able to vote electronically. The Tories warn this means more strikes, yet their union-bashing approach led to more strikes in 2023 than in any year since the 1980s. Employers will no doubt try to deter staff from joining, so the TUC tells me: "That puts pressure on us to come with a very attractive retail offer." Union membership brings not just better pay and safety conditions, with representation if disciplined or dismissed, but advantages such as free visa and benefits advice, free courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (though this was restricted in 2021 when Gavin Williamson, the improbable education secretary, axed the union learning fund), and an array of free courses for upskilling.

Alongside the CBI's admonitions about a "hole in the confidence and trust that business has in the government", the British Chambers of Commerce also warns of dire consequences: "the warning lights on recruitment, employment and training are already flashing". Others stir rumours that Labour will backtrack: the Financial Times both predicts it and calls for it, protesting this week that the banning of fire-and-rehire is "too tightly drawn, requiring companies to be almost insolvent before they can change contracts". The government strongly resists this argument: imminent insolvency and resulting mass job losses will remain the only justification for a fire-and-rehire cut in pay and terms. It may make the government appear in a more reasonable light when confronted by the ever-combative Sharon Graham of Unite, who opposes the insolvency proviso and opposes the addition of the word "exploitative" to the ban on zero-hours contracts, which still allows some workers to choose variable hours. "Failure to end fire-and-rehire and zero-hours contracts once and for all will leave more holes than Swiss cheese that hostile employers will use," she says.

In the face of an array of employers threatening job cuts, such as Lord Wolfson of Next (more than £1bn profit last year), the TUC tells me it has no fear of the government backtracking from the radicalism of the bill: "From our perspective, there are no red lights flashing. Employers made the same noise over introducing the minimum wage." Darren Jones, treasury secretary, said last week there would be no retreat, echoed by Keir Starmer at PMQs.

"Make work pay" is Labour's rubric for this act: growth depends on better pay, it says. Polls show overwhelming support for these working rights. People see the need for stronger protection of a workforce that has become more insecure and vulnerable. Bidfood's dash to expel unions before the bill passes will act as a useful reminder.

The Telegraph

# Trump's return and its impact on Türkiye-Africa relations

**F**ROM a real estate merchant to the US president, Donald Trump entered the political arena in 2016 with swift success, stunning local and international observers. His first election victory was highly improbable [1] according to opinion in the US, given the overwhelming reality that candidates with no government or military experience had ever been chosen. President Donald Trump's first tenure, ipso facto, was equally unconventional, and he put his stamp on history by facing two impeachment trials [2] for abuse of power - and escaping unscathed.

This time around, however, the president's triumph did not surprise many. His new term is expected to be met with less resistance, as his party has won both [3] chambers of Congress-the House of Representatives and the

Senate. What could Trump's full control of Washington mean for the Africa in general, and Türkiye-Africa relations in particular? Is there a glimmer of hope or looming despair on the horizon? Though no one can predict what will happen, some indications can be derived by decoding his first term's economic, military, political and personal results.

First and foremost, China will likely be the epicenter of Trump's foreign policy focus, since he has made no secret of his intention to adopt a headline stance [4] on the country, regardless of its economic, demographic and geopolitical potential. Approaching a "zero-sum game" strategy with China, new tensions over trade, technology and the Taiwan issue will likely be unveiled. This could spur China to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy to counter the US containment

strategy. Africa will be influenced by such tension, as Beijing sees the continent as the "base" from which a rising China could best extend its global power. China's keenness to become a leading global actor comes during Trump's America First focus and will be materialized through deepening ties [5] in Africa.

China-US competition will ultimately pose various challenges for African states, requiring them to maintain a state of economic preparedness for unexpected challenges. China's unyielding Africa policy could thus confine foreign actors, including Turkish firms and companies operating in Africa. Conversely, new market conditions are likely to create different opportunities for Turkish companies, though. The latest trend in Türkiye's trade relations [6] with African

countries, which increased nearly eight-fold over the past 20 years, from \$5.4 billion in 2003 to \$41.3 billion in 2023, may change.

Foreign aid will be another issue at stake in Türkiye-Africa relations during Trump's second period. Africa generally receives a large share of annual US humanitarian assistance, and around 70% of this goes to health programs. In his first term, Trump made sweeping cuts [7] to the US Agency for International Development and withdrew funding from health organizations.

US aid flow to Africa, which currently stands at around \$8 billion annually, [8] is likely to be cut by 30% in Trump's second term. Cuts to programs such as PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), will especially disrupt vaccination and AIDS programs in Africa. As

Africa braces for these cuts, Türkiye could extend its footprint on this issue, portraying itself as a great emerging donor of its own accord. Turkish Official Development Assistance (ODA), which began at \$85 million in 2002, amounted to nearly \$8 billion [9] in 2022. Juxtaposed with the "virtuous power" and "benevolent state" paradigm, Ankara could have the chance to upgrade its aid model through the catch-all term of "Turkish-type development assistance model" (TDAM), but this could burden the country with additional economic costs.

Although Middle East allies will be eager for the US to protect its military base in Djibouti, a potential military disengagement of the US could certainly create a vacuum that Moscow will be keen to exploit. Therefore, Trump's military steps likely present Russia with a major defense

opportunity to expand its stimulus over the continent. The retreat of Russian forces in Syria revealed a "Saigon Moment" [12] for Russia to halt the war in Ukraine. If the conflict ends, Russia will have a chance to deploy more security insight towards Africa. This could open new avenues for both Türkiye and Russia to expand their military engagement more deeply and comprehensively in the continent to tackle current challenges, particularly in the Sahel region.

The competition between the US, China and Russia in Africa will create both a fertile new set of relationships for economic leverage and a whole set of new complex challenges within it. Importantly, these opportunities depend to a large degree on how Türkiye will apply its capability through its political, military and humanitarian role.



# Why is Ukraine struggling to mobilise its citizens to fight?

Peter Korotaev & Volodymyr Ishchenko

**OVER** the past few months, Ukraine has increasingly been under pressure from its Western allies to start mobilising young men under the age of 25. This came after the mobilisation law passed in April did not deliver the expected number of recruits. Even the lowering of medical requirements - allowing men who had had HIV and tuberculosis infections to serve - did not help much.

Some pro-Western Ukrainian officials, like Roman Kostenko, the secretary of Ukraine's parliamentary security committee, have also pressed for lowering the age. Kostenko said he is being constantly queried by members of the US Congress why the Ukrainian government asks for weapons but isn't willing to mobilise its youth. So far President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has refused to move forward. Part of the reason is demographic fear: Sacrificing young men en masse in a prolonged conflict risks condemning Ukraine to an even bleaker future, where demographic decline undermines its ability to rebuild economically, socially, and politically.

But the Ukrainian president also fears public anger. There is growing and palpable reluctance among Ukrainians to fight in the war. And this is despite the fact that their leaders and civil society frame it as an existential struggle for survival. Many Ukrainians are indeed fatigued after nearly three years of full-scale war, but their war-weariness is not just a matter of exhaustion. It stems from pre-existing fractures in the nation's sociopolitical foundations, which the war has only deepened.

Public opinion polls, Ukrainian media reports, and social media posts we have examined, as well as in-depth interviews we have conducted with Ukrainians as part of our research on the consequences of post-Soviet revolutions and wars, help elucidate some of these dynamics. Like in all post-Soviet and post-communist states, a new social contract emerged in the 1990s that reflected the new sociopolitical realities in Ukraine. State-citizen relations were reduced to the following: the state won't help you, but in return, the state won't harm you either.

Meanwhile, politics became animated by the dramatic Maidan revolutions of 2004 and 2014. The opportunities created by these uprisings were repeatedly co-opted by narrow elite groups - oligarchs, the professional middle class, and foreign powers - leaving large portions of Ukrainian society excluded and their interests underrepresented. Before 2022, this situation was tolerable for many Ukrainians to an extent. The borders were open, so millions were able to emigrate. In 2021, Ukraine occupied the eighth place in the ranking of countries with the most international migrants - more than 600,000 left in that year alone. Remittances from the emigrants helped those who stayed behind maintain an acceptable standard of living. But in the long term, this path did not seem sustainable. In 2020, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal admitted that the state will struggle to pay state pensions in a decade and a half. After years of declining state capacity and de-development, Ukrainians were unsurprised. The news was received as another indication that one should save up American dollars and try to emigrate.

The war put the already weak social contract to the test. All of a sudden, a state that had hardly been present in Ukrainians' lives demanded that they sacrifice themselves for its survival. In the wake of the failure of Russia's initial invasion plan, the surge of unity fuelled a wave of volunteerism. However, as the war ground on, a stark realisation emerged: the state is distributing the burdens and benefits of the war unequally. While some segments of society gain materially or politically, others bear disproportionate sacrifices, fuelling a growing sense of alienation within a large part of the Ukrainian population. The state has done little to strengthen its relations with citizens in the face of waning war enthusiasm. Instead, government officials have bombarded the population with messaging about self-reliance.

In September 2023, Minister of Social Policy Oksana Zhovniovich called on citizens not to remain dependent on benefits, since this makes them "children". She proposed a "new social contract" in which citizens accept social spending cuts and live independently as "free swimmers". In September 2024, the government announced it was not going to increase the minimum wage and social security payments in 2025 despite inflation reaching 12 percent.

As the third year of the war is about to wrap up, the consequences of this weak social contract are becoming increasingly apparent. The narrative of fighting an existential war no longer seems to move the majority of Ukrainians. The words of one of our interviewees are quite illuminating. This person fundraises for non-lethal military equipment for the army - but not drones or other weapons, because he believes that "the state completely failed in its most critical role of preventing war". He told us: "I don't understand why this war should fully become my war in the truest sense of the word."

He said he found it hard to be open about his views: "When you want to live as you wish, you only

speak openly in close circles. Either you have to let go of all ambitions, part of your identity, or consider emigration because this country will ultimately become completely foreign to you." The attitude that this is not "our war" can be seen reflected in polls conducted throughout the past year, in which a silent majority does not seem ready to mobilise to fight.

In an April 2024 poll, only 10 percent of respondents said that most of their relatives were ready to be mobilised. A June survey showed that only 32 percent "fully or partly supported" the new mobilisation law; 52 percent opposed it, and the rest refused to answer. In a July poll, only 32 percent disagreed with the statement "mobilisation will have no effect other than increased deaths". A mere 27 percent believed that forced mobilisation was necessary to solve issues at the front line.

According to another July poll, only 29 percent considered it shameful to be a draft dodger. A consistent pattern can be seen in these surveys: those supporting the continuation or strengthening conscription only constitute about a third of the population; a significant minority evade responding to such questions, reflected in the large number of "hard to say" or "don't know" answers; and the rest openly reject mobilisation.

These attitudes on conscription may seem at odds with results from "victory" polls. The majority in such surveys still indicate that "victory" for Ukraine should mean reclaiming all territories within its 1991 borders and rejecting any concessions to Russia. But there is really no contradiction here. It is evident that while most Ukrainians would like to see "total victory", they are unwilling to sacrifice their lives for this goal and empathise with others who feel the same. That is why the majority also supports a negotiated peace as soon as possible.

The lack of motivation to fight is also apparent in the rates of draft dodging. Per the April mobilisation law, all men eligible for mobilisation were to submit their details to the draft offices by July 17. By the deadline, only 4 million men had done so, while 6 million had not. And of those who entered their details, various officials have said that from 50 to 70-80 percent had medical or other reasons allowing them to legally avoid mobilisation.

Meanwhile, groups and channels have proliferated on Telegram to alert people to the presence of mobilisation officers in certain areas; they have continued to run despite some members getting arrested. The mobilisation authorities have launched investigations against 500,000 men for draft evasion so far. Draft dodging has not only revealed the scope of the crisis of motivation but also the extent to which the war has massively deepened class divides.

Over the past year, there have been regular news reports of officials accepting massive bribes in exchange for exempting men from military service. In one case made public in early October, a top medical official who also served on a local council representing the ruling Servant of the People party, amassed a fortune taking bribes to facilitate draft-dodging through disability slips. The local police said it found \$6m in cash and released a photo of a family member who had photographed themselves on a bed with piles of dollars. Less than two weeks later, Ukrainian media reported that nearly all prosecutors in the region where the medical official operated were registered as "disabled". In the aftermath of the scandal, Zelenskyy sacked some officials and triumphantly abolished the institution responsible for giving out disability slips. Uncomfortable questions about why top officials didn't notice these corrupt schemes were dismissed.

Those who do not have thousands of dollars to pay for a medical exemption or bribe border police, attempt dangerous journeys at Ukraine's western borders. As a result, a significant portion of Ukraine's border patrol is stationed on the "peaceful" western borders. Since 2022, 45 Ukrainians have drowned in the Tyssa River on the border with Romania and Hungary in desperate attempts to flee. There have been multiple cases of Ukrainian men trying to escape the country shot and killed by their own country's border patrol. In March, a video went viral of a border patrol guard madly shooting into the Tyssa to demonstrate what he does to draft dodgers, saying: "\$1000 to cross this river isn't worth it".

There have been cases of dozens of men attempting to cross the border at a time. Once caught, photographs of these "shameful draft dodgers" have been shared on social media, with the captions often stating that they are being sent to the front.

Thus, those who make it to the front line are usually too poor or too unfortunate to have been caught by draft officers. As parliamentarian Mariana Bezuhla put it in mid-September after visiting the front lines near Pokrovsk, the people there were mainly those who could not "decide things" with a bribe. In a November TV interview, a military commander said that 90 percent of those at the front are "forcibly mobilised villagers". Army officers often complain of

the low quality of these "busified" troops, the term referring to the minibuses into which draft-age men are dragged off the streets. No wonder there have been hundreds of arson attacks against these vehicles.

The effect of such violent coercion unleashed onto mostly impoverished Ukrainian men is the extremely low morale at the front line. As of November 2024, there were four mobilised soldiers for every volunteer. Mass desertions by mobilised soldiers have been leading to constant retreats. In recent weeks, reports have surfaced that hundreds of "busified" men in the 155th brigade deserted before they were deployed to stop the advance of the Russians near Pokrovsk. In a July Facebook post, a mobilised Ukrainian journalist bemoaned the lack of patriotism among his fellow conscripts. He wrote that most of the people he served with were from poor, rural regions and were more interested in discussing government corruption than anything else. His attempts to remind them of their patriotic duty failed to convince them: "A significant portion of the people openly state: Over my 30-40-50 years, the state hasn't given anything except a Kalashnikov. Why should I be a patriot?" he observed. These soldiers certainly aren't insufficiently acquainted with the realities of war. They aren't distant civilians tired of frontline footage on the television. But they have good reasons to be suspicious of patriotic imperatives.

Morale problems are compounded by the abuse recruits suffer during mobilisation and deployment. Each month sees a new case of someone beaten to death in the mobilisation stations. In December, media revelations pointed to systemic torture and extortion within the ranks of the Ukrainian army. In a September interview with a local media outlet, Ukrainian officer Yusuf Walid claimed that 90 percent of officers treat the mobilised "like animals".

Walid also said that the generation of those born in the 1980s and '90s are "hopeless" in terms of their patriotic commitments - all they care about is economic survival. This is hardly surprising, given that the post-Soviet Ukrainian social contract convinced individuals to focus on their own survival rather than asking for "handouts" from the state. While the rural poor are coerced into fighting at the front lines, there is a well-off urban minority that lives a relatively protected, comfortable life in Kyiv and Lviv. This "warrior elite" - composed of activists, intellectuals, journalists and NGO workers - maintains the patriotic narrative that Ukraine must fight till victory. Yet, it seems many members of this elite appear to be reluctant to join the fight at the front line. There have been a number of high-profile patriotic journalists and activists who have called for mass mobilisation, while themselves seeking exemptions on medical or other grounds.

Among them is Yuri Butusov, a very well-known military journalist, who reportedly sought an exemption on the grounds of being a father of three children, and Serhiy Sternenko, a prominent nationalist "activist", who claimed disability exemption for "bad eyesight". In June, the employees of 133 NGOs and enterprises receiving foreign funding were granted official exemption from mobilisation. Many of these organisations are not involved in maintaining any critical infrastructure. While enthusiastically supporting the pro-war narrative of fighting until total "victory", Ukraine's patriotic intelligentsia blames all corruption and the growing failures of the state on the statist Soviet past.

In their view, the solution is simply to continue to diminish the role of the state. But austerity has not only done little to endear Ukrainians to their government, especially in times of war, but has also largely failed in terms of its stated aims. One just has to look at the various corruption scandals in enterprises run by highly paid "reform" officials, who are supported by Western allies. These "reformed" companies mainly wage the struggle against corruption by keeping the rest on minuscule wages, like state railway company Ukrzalyznyiysia, or letting go of their workers. The anticorruption rhetoric is blind to the class divides that it helps entrench. Ordinary Ukrainians often joke about the high salaries received by "anti-corruption observers" and young "reform" members of the board of directors of top state companies. Anticorruption serves more often than not as a justification for neoliberal policies that favour the business interests of international capital. Ironically, the dismantling of state enterprises driven by such considerations severely weakened Ukraine's massive Soviet-era military-industrial complex after 2014, which affected its war capabilities.

But instead of blaming themselves for the current state of affairs, the nationalists tend to blame the Ukrainian people. Dmytro Kukharchuk, a well-known nationalist officer, gave a long interview in July about Ukraine's dim military prospects. According to him, "there are many more khokhols [the Russian "colonial" slur against Ukrainians] today" than there are "true" Ukrainians. He defines "khokhols" as those unwilling to fight for Ukraine's territorial

integrity. Kukharchuk belongs to the leadership of the extreme-right National Corps party and commands a battalion in a brigade linked to the Azov movement. The sentiments he expresses might seem confined to the fringe, but his rhetoric is far from unique. It echoes a narrative that has dominated Ukrainian, and more broadly, post-Soviet, national-liberal civil society and intelligentsia since the 1990s. This narrative, repeated endlessly, derides the majority of the population - dismissively labelled as bydlo, or "cattle". This disparaging term targets those who, in the view of these elites, cling to "Soviet" habits, prioritise personal wellbeing, value state-provided welfare, and resist self-sacrifice for nation-building. Such discourse is not only ethnonationalist but profoundly classist, painting a large segment of the population - primarily workers, poor people, and pensioners - as obstacles to reactionary-defined social progress while valourising a narrow, self-defined vanguard of the nation. Ukraine's growing setbacks in the war cannot be attributed to Russia's overwhelming power or insufficient Western aid. History provides numerous examples of nations overcoming far stronger adversaries in protracted conflicts, often with little or no military or financial support from powerful allies like NATO.

Consider not only Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s and Afghanistan 1979 - 2021, but also revolutionary France after 1789 and revolutionary Russia after 1917, both of which successfully repelled counter-revolutionary interventions by other great powers. These revolutionary movements not only survived but went on to dominate large parts of Europe. Time and again, social revolutions and national liberation struggles have demonstrated the ability to forge stronger and more mobilised states against all odds. According to the dominant narrative, Ukraine should fit into this pattern: a nation emerging from Russian and Soviet oppression, driven by successive national liberation movements, dissident intelligentsia, Maidan revolutions, and the resistance to Russia's "hybrid war" in the Donbas. This story culminates in the unity and resilience of the Ukrainian people repelling the full-scale invasion of 2022. But this narrative appears fundamentally flawed.

This may be because Ukraine's is simply one of many post-Soviet trajectories shaped by the modernising successes and later the degradation of the Soviet revolution. Like in many other countries in the region, the state after independence was captured by predatory and comprador elites who prioritised their own interests over the public good. This failure to deliver meaningful opportunities and protections for the majority of Ukrainians has left the state unable to demand much from them in return. As a result, today, Ukraine is unable to fully mobilise its people who are divided by a profound sociopolitical disconnect. Contrary to the popular narrative of national unity, there has been no cohesive project of national development to bridge the divide between those bearing the brunt of the war and the political and intellectual elites who claim to represent them both at home and abroad. This disconnect undermines the idea of a shared purpose driving the nation forward.

More and more, it seems the only emotion truly uniting the fragmented Ukrainian nation is fear. Not the lofty ideals of nation-building, but the visceral dread of personal and communal devastation. This fear stems from the apprehension of losing one's home if the front line comes close, the anguish of becoming precarious refugees, or the terror of enduring months in basements, hiding from relentless shelling and street battles. Even for those whose homes remain intact, fear persists - of lawlessness, looting, murder, sexual violence - the grim realities that often accompany military occupations. If Ukrainians are united only by a fundamentally negative coalition - by shared fears rather than shared aspirations - then what happens when these fears begin to shift and compete? Some people start weighing them against one another. The fear of losing one's home to invasion is measured against the fear of enduring forced conscription, becoming cannon fodder in a war that seems increasingly difficult to win.

There is the fear of repression under occupation, juxtaposed with the fear of being arrested in a state where civil society and government increasingly diverge from their own views of freedom and human rights. There is the fear of being humiliated as a khokhol by Russians or as a Russian-speaking mankurt (a disparaging term for someone who has lost touch with their roots) by your own nationalists. These shifting fears drive the Ukrainian population, but they do not unite it.

We talked to a Ukrainian man in his 50s who did not leave his town in the Kharkiv region even when the front line got just a few kilometres from it and there was regular shelling by the Russians. He could have left for a safer part of Ukraine, but he did not and stayed to help, distributing humanitarian aid to his neighbours. He is not a coward; he is a patriot. But as he said, he is not willing "to die for the state we have now. Not for that Ukraine which is imposed on us now ... This is my country, but this is not my state."

Al Jazeera

# For US Conservatives, DEI is code for ‘Don’t Ever Integrate’

Donald Earl Collins

**THE latest flashpoint in the conservative and far-right war against so-called "woke culture" is diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programmes. Numerous GOP officials and conservative public figures publicly blamed tragic accidents, such as the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore, on "DEI hiring practices". South African billionaire, X owner and newly assigned United States "Administrator for the Department of Government Efficiency" Elon Musk has blamed DEI for this month's massive climate change-driven fires in Southern California, claiming in a video posted on X that "DEI means people die".**

In recent months, those against DEI have also gone after the institutions that support these efforts. From the Fearless Fund to Merck, from Walmart to McDonald's, and from Meta to Amazon, some nonprofits and major corporations are now in a headlong retreat. They are abandoning or stripping down programmes they either implemented or had significantly expanded on following the uprisings over the 2020 police killing of George Floyd. In states such as Alabama, Iowa, Utah, Missouri, Kentucky, Texas and Nebraska, the dismantling of DEI infrastructures in public higher education institutions reportedly began at the local and institutional level over three years ago. As expected, President Donald Trump used his first day of his second term in the White House to begin the dismantling of the federal government's entire diversity and inclusion infrastructure. He demanded all federal DEI staff be put on paid leave starting on Wednesday - they will eventually be laid off.

So why is putting an end to DEI - which typically is the acceptance, even embracing of racial, gender, sexual orientation, and other differences and the creation of a welcoming climate for marginalised Americans at universities and in workplaces - such a priority for Trump, his conservative supporters and the wider far right?

They want to see the end of DEI because they believe these programmes present a real challenge to their efforts to rebuild the "white man's country" they long for. Their insistence on colour-blindness in educational and employment practices is really an insistence on returning to the days when only white men could affirmatively benefit from allegedly objective practices for social mobility. They want to do nothing short of closing already extremely narrow pathways for social and economic advancement available to people of colour and other marginalised people in the US. They want to ensure that DEI or other antiracist or "woke" programmes cannot force them to confront their own racism in the process. For them, DEI is just code for "Don't Ever Integrate". None of this is accidental. Since 2019, the far

right has been lobbying grenades at critical race theory and African American studies in K-12 and at colleges and universities throughout the country. In the June 2023 cases Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v Harvard University and SFFA v University of North Carolina, the US Supreme Court ruled that race-conscious affirmative action in college admissions is unconstitutional, overturning decades of precedent. These were not stand-alone developments. The efforts against DEI programmes, affirmative action in education and employment and critical race theory are all part of a larger movement to return the US to a state of quasi-legal racial segregation.

Long before the current efforts against DEI, opponents of race-based affirmative action regularly decried the idea that Americans of colour - especially Black folk - needed an onramp to better educational and employment opportunities. They stood in opposition to President Lyndon Johnson's 1965 Executive Order 11246 and its gradual extension beyond government contractors to higher education and employment in all sectors of the US economy. Perhaps President Johnson sensed this potential opposition as well. In his 1965 commencement speech at the historically Black Howard University in Washington, DC, that June, titled "To Fulfill These Rights," Johnson said, "You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'You are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair." Johnson wanted to find ways to create onramps onto an otherwise unlevel playing field, one that had always heavily favoured white Americans and white men over all other groups. Trump's Executive Order 14171, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, has officially revoked Johnson's order, and 60 years' worth of anti-discrimination protections in the federal workforce with it.

Every movement has its champions, even anti-social justice movements. For conservatives like Ward Connerly and Edward Blum, any correctives meant to work against the ingrained white supremacist racism of the American systems and institutions - whether affirmative action, DEI, or even critical race theory - are overcorrections. Connerly, who is African American, stood against affirmative action in the 1980s and 1990s. He led the anti-affirmative action movement in California, and with the help of Republican Governor Pete Wilson, successfully managed the overturning of affirmative action in the state with the Proposition 209 initiative in 1996. The initiative's implementation into law helped severely reduce the number of

Black and brown students attending California's universities.

Here is the main problem with both Connerly's and Blum's work. The US is not a colourblind society. It is a society which has white supremacist racism, patriarchal misogyny, and massive socioeconomic inequalities encoded in its cultural DNA. Fighting for "fairness" and "the meritocracy" and "colourblind" policies only means that conservative and far-right folk like Connerly and Blum are fighting for the end of any onramps for marginalised Americans towards social mobility through higher education and middle-class jobs. And if the primary ladders to create affirmative opportunities in white (and male) dominated society are destroyed, the default towards exclusion and segregation in higher education and the workforce are soon to follow. The impact of dismantling affirmative action is already evident in reduced Black and Latinx university and medical school admissions over the past 18 months, and will surely impact hiring and promotion practices as well.

But the truth is, neither exclusion nor segregation has ever gone away, not with more than 70 percent of Fortune 500 corporations with white men at the head. And certainly not with more than half of Black and brown kids attending majority Black and brown schools while 76 percent of white kids attending predominantly white schools. Only, in higher education, in employment and entrepreneurship, Connerly and Blum have made it their mission to end the small spigot of that affirmative action and DEI programmes have provided over the past six decades. But with 43 percent of students attending the coveted Ivy League universities as legacies, it would seem that affirmative action is always welcome for white Americans, even in Connerly and Blum's vision for a colourblind society.

As Duke University sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva noted in his book Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America, "color-blind racism" involves "rationaliz[ing] minorities' contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks' imputed cultural limitations". Folks like Connerly, Blum, Donald Trump and Elon Musk are merely exercising the narcissism that comes with their socioeconomic, racial and gender status.

As typical of this set, they place the blame for setbacks and failures on individuals, and not on systems that primarily affirm white folk and especially affluent white men. Really, their excuses for attacking anything antiracist, anti-discrimination and affirmative action-related is a smokescreen for expressing one's racism and tacit approval of segregation and exclusion over the difficult road of inclusion.

# Davos people thought they were more important than democracy

Tim Stanley

**IF your head's stopped spinning from all the winning, you might take a look at Donald Trump's Davos speech. It's a glimpse into the next four years: Trump insulting and threatening foreigners while they nod furiously cos he has the nukes now. And yet, as we discovered, he doesn't actually like nukes ...**

Davos is a powerful and impactful meeting of 3,000 of the world's most awful people. Sessions before Trump's included "why Saudi Arabia is fabulous" - or words to that effect, online audience of 30 - and Nick Clegg discussing AI (so that's where Clegg got to, if you were remotely interested). This year's theme is "You Will Obey". The opening ceremony featured a man dressed as the Test Card hitting himself with a stick - I'm making none of this up - while he screeched into the microphone, a song that probably sounded better in the original inuit. People pay around £20,000 to attend this nonsense. I'd rather be held hostage by Hamas (at least you get a gift bag).

The WEF's supreme leader Klaus Schwab - Blofeld minus the cat - introduced the new president live via videolink, his absence felt as a comment on the declining influence of the globalist elite. "Vot a great honour and pleasure

to welcome you back," said Klaus. Yes, it must be oozed Trump - declaring that while the Davosites were freezing their yurts off, he was warming America (and the Earth!) up to a new "golden age". Davos exists to unite the world; he rhetorically unpicked it. Auf wiedersehen, Paris climate accord; au-revoir, electric cars. America will disappear behind a tariff wall. Bring your business here, he said, and you'll get low taxes and regulation; insist on operating elsewhere, and you'll pay to play. Trump insisted interest rates and oil prices go down. He asked Nato countries to spend 5 percent on defence.

He looked especially happy to remind us that he'll be in charge when America hosts the 2028 Olympics and for the country's 250th anniversary in 2026 - the latter said as if he'd personally negotiated the date with George III.

There was some pleasure to hear Trump tear into EU regulations, but the event also reminded us that he's far from a working-class outsider.

The panellists asking questions largely seemed to be friends; one, the head of Blackstone, is a neighbour. Trump was asked a softball question by Patrick Pouyanne, boss of Total,

whose company just announced a delay to its work on a liquid natural gas plant in Mozambique. This follows unrest in the country and disturbing reports by Politico. The scandal makes a mockery of the idea that globalisation is an economic win-win that knits the world together and increases political stability.

Free market capitalism can descend into a war of all against all, and Trump is merely open about it; as the new CEO of America, he intends to rewrite the rules to his advantage, squeeze out the competition and deliver rich dividends for the voters. But on one point he retains a humanity that I don't see in many liberal statesmen: he hates war. Viscerally loathes it. We need, he argued, to move towards nuclear disarmament. Of Ukraine, he said, "They're laying dead all over the flat fields" - an image that is powerful because it's so clumsy, capturing the pitiless absurdity of conflict. He has already brought a ceasefire to Gaza. "Ve look forward to seeing you next year," the panellists kept saying, like unloved relatives announcing your presence at a dinner before you knew it was even happening. In their minds, the Davos consensus is more important and irresistible than democracy itself. Trump proves them wrong.





# PTF continue to protect businessmen: Shabir

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Senior Vice President of the People's Trade Forum (PTF), Shabir Hussain, emphasized that Chairman of tPakistan People's Party (PPP), Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, is advancing the vision of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Speaking to the media, he condemned violence against government employees, calling it an act of injustice, and urged the resolution of traders' concerns at Fawara Chowk.

He highlighted that the PPP has always pursued a policy of serving the people rather than seeking power. The People's Trade Forum is actively working to address the issues faced by businesspeople in

Peshawar. Hussain reaffirmed the PPP's commitment to protecting the rights of the people, stressing that their rights would never be compromised.

Hussain stated that the sacrifices made by martyred leaders Benazir Bhutto and Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto inspire the party to stand firm in the face of challenges. He called for making Pakistan a strong, developed, and self-reliant state, aligning with the vision of the PPP.

He demanded an immediate end to electricity and gas load-shedding in Peshawar and urged authorities to ensure the protection of businesspeople. He criticized the Excise Department for harassing traders under the pretext of

property taxes and sealing business centers.

Regarding the properties of Islamia College in Peshawar, Shabir Hussain emphasized that the People's Trade Forum has a clear stance. He called for fair terms for the businessmen of Islamia College, advocating against unjust evictions. He also requested the transfer of the Textbook Board's operations back to Peshawar to ease business challenges.

Hussain hailed Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as a historical leader who is committed to the philosophy of "Roti, Kapra, Aur Makaan" (bread, clothing, and shelter) for the people. Under his leadership, the PPP remains devoted to its founding principles.

He noted that the PPP believes in the supremacy of the Constitution and that Bilawal Bhutto is fighting for public rights and prosperity. Hussain praised President Asif Ali Zardari's historical decision to transfer presidential powers to parliament, strengthening democracy.

The PPP is making every effort to uphold the Constitution, ensure the rule of law, and protect freedom of expression, especially concerning amendments to the PECA Act, which could undermine this fundamental right. The People's Trade Forum, following Bhutto's philosophy, continues to serve the business community and advance the party's mission.



WASHINGTON: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a group photo with a high-level delegation from US-Pakistan Business Council.

## SNGPL: 430 illegal connections disconnected

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: In its ongoing crackdown against gas theft, SNGPL has disconnected 430 illegal connections across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad, imposing fines amounting to Rs 2.5 million.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 33 connections for illegal gas use and 4 for using compressors. Fines totaling Rs 0.66 million were imposed.

In Faisalabad, 13 illegal connections were disconnected, and Rs 0.14 million in fines were imposed.

In Sheikhupura, the team disconnected 9 illegal connections and levied fines worth Rs 1.18 million.

In Multan, 50 illegal connections and 2 compressor-related connections were disconnected.

In Bahawalpur, the team disconnected 34 illegal connections and 7 connections due to compressor use.

In Karak, 271 illegal connections were disconnected, and 5 individuals were arrested for gas theft.

In Sahiwal, 4 illegal connections were disconnected, and fines amounting to Rs 0.38 million were imposed.

In Gujranwala, the team disconnected 2 illegal connections and 1 compressor-related connection while imposing fines of Rs 0.18 million.

## SCCI supports reforms

SUKKUR (APP): The Sukkur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) has thrown its weight behind proposals aimed at reviving the housing sector.

Muhammad Khalid Kakazai, President of SCCI, Abdul Wahab Memon, Convener of the Builders and Developers Committee, and other senior members on Saturday have urged to formulate policies to promote the construction sector's growth.

They said that the housing sector has been in crisis for several years, affecting 72 industries linked to it.

The SCCI leaders believe that reviving the sector will create job opportunities, boost economic growth, and promote economic development, they added.

The government has been asked to reduce the withholding tax on property transactions to 1% and exempt first-time property buyers from taxes.

# CCP approves asset acquisition of Crescent Cotton Mills

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has granted approval for the acquisition of certain assets, including land, equipment and machinery of Crescent Cotton Mills Limited (CCML) by Sultan Spinning Industries (Private) Limited (SSIL).

The CCP defined the relevant product market as 'yarn,' segmented into cotton, synthetic, and blended yarn, based on differences in production, consumer preferences and pricing, said a press release issued here.

The assessment determined that CCML holds a

minimal market share, which will diminish further post-transaction as the assets will no longer contribute to its operations.

In contrast, SSIL's market entry is anticipated to invigorate competition by introducing a new participant in the yarn industry. This is expected to stimulate competitive pricing, innovation and increased product availability, benefiting consumers and the broader market.

The CCP's Phase I assessment concluded that the transaction poses no risk of lessening of competition. Instead, it paves the way for enhanced con-

sumer choice and encourages fair competition.

Additionally, the transaction involves the transfer of existing assets rather than the consolidation of market share, ensuring no additional barriers to entry for potential new competitors.

SSIL, a private limited company incorporated under the laws of Pakistan, has not yet commenced operations but intends to engage in the manufacturing and sale of yarn once operational. Meanwhile, CCML, a publicly listed company, remains engaged in the manufacturing and sale of yarn.

# Vegetable, fruit prices drop; ghee, sugar remain expensive

PESHAWAR (APP): Vegetable and fruit prices in Parachinar have significantly dropped, bringing relief to citizens, however, ghee and sugar prices remain exorbitantly high.

In contrast, the prices of vegetables and fruits have seen a sharp decline. Tomatoes have dropped from Rs. 450 to Rs. 150 per kg, onions from Rs. 600 to Rs. 250 per kg, and green peas from Rs. 750 to Rs. 250 per kg. Similarly, fruits have also become more affordable, with oranges now selling at Rs. 400 per dozen, down from Rs. 600, and lemons at Rs. 500 per

kg, reduced from Rs. 800. The drop in prices has given a sigh of relief to the residents, who expressed satisfaction over the government's efforts.

According to local vegetable market authorities on Saturday, more supply trucks are expected to arrive, which could lead to further reductions in prices.

Citizens have urged the government to ensure uninterrupted transportation of essential goods and address the ongoing crises of petrol, diesel, and LPG shortages.

While the drop in vegetable and fruit prices is appreciated, the skyrocket-

ing costs of essential commodities like ghee, sugar, and flour remain a concern due to profiteering by certain traders.

The prices of poultry have also decreased, with live chickens falling from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 500 and roasted chicken now available for Rs. 1,200 instead of Rs. 2,000. Traders anticipate further reductions as more supplies arrive in the market.

The public hopes for continued government efforts to stabilize prices and ensure the availability of all basic commodities at reasonable rates.

# Pak hairtail, aquatic items gain popularity in China

BEIJING (APP): Pakistani aquatic products, particularly hairtail (a type of ribbonfish), are gaining increasing traction in the Chinese market.

According to the latest data from the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC), imports of frozen hairtail (HS Code 03038910) from Pakistan have risen by 27.6% in 2024, reaching USD 3,565,373, up from USD 2,793,326 in 2023, China Economic Net (APP) reported on Saturday.

Commenting on this trend, Jessie Hao, International Trade Manager at Prestige International Trading Co., Ltd., said, "China's demand for high-quality seafood is immense, with annual consumption of hairtail alone reaching up to 1 million tons."

Pakistani exporters are seizing this opportunity by offering a wide variety of nutritious and flavorful aquatic products that cater to the tastes of Chinese consumers.

Prestige International Trading Ltd, which has managed the Pakistan National Pavilion on JD.com for the past three years, has recently expanded its offerings to include aquatic products.

The company's inaugural shipment comprising 53 tons of frozen hairtail and 22 tons of frozen shrimp arrived from Karachi Port to Qingdao Port.

These products are now being sold through various offline channels, including restaurants, canteens, hotels, and wholesalers.

In the future, Prestige plans to introduce smaller retail packs of shrimp for online sales, tapping further into the rapidly growing Chinese e-commerce mar-

ket.

Pakistani hairtail is particularly popular for its tender texture and delicate flavor. Hao explained, "The fish's silvery sheen and transparent corneas make it visually appealing. Its firm muscles and broad size are particularly attractive to Chinese consumers who favor larger fish filets."

With competitive pricing and superior quality, Pakistani hairtail is filling a significant gap.

In addition to hairtail, Jessie Hao highlighted that other premium Pakistani aquatic products, such as shrimp, lobster, black tiger prawn, and grouper, are also in demand among Chinese consumers.

Currently, 307 Pakistani aquatic enterprises are registered with the GACC for exports to China, some of which have been operating in the market since 2018.

# Navigating cybersecurity maze with a new hope

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: In an age where our lives are increasingly intertwined with technology, the specter of cyber-attacks looms larger than ever. Businesses and individuals alike find themselves grappling with a complex web of digital threats, ranging from data breaches to ransomware attacks. As these threats escalate both globally and locally, the importance of robust cybersecurity solutions cannot be overstated.

This is where Tungsten Secure comes in. Launched by TPL Trakker, it is dedicated to keeping your digital assets safe. But what makes it special in a crowded market?

Cyber-attacks aren't just the work of distant hackers anymore; they affect every-

one. As cybercriminals become more skilled, the need for effective security measures has never been greater.

Recent increases in attacks have highlighted the vulnerabilities many face, making it crucial to take steps to protect ourselves.

For individuals, cybersecurity means keeping personal information safe—everything from financial details to private messages. For businesses, it's about protecting sensitive data and maintaining trust with customers.

A single breach can lead to serious problems, including financial loss and damage to a brand's reputation.

As we navigate this digital landscape, it's important to remember that cybersecurity is not just a tech

issue; it's a vital part of our everyday lives.

Tungsten Secure comes as a ray of hope in our challenging environment. With a variety of innovative products and services, it helps users take charge of their digital safety.

From assessing threats to responding to incidents, the brand covers all bases to ensure a secure online experience.

What truly sets this apart is its focus on users. Instead of bombarding clients with technical jargon, it aims to make cybersecurity clear and easy to understand. The mission is straightforward: to make cybersecurity accessible for everyone, no matter their level of tech knowledge.

While it stands on its own, this brand carries the strong legacy of TPL

Trakker, known for protecting physical assets.

This shift into the digital world showcases a commitment to comprehensive security.

By using years of experience in asset protection, the brand aims to build trust with users as they navigate the complexities of the online world.

As we face an ever-changing digital landscape, the launch of this cybersecurity solution is a timely response to the growing need for protection. With its user-friendly approach and a strong foundation built on trust, it is ready to make a real difference in safeguarding our digital lives.

In a world where the stakes are high, taking proactive steps toward cybersecurity isn't just smart—it's essential.

# DKT opens renovated Trauma Ward and family planning clinic



## F.P. Report

JATI, Sujawal: DKT Pakistan, in collaboration with the Government of Sindh and Jati Taluka Hospital management, inaugurated the renovated Trauma Ward, now equipped with a new family planning clinic. The facility was officially inaugurated by Muhammad Ali Malkani, Minister of Livestock and Fisheries.

This initiative pays tribute to Phil Harvey, the visionary founder of DKT International, who passed

away in 2022. The renovation breathes new life into a ward severely damaged by floods and rain, transforming it into a functional space for outpatient care, emergency services, and office seating.

Equipped with essential amenities, including a waiting area, water coolers, fans, and refurbished washrooms, the facility now

offers much-needed relief to patients, particularly women with small children, from Jati and surrounding areas.

In line with its mission to enhance access to family planning services, DKT Pakistan inaugurated a family planning clinic within the renovated ward. During the launch, two Levoplant insertions were performed

at the free family planning camp. Levoplant, DKT Pakistan's newly introduced three-year contraceptive implant, offers a reliable spacing solution for women.

Notable participants at the event included Dr. Bashir Solangi, Medical Superintendent Jati, Syed Shakil Hashmi, Head of Health Services, DKT Pakistan, Mr. Rizwan Saikh, Assistant Commissioner Jati, Dr. Samreen Musharraf, Trainer and Consultant, DKT Pakistan, Ms. Hareem Soomro, Head of Media and Communications, DKT Pakistan, and Manzoor Rahim Palijo among others.

DKT Pakistan is committed to furthering its efforts in the region through a series of family planning camps, community engagement sessions, and training programs to empower local communities with access to reproductive health services.

This project underscores DKT Pakistan's dedication to improving healthcare infrastructure and promoting family planning as a means of fostering healthier, more resilient communities.

# US stocks retreat while yen gains on BOJ rate hike

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street stocks retreated Friday as the market's latest rally lost steam, while the yen pushed higher after the Bank of Japan lifted interest rates.

After a flatish open, major US indices tumbled into the red. The S&P 500 finished down 0.3 percent after closing at a record high on Thursday.

"This is normal consolidation or profit taking after a big 2-week rally," said Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investment.

Wall Street stocks have gained in recent sessions following benign US inflation data, strong earnings from banks and the new presidency of Donald Trump in Washington.

Markets have thus far welcomed his growth-oriented agenda and largely shrugged off his threats of

tariffs. Sarhan said the market was poised for a pause given the heavy calendar next week, which includes a Federal Reserve monetary policy decision and earnings from tech giants and other big companies.

In Europe, both London and Frankfurt stocks hit fresh record highs before turning lower. Paris ended the day with a gain, led by luxury stocks after British fashion house Burberry showed signs of recovery.

In Japan, Tokyo's stock market dropped and the yen rallied after the Bank of Japan lifted borrowing costs to their highest level since 2008 and flagged further increases in the pipeline.

Even as other central banks have raised borrowing costs in recent years -- and started cutting again in

2024 -- the BoJ has remained an outlier.

But it concluded last March that Japan's "lost decades" of economic stagnation and static or falling prices were over, finally lifting rates above zero.

In other Asian trading, Hong Kong gained nearly two percent and Shanghai also advanced following Trump's latest comments with regard to China.

In an interview broadcast Thursday night, Trump said he would "rather not" impose tariffs on China and signaled openness at negotiating a trade deal with Beijing.

"We have one very big power over China, and that's tariffs, and they don't want them, and I'd rather not have to use it," Trump told Fox News. "But it's a tremendous power over China."

## 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

# FDA DG orders strict compliance of Housing Schemes Act

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Director General (DG) Muhammad Asif Chaudhry has directed the officials to ensure strict compliance of Housing Scheme Act for sustainable development of housing colonies in Faisalabad.

Addressing a meeting of land developers and their representatives here on Saturday, he said that the FDA would facilitate the establishment of private housing schemes on top priority basis. However, implementation on Private Housing Schemes Act of

Punjab Development Authorities was imperative to ensure organized town planning by bringing housing schemes within the ambit of the law.

He outlined the relevant regulations and Punjab government's policies and urged the developers to operate within legal boundaries.

"Non-compliance would result in strict action", he said, adding that FDA would also launch operation very soon against unauthorized activities in the development of housing colonies.

He also asked the defaulter developers to submit their outstanding dues immediately to avoid enforcement actions such as demolitions or sealing of their sales offices.

He further said that important reforms had been introduced to improve quality of Faisalabad Development Authority services in addition to expediting processing of applications for housing scheme approvals.

He urged the developers to fulfill departmental requirements and legal conditions without delay so that their applications could

be approved promptly.

He also provided a list of outstanding dues to the defaulter developers in the meeting and directed them to ensure timely payments.

The defaulter developers assured the DG FDA that they would deposit their dues within a week.

The local developers of 27 housing schemes of Satiana Road including Chaudhry Yaseen, Rana Shaukat and Adnan Khaliq were present in the meeting in addition to Additional Director FDA Yasir Ejaz Chattha and Director Town Planning Asma Mohsin.





## In brief

## Bowlers performance put Pakistan under pressure

MULTAN (APP): West Indies bowling coach, James Franklin, commended the bowlers for their outstanding performance which managed to put Pakistan under pressure. Holding a press conference at Multan Cricket Stadium on Saturday, he acknowledged the importance of their late partnerships, which helped boost the team's total. He said that the final partnerships made a big difference, ensuring a competitive total. Looking ahead, Franklin expressed optimism about his team's chances. "This was an opportunity for us to take control of the match tomorrow. We aim to build long partnerships and capitalize on the situation," he added. Speaking about the pitch, Franklin admitted it posed challenges for top-order batters. "Batting on this surface was tough, not just for us but for Pakistan as well," he noted. He also highlighted the difficulty of bowling early in the innings, calling it "a real challenge." Franklin maintained that Pakistan has been making the most of such conditions. "This pitch was yielding results for Pakistan, just like it did when they knocked England out," he remarked. He concluded by emphasizing how these conditions were benefiting Pakistan cricket. "They were getting results in these conditions, which was a significant advantage for their team," Franklin said. With both teams gearing up for the next day's play, Franklin's comments underline the importance of adapting to the challenging Multan conditions.

## Pakistan to host Taekwondo Championships

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Taekwondo Federation will host the Combaxx 7th Asian Taekwondo Open Championships 2025, scheduled to take place from February 14 to 20 here at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex. The athlete registration process is already underway, and the championship is set to be a landmark event in Pakistan's ongoing efforts to promote and develop taekwondo on a global scale, said a press release. Lt. Col. (R) Raja Waseem Ahmed Janjua, President of the Pakistan Taekwondo Federation, expressed his excitement, saying, "This will be the fourth international taekwondo championship hosted in Pakistan. We are confident that this event will not only elevate the standard of our athletes but also contribute to the promotion of taekwondo across the region." The PTF is committed to providing a world-class platform for athletes to showcase their skills and gain valuable international exposure. The federation warmly invites all participants, officials, and taekwondo enthusiasts to be part of this thrilling competition in Islamabad.

## Walker joins Milan on loan

MANCHESTER (Reuters): Manchester City captain Kyle Walker has joined AC Milan on loan for the rest of the season, the two clubs announced on Friday. Milan said in a statement that they also have an option to buy the England right-back, with Sky Italy saying Walker would cost around 4.2 million pounds (\$5.24 million). The 34-year-old made 319 appearances for Pep Guardiola's City side and last featured in their 4-1 Premier League victory over West Ham United on Jan. 4.

## Keys stuns Sabalenka in thriller to win Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP): Underdog Madison Keys upset Aryna Sabalenka 6-3, 2-6, 7-5 in the Australian Open final on Saturday to win her first Grand Slam crown at the age of 29.

The American ended world number one Sabalenka's dream of becoming the first woman for 26 years to win a third successive Melbourne Park singles title.

Keys yelled in delight and wiped away tears on securing the title after withstanding a fierce fightback from the Belarusian two-time defending champion.

Sabalenka, the 2023 and 2024 champion, buried her head in a towel after her 20-match win streak at Melbourne Park was ended.

For 19th-seeded Keys it was the culmination of a 15-year journey from teenage prodigy to major winner.

"I have wanted this for so long and I have been in one other Grand Slam final and it did not go my way," said an emotional Keys, whose coach Bjorn Fratangelo is also her husband. "I didn't know if I was ever going to get back to this position to try to win a trophy again."

The American had been tipped as a future world number one after winning



her maiden WTA Tour match at the age of 14.

She made her first major semi-final at Melbourne Park 10 years ago as a 19-year-old, but a decade on she can finally call herself a Grand Slam champion.

"I made my very first Grand Slam semi-final here in Melbourne," said Keys, the runner-up at the US Open in 2017.

"So to now have won

my first Grand Slam in the same place means the absolute world to me.

"My team believed in me every step of the way. So thank you so much," added Keys, who will now equal her career-high seventh in the world ranking she attained nine years ago.

"They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself, and helped me

every step of the way. Last year was so tough, with some really bad injuries, I didn't know if I was gonna be able to do it again."

'What a tournament' Keys becomes the fourth oldest first-time winner of a major since the Open Era began in 1968.

Sabalenka was gracious after a first Melbourne defeat since 2022.

"First of all, Madison,

what a tournament. You have been fighting really hard to get this trophy," Sabalenka said.

"I really feel like it's home when I'm here and I'll come back stronger and do my best next year."

It was Keys who came out of the blocks playing exemplary tennis to put Sabalenka under pressure and race to the first set in 35 minutes on Rod Laver Arena.

The Belarusian began to flip the script in the second set, breaking in the third game, and moving ominously ahead 3-1.

Another break followed on a brilliant Sabalenka cross-court pass and she levelled the match after an hour and 20 minutes on court. The 26-year-old Sabalenka by now was timing the ball much better and a younger Keys might have buckled.

But this mature version of Keys, who battled all the way to beat Iga Swiatek in a 10-point final-set tiebreak in the semi-finals, is made of sterner stuff.

At 5-6 when Sabalenka served to take it to another final-set tiebreak, Keys brought up two match points. She held her nerve to secure the long-awaited title on the second with her 29th winner after 2hr 2min.

## Mohammad Asif achieves rare feat at national C'ship

KARACHI (Web Desk): Pakistan's snooker ace Mohammad Asif made history on Saturday by recording a rare 147 break during the National Snooker Championship match against Ali Raza.

The maximum break considered the pinnacle of snooker scoring, involves potting all 15 reds with 15 blacks, followed by all six colours in a single visit to the table. Asif, 42, became only the second player in Pakistan's National Snooker Championship history to achieve this feat and the fourth Pakistani overall.

The milestone places him alongside the likes of Saleh Muhammad, who recorded a 147 at the 2008 Asian Championship, Muhammad Sajjad, who achieved it during the 2021 National Championship, and Ahsan Ramzan, who achieved the maximum break at the 2022 World U21 Championship.

"This is a special moment for me and I thank everyone who've supported me throughout my career," said Asif after the feat.

Asif won the match 4-2 with frames score of 1-0, 54-21, 98(98)-0, 147(147)-0, 17-90(89) and 87-16.

The 147 break, also known as a maximum break, is a rare accomplishment at the highest levels of professional snooker.

It requires perfect shot-making, tactical skill, and strong nerves, making it the ultimate benchmark of excellence in the sport.

Asif, a three-time IBSF World Snooker Champion (2012, 2019, 2024), has been a stalwart of Pakistan snooker for over two decades. Born in Faisalabad, he has represented Pakistan in numerous international events, earning widespread recognition for his consistency and composure.

His 2012 triumph made him the second Pakistani to win the IBSF World Championship, his 2019 victory cemented his legacy as one of the country's finest snooker players.

## Brignone wins Garmisch downhill, Vonn out of luck

GARMISCHPARTENKIRCHEN, Germany (AFP/APP): Italian Federica Brignone won the women's World Cup downhill at Garmisch-Partenkirchen on Saturday with comeback queen Lindsey Vonn failing to finish.

Brignone defeated her fellow Italian Sofia Goggia, who suffered a dislocated shoulder during her run, by just one hundredths of a second.

The veteran Brignone, who celebrated the first downhill victory of her career last week, finished in one minute and 35.83 seconds to narrowly deny Goggia. Switzerland's Corinne Suter finished 0.19 seconds back in third.

The race was overshadowed by a serious injury to Austrian Nina Ortlieb, who was helicoptered off the course after crashing out and screaming in pain. Brignone, who finished third behind Goggia in the downhill at Cortina d'Ampezzo last Saturday, overcame slow times in training this week to triumph in Germany.

"I tried everything and did well today. In training I didn't do each split well, but today I put the pieces of the puzzle together," she told Germany's ZDF network. "I didn't think I'd be in first today. There's no secret recipe. I've trained a lot with my brother in these conditions, on



the long curves. It's five years of training and I'm very happy."

The 34-year-old credited her "mental strength" for the victory and said she was "ready" for the upcoming World Championships, but was first focused on Sunday's Super-G.

The 32-year-old Goggia revealed after the race she dislocated her shoulder. "I wasn't in the position to push for more speed because of my right shoulder" the 2018 Olympic downhill champion said.

Goggia is returning from injuries sustained from a crash in training in 2024 and said she was not yet back at 100 percent. "The shoulder isn't very stable. It happens to me all the time when I lose muscle mass."

- Vonn eyes next season -

Vonn, returning to one of her favourite pistes where she has cele-

brated nine of her 82 World Cup victories, lost her footing midway through the race while taking a turn and skied out with seven gates remaining. She did not finish for the second race in a row after her crash in last Sunday's super-G at Cortina d'Ampezzo.

The 40-year-old retired in 2019 but announced a surprise comeback this year and is racing with a titanium knee. After initially impressing on her comeback with fourth and sixth placings in St Anton, Vonn finished 20th in the downhill at Cortina -- the site of next year's Winter Olympics -- and was unable to add to her tally of five downhill victories in Garmisch.

"I got hit at the wrong moment but that's how it is. Maybe I would have had a chance to fight, but for me it was too much of a risk," Vonn told reporters. "I made a mistake. It can happen. I wasn't as fast as I wanted, but I have to stay patient."

Vonn was upbeat, saying she was ahead of schedule and had her sights set on next year and the 2026 Winter Olympics. "I'm having fun and enjoying my time. My goal is really next season. This season is much more than I thought. My first downhill in St Anton was certainly much faster than I thought."



MULTAN: Pakistan's Noman Ali celebrates becoming the first Pakistan spinner to get a hat-trick in test cricket during the first day of the second Test cricket match between Pakistan and West Indies.

## Pakistan crumble for 154, WI snatch 9-run lead on dramatic 1st day

MULTAN (APP): The opening day of the second Test at Multan Cricket Stadium turned into a rollercoaster of wickets, with Pakistan bowled out for 154 in their first innings, handing West Indies a slender 9-run lead after the visitors posted 163.

In a dramatic turn of events, an astonishing 20 wickets fell on day-first of the second test, leaving fans on the edge of their seats.

West Indies, having opted to bat first, found themselves in deep trouble early on as

Pakistan's bowlers ripped through their batting lineup. On debut, right-arm pacer Kashif Ali struck gold in his very first over, dismissing Mikyle Louis for just 4. Sajid Khan soon joined the party, reducing the visitors to 9-2. What followed was a ruthless display of spin bowling by Noman Ali and Sajid, who dismantled West Indies' top and middle order, leaving them gasping at 38-7 in 12 overs.

Just when Pakistan seemed poised to bowl out the opposition cheaply, West Indies'

tailenders mounted a stunning fightback. Partnerships between the lower-order batsmen added valuable runs, pushing the score to 95 and later to a respectable 163.

Noman Ali, the hero of the innings, claimed his sixth wicket to finally end the resistance. His bowling figures of 6-52 marked a career-defining performance. Sajid Khan grabbed 2 wickets, while Kashif Ali and Abrar Ahmed took one apiece.

In response, Pakistan's batting lineup crumbled under the

pressure of West Indies' disciplined bowling attack.

The early blows were dealt by Kemar Roach, who dismissed Mohammad Harris for 9 and bowled Babar Azam for just 1. The skipper Shan Masood (15) also fell victim to Roach, leaving Pakistan tottering at 22-3. Kamran Ghulam departed for 16, making matters worse.

Amidst the chaos, Saud Shakeel (32) and Mohammad Rizwan (49) showed resilience, stitching together a valuable partnership to steady

the innings. Rizwan, just one run shy of a half-century, became Jomel Warrican's fourth scalp, while Shakeel also fell to the left-arm spinner. The lower order failed to offer any resistance as Kashif Ali and Noman Ali departed for ducks, while Sajid Khan remained unbeaten on 16. Pakistan's innings ended at 154, trailing by 9 runs.

For West Indies, Jomel Warrican was the standout performer, picking up 4 wickets with superb control and accuracy. Gudakesh Motie chipped

in with 3 wickets, while Kemar Roach's early breakthroughs earned him 2 scalps.

The Multan pitch has already proven to be a bowler's paradise, with both teams struggling to cope with the spin-friendly conditions. As the second day looms, the contest was finely balanced, and with 20 wickets falling on the first day alone, the match promises to deliver even more thrills and twists. Fans can expect another exhilarating chapter in this battle for dominance.

## Babar Azam makes to ICC Men's T20I Team of the Year 2024

LAHORE (APP): Class personified batsman Babar Azam is the only Pakistani cricketer to be nominated by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in the ICC Men's T20I Team of the Year for his exceptional batting performances in the shortest format of the game during the year 2024.

Babar Azam, who has made the cover drive his own, once again exhibited unparalleled consistency as he scored 738 runs in 24 matches at an average of 33.54 with six half-centuries and the highest score of 75.

The citation by the ICC read as: "Renowned for his elegant stroke play and unmatched consistency, Babar Azam again anchored Pakistan's innings time and again, ensuring stability in a dynamic batting lineup.

The right-handed batter started off his year in sizzling fashion, notching up three half-centuries on the trot against New Zealand away from home. The 30-year-old's ability to perform under pressure and his consistency across formats reaffirmed his status as one of the finest players in international cricket, placing him sixth on the ICC Men's T20I rankings for batters."

ICC Men's T20I Team of the Year 2024:

Rohit Sharma (C), Travis Head, Phil Salt, Babar Azam, Nicholas Pooran (WK), Sikandar Raza, Hardik Pandya, Rashid Khan, Wanindu Hasaranga, Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh.

On the other side, left-arm orthodox slow Sadia Iqbal was picked in the ICC Women's T20I Team of the Year 2024. Sadia Iqbal bagged 30 wickets in 19 appearances at an average of 14.30 and the best bowling of 4-16.

The ICC acknowledged Sadia's bowling acumen in the following words: "The left-arm orthodox bowler had an exceptional year, making a major impact by claiming 30 wickets in 19 matches, proving to be a key performer with the ball throughout the season.

A brilliant spell of 3/18 from 4 overs against West Indies in Karachi in May marked the start of Sadia Iqbal's consistent performances throughout the 2024 year.

The 29-year-old delivered her best T20I spell against Sri Lanka in Dambulla during the Women's Asia Cup, with remarkable figures of 4/16 from 4 overs. She followed it up with another impressive performance, taking 3/34 against South Africa in Multan in July and September.

Sadia Iqbal's consistency and ability to get breakthroughs cemented her second position in the ICC Women's T20I Bowling Rankings."

ICC Women's T20I Team of the Year:

Laura Wolvaardt (C), Smriti Mandhana, Chamari Athapaththu, Hayley Matthews, Nat Sciver-Brunt, Melie Kerr, Richa Ghosh (WK), Marizanne Kapp, Orla Prendergast, Deepti Sharma and Sadia Iqbal.

## PCB confirms details of tri-nation ODI series

LAHORE (PPI): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) today announced the schedule for the tri-nation ODI series, featuring New Zealand and South Africa. The series will be played on a single-league basis from 8 to 14 February, with Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium hosting the opening two matches and Karachi's National Bank Stadium staging the final league match and the final.

According to a statement by Pakistan Cricket Board, Pakistan and New Zealand will kick off the series at the iconic Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday, 8 February, with the first ball scheduled to be bowled at 1400 (local time). New Zealand will then face South Africa on Monday, 10 February, in a day match with the toss set for 0900 (local time).

The action will shift to Karachi, where Pakistan will take on South Africa on 12 February in a day/night match at the National Bank Stadium, starting at 1400 (local time). The final will be played on Friday, 14 February, with the first ball to be bowled at 1400 (local time).

Both Pakistan and New Zealand are scheduled to train at the Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday, 6 February, under lights, while South Africa's first outing at the historic venue will be on the morning of Sunday, 9 February.

While the four matches at Gaddafi Stadium and National Bank Stadium will provide the three sides with an excellent opportunity to finalise preparations for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, it will also be a perfect occasion for the PCB to showcase its redesigned and redeveloped venues to the world through its world-class broadcast.

At the Gaddafi Stadium, the spectator capacity has been increased, with new chairs installed throughout the venue. Additionally, 480 state-of-the-art LED lights have been installed to enhance broadcast LUX levels, ensuring a superior viewing experience for fans worldwide. To further elevate the spectator experience, two giant digital replay screens – measuring 80 feet x 30 feet and 22 feet x 35 feet – have been installed. A brand-new hospitality enclosure for players and officials is near completion, ensuring that the iconic stadium is fully operational to deliver an unparalleled experience for all stakeholders.

At the National Bank Stadium, significant enhancements have been made, including the creation of a new hospitality enclosure for players and officials at the University End. To improve broadcast coverage, 350 LED lights have been installed, ensuring optimal visibility for global audiences. Two digital replay screens have already been fixed and 5,000 new chairs have been installed to enhance spectator comfort.

Schedule of tri-series matches (day/night matches will start at 1400, day match will begin at 0930):

- 8 February – Pakistan v New Zealand (d/n)
- 10 February – New Zealand v South Africa (d)
- 12 February – Pakistan v South Africa (d/n)
- 14 February – Final (d/n).





## In brief

### Govt to refund Rs40,000 to last year's Hajj pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government announced on Saturday the refund of Rs.40,000 to Hajj pilgrims who performed the pilgrimage last year. According to media reports, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Chaudhry Salik Hussain shared the details in an interview. He mentioned that the refunds would be issued according to the category of pilgrims, with each Hajj pilgrim receiving up to Rs40,000. The minister further stated that this year's pilgrims would be provided with even greater facilities for the same cost. Hussain revealed that the pilgrims would be provided with three meals daily during the pilgrimage. Unlike last year when pilgrims stayed in cloth tents in Mina, this year, they would stay in gypsum-built tents. Additionally, pilgrims would receive air-conditioned accommodation instead of the room coolers provided the previous year. The most significant new benefit would be the "Road to Makkah" initiative, which would ensure that pilgrims complete their immigration in Pakistan and receive their luggage at the Saudi hotel.

### Police arrest four kite sellers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi are making efforts to control kite flying and managed to arrest four kite sellers on recovery of over 200 kites and nine kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Saturday. He informed, that Sadiqabad police arrested two kite sellers namely Umair and Haris and recovered 110 kites and four kite flying string rolls. Naseerabad police also rounded up a kite seller, Muneeb and recovered 100 kites from his possession. Pirwadhai police in their raid arrested an accused namely Arshad with 17 kites and four kite flying string rolls. Separate cases have been registered against the accused and further investigations are under process. Divisional Superintendents of Police directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers.

### Illegal constructions face bulldozers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has intensified its campaign against illegal constructions and land encroachments in the federal capital, with sector E-12 as the latest target in its anti-occupation drive. In a recent operation in Sector E-12, multiple unauthorized structures were demolished, said the spokesman of ICT administration here. Assistant Commissioner (AC) Saddam zone led the operation, deploying heavy machinery to remove the illegal constructions. Teams from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the Islamabad Police assisted in the activity, ensuring the operation proceeded without interruptions. On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon emphasized the administration's commitment to clearing all encroachments in the city. He instructed teams to continue similar actions across Islamabad until no illegal structures remain. "No illegal construction will be allowed in the federal capital," stated Memon, adding that strict measures will be taken against individuals involved in such activities. The administration plans to sustain its efforts against land grabbers and unauthorized developments, signaling a zero-tolerance policy for encroachments in Islamabad.

# Pak-China strategic cooperation to boost mutual benefits: Chinese ambassador



ISLAMABAD (APP): Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong on Saturday said that the China will continue to seek greater synergy in development strategies with Pakistan, to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation.

Addressing the "Chinese New Year, We Celebrate Together" celebration event, the ambassador said that this cooperation will also foster an upgraded version of CPEC and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

He said that both CPEC projects and non-CPEC projects, both commercial cooperation projects and development aid projects not only reflect the tenacity and certainty of China-Pakistan cooperation but also show that China-Pakistan practical cooperation is all-round and wide-ranging.

He said that China's economy smoothly achieved its major expected goals and tasks. He added, the economy grew in size, optimized in structure, and was driven by new momentum. China's GDP exceeded 130 tril-

lion yuan for the first time, reaching 134.9 trillion yuan RMB, representing a 5% year-on-year increase.

He said that the China advanced high-quality Belt and Road cooperation as 155 countries have joined the Belt and Road cooperation.

The ambassador said that in 2024, China's total trade with Belt and Road participating countries exceeded 22 trillion yuan, a 6.4% year-on-year increase, accounting for 50.3% of China's total foreign trade value.

He said that China put forward the five-point proposal for building a more beautiful home of the SCO, eight practical measures to support the high-quality development of BRICS cooperation, and China's eight actions for global development.

These efforts have advanced the reform of global governance, strengthened the solidarity of the Global South, and taken new solid steps towards building a community with a shared future for mankind, he added.

The ambassador said, "In the past year of 2024, we were

delighted to see that the new Pakistani government has made all-out efforts to advance various reform agendas, achieving new progress in national development and enhancing Pakistan's international status."

He said that Pakistan's GDP is expected to grow by 3.5% in the current fiscal year. In the first six months of this fiscal year, Pakistan's current account surplus reached its highest level in 15 years, with both foreign investment and overseas remittances rebounding.

He said that the inflation rate dropped to its lowest level in seven years, and foreign exchange reserves reached a three-year high.

He said that on 1st December of last year, the Khunjerab Pass achieved year-round opening while on 30th December, the construction of Chashma Nuclear Power Plant Unit 5(C-5) officially started.

He said that the State Bank of Pakistan announced that China's investment in Pakistan accounted for 40% of Pakistan's total foreign investment in the first six months of

the new fiscal year.

He said that the new Gwadar International Airport welcomed its first commercial flight while a few days ago, a Chinese expert team traveled all the way to Pakistan and has successfully performed surgical treatment for children with congenital heart diseases.

He said that the theme of today's event is "Chinese New Year, We Celebrate Together". "Our door is always open to you, and China will always stand firmly with Pakistan."

He said that the incoming new year is the Year of the Snake in the Chinese zodiac. In traditional Chinese culture, snake symbolizes wisdom, agility, bravery, and tenacity.

"In the new year, we stand ready to work with Pakistani side, to work hard and move forward courageously, to be practitioners of friendly cooperation, promoters of mutual learning among civilizations and participants in building a community with a shared future for mankind, and jointly create an even more brilliant future for China-Pakistan relations."

## HRCP urges open Senate debate on Peca amendments

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Saturday called on the government to ensure that the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (Peca, 2025) was openly debated in the Senate after being bulldozed by the ruling coalition in the National Assembly.

In a statement, the HRCP demanded that the bill must be debated openly and extensively in the Senate before it proceeds any further. "The HRCP is deeply concerned by the passage of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill 2025 in the National Assembly", the statement added.

It said given the state's poor record on protecting

freedom of digital expression, the bill, if it becomes law, is likely to become yet another means of targeting political workers, human rights defenders, journalists and dissidents by effectively penalizing criticism of state institutions.

It said the bill's emphasis in Section 26-A on 'fake or false news' is troubling. The statement said the text of the bill does not satisfactorily define 'fake news' and instead refers to vague outcomes such as public 'fear, panic or disorder or unrest'.

Moreover, the prescribed punishment of up to three years' imprisonment is excessive, it added. It said the institution of four new authorities to regulate digital content- thereby impos-

ing disproportionate multi-layered controls- will have a chilling effect on freedom of expression and opinion.

"The fact that appeals to the proposed Social Media Protection Tribunal will go directly to the Supreme Court and that this tribunal will comprise government-appointed members is also cause for concern because it implies diminished judicial oversight and greater executive control", the HRCP feared.

The HRCP reminded the government that digital freedoms have already been over-regulated, whether through law or policy, to the detriment of people's right to information and connectivity, both of which are integral to a twenty-first century democracy.

## Afghan dacoit gang busted, DIG says

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police Syed Ali Raza held a significant press conference on Saturday at the Rescue-15 Field Office, announcing the arrest of two members of an organized Afghan gang involved in home invasions and armed robberies. Stolen goods worth over PKR 35 million, along with weapons used in the crimes, were recovered.

Detailing the incident, DIG Syed Ali Raza stated that unidentified culprits broke into a residence in the Aabpara area, looting gold jewelry, cash, watches, artificial jewelry, and other valuables at gunpoint. In response, DIG Raza

stated that a special police team, led by SSP Operations/Investigation Muhammad Aarsalan Shahzeb, was constituted. Using technical resources and human intelligence, the team swiftly apprehended two suspects identified as Salam Khan and Faisal Khan.

The arrested suspects were found in possession of 1,117 grams of gold, artificial jewelry, watches, and other valuables, all worth over PKR 35 million.

The weapons and ammunition used during the robberies were also recovered. DIG Ali Raza commended the police team for their prompt action and announced cash rewards for

their efforts.

He further emphasized that Islamabad Police is actively working to apprehend suspects involved in heinous crimes, including murder. Efforts to reduce crime rates in the capital city have led to a noticeable decline in criminal activities.

The suspects, Salam Khan (alias Rizwan) and Faisal Khan, were identified as Afghan nationals residing in Sohan. One accomplice remains at large, and efforts are underway to ensure their arrest.

DIG Raza highlighted that incidents of street crime and serious offenses in Islamabad have significantly decreased.

## 2-Day convocation of Riphah Int'l University kicks off

ISLAMABAD (APP): The two-day event of 19th convocation of Riphah International University kicked off on Saturday at the Jinnah Convention Centre, here on Saturday. The event was graced by the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Professor Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, as the chief guest.

The Chancellor of Riphah International University, Dr. Hassan Muhammad Khan, and Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Anis Ahmad were also in attendance.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Anis Ahmad delivered the opening speech, highlighting the university's vision and mission. He stated, "Riphah International University was established with a unique purpose: to provide modern education while upholding Islamic values."

"The university is achieving significant success not only in Pakistan but also internationally," he informed.

"We are proud to send our students to foreign universities for higher education, equipping them to

excel globally," he told.

He also mentioned the scholarships offered by Riphah International University, which provide financial assistance to students, enabling them to pursue quality education without barriers.

He concluded by congratulating the graduates, saying, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the students who have achieved success today. This is your moment of pride."

Chancellor Dr. Hassan Muhammad Khan, in his address, emphasized the significance of the day and the collective effort behind it.

He remarked, "Today is a momentous occasion, achieved through the hard work of students, parents, and teachers. Whatever field you excel in, aim to go far and make a difference."

"Technology has reached remarkable milestones, and we must leverage its advancements to create a better future."

The Chairman of HEC, Professor Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, shared his thoughts, stating, "This is a proud moment for both stu-

dents and their parents. Pakistan is rich in talent, and our students are not lesser than anyone. To build a better society, we need hard work and dedication.

While technology has brought immense progress, it also requires us to address its challenges responsibly."

Addressing the graduates, he said, "You are our future and our pride. While we acknowledge past mistakes, the responsibility of shaping Pakistan's future now lies in you. Today is not only a day of celebration but also a day of gratitude. I congratulate all the graduates on their well-deserved success."

He acknowledged Riphah for building character along with quality education.

He expressed hope Pakistan would have a bright future.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of degrees and awards to the graduating students, marking a day of pride, accomplishment, and optimism for the future.

The two-day event of 19th convocation would conclude on January 26 tomorrow(Sunday).

## PTI's refusal to engage in dialogue a 'tactical mistake': Daniyal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Daniyal Chaudhary on Saturday lambasted the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) for its failure to seize the opportunity for dialogue, categorically stating that a stable and prosperous Pakistan would ultimately spell the political demise of the PTI.

In an exclusive interview with PTV News Channel, Barrister Daniyal criticized PTI for fostering chaos and hate-based politics. Parliamentary Secretary criticized PTI for its refusal to engage in dialogue, terming it a "tactical mistake" that will ultimately lead to the

party's downfall.

According to Daniyal, PTI's reluctance to negotiate is a clear indication that the party is not interested in finding solutions to the country's problems. Instead, they are more focused on exploiting sensitive issues for their own political gain. He stated that PTI's focus was solely on self-centred politics and they have been exploiting sensitive issues for their own benefit.

Barrister Daniyal said, "PTI cannot digest the fact that Pakistan is progressing and moving forward under the current government. They are finding it hard to accept that the country is witnessing unprecedented economic growth, infrastructure develop-

ment and social reforms, he added.

Their inability to stomach this progress is driving them to spread chaos and misinformation but the people of Pakistan will not be fooled by their antics, he expressed confidence.

Daniyal Chaudhary further stressed that negotiation is the most effective way to resolve issues, but unfortunately, PTI refused to continue with it. Despite extending an olive branch, PTI chose to reject it and instead adopted a confrontational approach, which has led to increased polarization and instability, he added. It is disheartening to see PTI prioritizing their own interests over the nation's welfare, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Women visiting stalls at an art exhibition organized by Andleeb Ghalib, showcasing the strength, creativity, and empowerment of women through art at a local hotel. —APP Photo

## Abbasi inaugurates Masjid Al-Hanan road rehabilitation project

RAWALPINDI (APP): Member National Assembly (MNA), Muhammad Hanif Abbasi here on Saturday formally inaugurated the rehabilitation project of Masjid Al-Hanan Road, a crucial link connecting Asghar Mall Road to 4th B-Road, a RDA spokesperson informed.

The road plays an integral role in facilitating access to several educational institutions, residential and commercial areas and it is also vital to the economic and social activities of the region.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General (DG), Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA),

Kinza Murtaza highlighted the challenges being faced by the residents of the area.

The project would help address issues including dilapidated condition of the road and drainage system and improve the road's functionality for the commuters.

The DG said that the length of the road is 0.64 kilometers and the rehabilitation of the road would benefit over 10,000 commuters. Muhammad Hanif Abbasi appreciated efforts of the DG RDA and RDA team.

"We are happy to have initiated the rehabilitation of this critical road, which will significantly improve access and mobility for

both residents and the commuters. This project will ease traffic congestion and foster better connections between key locations, promoting the region's educational institutions and commercial activities," he added.

Full rehabilitation of Masjid Al-Hanan Road is expected to be completed in phases and would contribute to the overall development of the area, improving the quality of life for the community, he said.

Chief Engr RDA, Muhammad Anwar Baran, Director Engineering RDA, Muhammad Kamran and other officials were also present on this occasion.

## DC directs for successful completion of Suthra Punjab Program

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi and Chairman Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC), Hassan Waqar Cheema has directed for utilizing all resources to ensure the successful completion of "Suthra Punjab Program".

While attending a briefing at RWMC he emphasized the immediate resolution of public complaints regarding sanitation and stressed the importance of using modern techniques and equipment to maintain high standards of cleanliness.

He urged all units to remain active and to encourage citizens to become responsible by raising awareness about cleanliness through public campaigns.

He appreciated the performance of the staff working under the Suthra Punjab Program and expressed his expectations that they would continue to fulfill their duties with dedication and honesty.

He concluded by emphasizing the importance of teamwork for the success of the program, stating that these efforts would contribute to

transforming Rawalpindi into a model city.

Earlier, CEO RWMC Rana Sajid Safdar and other senior officials provided a detailed briefing on the "Suthra Punjab Program."

The CEO informed the Deputy Commissioner and Chairman RWMC about the progress, challenges and future plans of the Suthra Punjab Program.

He highlighted that numerous measures were being undertaken to ensure cleanliness in both urban and rural areas, with a special focus on the Zero Waste Policy.



£7m allocated for Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UK Foreign Office has announced that the country will allocate £7 million for clearing mines and explosives left behind from wars in Ukraine and Afghanistan. According to the report, the allocated budget will be handed over to the Scottish demining charity, The HALO Trust, to carry out this mission. Out of the £7 million, £3 million will be spent in Afghanistan between April 2025 and March 2026.

Iranian threatens arrest

TEHRAN (Amu TV): The governor of Tehran, Mohammad Sadegh Motamedian, has issued a warning that undocumented Afghan migrants will be arrested and deported. He also indicated that Afghan migrants with legal status but working in unauthorized sectors in Tehran would face repercussions. “We have two missions concerning migrants,” Motamedian said in an interview with ILNA, a semi-official news agency.

## Instead of criticizing Islamic system, reform ideas to be shared with govt



KHOST (Ariana News): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir has said that instead of criticizing the Islamic system, efforts should be made to share reform ideas with the relevant government institutions.

tutions.

Speaking at a madrasa graduation ceremony in Khost province, Abdul Kabir said that the Islamic Emirate maintains relations with the region and the world to solve problems in the light of Islam and in order to strengthen the Islamic system.

He added that the demands of the region and the world on Afghanistan are met by the policy of the Islamic Emirate and the international community is not concerned about use of Afghanistan's soil against countries.

He also stressed that the country's national budget is funded by the Islamic Emirate.

## Governor announces major initiatives

NURISTAN (BNA): Qari Zain-ul-Abidin Abid, the governor of Nuristan, announced the restoration of 2,500 hectares of forest and the planting of 206,000 saplings in the province.

Speaking to the Bakhtar News Agency, Governor Abid detailed the achievements made this year, emphasizing the restoration of forests in various areas across Nuristan.

The tree-planting campaign includes a mix of fruit and ornamental saplings, contributing to both local agriculture and beautification efforts.

To combat deforestation, the governor highlighted the construction of 50 solar-powered houses, which provide sustainable energy solutions to residents.

Additionally, 68 water reservoirs have been established to facilitate irrigation, supporting agricultural activities in the province.

In a bid to reduce reliance on wood as a primary energy source, Governor Abid announced the importation of 200 tons of coal. This initiative is expected to prevent the consumption of approximately 2,000 tons of wood, promoting a more sustainable approach to energy use.

Looking ahead, discussions have been initiated with the Ministry of Energy and Water to construct rural power dams, which would further enhance energy accessibility and decrease the community's dependence on wood for fuel.

## Commercial corridor to be established

KABUL (BNA): Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey have agreed to establish a new trade corridor.

This corridor is intended to facilitate the transportation of Afghanistan's mineral products.

Amir Tawakuli Roudi, a member of Iran's Parliament Commission on Industries and Mines, announced this agreement after his visit to Kabul. He stated that during meetings with officials of the Islamic Emirate, an agreement was reached to launch the Iran-Afghanistan-Turkey trade corridor.

He told Iran's Tasnim News Agency that Afghanistan's mineral products would be transported via this corridor.

The Iranian parliamentary commission member also mentioned that Afghanistan has abundant mineral resources, which, with the use of Iran's technical expertise, can be processed and turned into final products.

## 'Polio Free Afghanistan' announced

KABUL (Khaama Press): The “Polio Free Afghanistan” initiative has announced that a new round of polio vaccination campaigns is scheduled to begin across various regions of the country.

In a post on its X (formerly Twitter) account, the organization stated that the campaign will officially commence on Monday, January 27.

The organization did not specify the number of children this campaign aims to cover or which provinces will be included in the vaccination drive.

Approximately one month ago, the Taliban's Ministry of Public Health, in coordination with international organizations, conducted a similar polio vaccination campaign in several provinces.

Afghanistan and Pakistan remain the only two countries where polio has not yet been eradicated, making these campaigns critical for public health in the region.

It is worth noting that the Taliban had temporarily suspended polio vaccination efforts for one month, raising concerns over delays in eradicating the disease.

## Rising dollar value sparks grocery price hikes in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): Residents of Kabul say that with the increase in the value of the dollar against the Afghani, the price of groceries is also rising, which is a cause of concern for many people.

Since a large portion of Afghanistan's goods are imported and purchased in dollars, fluctuations in the value of the dollar have a direct impact on the price of groceries.

In the past two weeks, the value of one US dollar has increased by four afghani in the country's markets.

Shah Mohammad, a resident of Kabul, expressed his concern about the rising prices of groceries, saying: “When the dollar goes up, prices automatically rise as well. People have become

very helpless and can't afford to buy.”

“When the dollar goes up, we can't afford to buy food because the prices increase,” said another resident of the capital, Shamsbad.

Recently, one US dollar has been exchanged for up to 75.61 afghani.

Experts believe that the suspension or reduction of international aid could be one of the main reasons for the rise in the value of the dollar and the instability of the afghani against foreign currencies.

“When foreign aid and dollars are stopped—whether directly to the government or indirectly to NGOs—it has very negative effects on the country because our imports are high, and our exports are

low,” Mohammad Nabi Afghan, an economic expert, told TOLONews.

However, the country's central bank considers fluctuations in currency value a normal occurrence and assures efforts to prevent severe volatility.

“The Central Bank of Afghanistan, as a committed institution, aims to maintain the value of the afghani and prevent severe fluctuations. Currency fluctuations can occur in any country's currency,” said Haseebullah Noori, the spokesperson of Afghanistan's central bank.

According to the statement from the Central Bank of Afghanistan, 20 million dollars will be auctioned on Saturday to stabilize the Afghan currency and reduce the value of the dollar.

## Nation partner with IEA, says Haqqani

KHOST (TOLONews): Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani, the acting Minister of Interior, stated in an audio message during the graduation ceremony of a religious school in Khost that some hostile individuals are trying to tarnish the reputation of the (government) system.

In this message, the acting minister of interior also said that the nation is a partner in the system, and sincere individuals can work towards understanding, raising religious awareness, and addressing people's challenges.

Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani said: “Try to create mutual understanding between the people and the system. Many hostile individuals want to misrepresent the system. This system belongs to the entire nation, and everyone has a right to it.”

At the same time, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the acting minister of refugees



and repatriation, said during the event that, based on active diplomacy, the Islamic Emirate now has supporters in the UN Security Council. He reiterated the Islamic Emirate's emphasis on legitimate engagement with the world.

Speaking at a madrasa graduation ceremony, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir added: “If decisions were made in the Security Council regarding Afghanistan, we previously had no one to

support us or veto those decisions. However, now our diplomatic and political relations have advanced to the extent that some countries support the Islamic Emirate and use their veto power in our favor.”

Some high-ranking officials of the Islamic Emirate strongly reacted to the recent request from the International Criminal Court and described it as a failed attempt to achieve political goals.

## Shawn criticizes suspension of Afghans' travel to US

KABUL (TOLONews): Shawn VanDiver, founder of AfghanEvac and VP of External Affairs at Athenian Group, has criticized the suspension of Afghan evacuations to the US, calling it a mistake by Donald Trump's administration.

In an interview with Sky News, VanDiver said that over 10,000 vetted Afghans, including children, are ready to travel to the US.

“We have been in Islamabad for three years, waiting for US visas. We are facing severe financial and security problems here,” an Afghan refugee in Pakistan, Sepozhmai, told TOLONews.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that based on an agreement between Washington and Islamabad,

all Afghan refugees in Pakistan with US immigration cases will be relocated to the US by September 2025. The ministry's spokesperson confirmed that the agreement remains in effect.

Ehsanullah Ahmadzai, an advocate for refugee rights, emphasized the need for a strategy between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the international community to address the challenges faced by Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

On another front, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser stated that Germany is actively working to deport more criminals to Afghanistan.

According to a Reuters report, Faeser mentioned that Germany is the only European country that has

deported criminals to Afghanistan since the Islamic Emirate took power in 2021.

“I would like to make it very clear that we are working hard to deport further criminals to Afghanistan,” Faeser told Reuters.

“As an Afghan living in Germany, I hope we can prevent such incidents in the future and utilize the educational and employment opportunities that Germany has provided for our intellectual growth,” Murtaza Akbar, an Afghan migrant in Germany, told TOLONews.

This comes after a recent knife attack by an Afghan citizen at a kindergarten in Bavaria, Germany, which resulted in the deaths of a two-year-old child and a 41-year-old man.

## Small businesses in Helmand offer alternative to migration



HELMAND (TOLONews): Residents in Helmand province who are engaged in small businesses say that these businesses can be a suitable alternative to illegal migration.

They believe that through these small businesses, they can provide for their families' expenses.

Nisar Ahmad is one such entrepreneur who sells bolani in a corner of

Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province.

He previously lived in Baghran district and after migrating to the city, started this business.

In an interview with TOLONews, he stated: “I have been engaged in this work for a long time. After coming from the district, I started making bolani, and this job has been better for me compared to studying

and other professions.”

In various parts of Lashkar Gah, many other residents have also turned to small businesses.

They believe that although these businesses have low incomes, they are safer and more beneficial compared to illegal migration.

“I sell fruit on a cart. This work is more profitable compared to smuggling abroad. It requires little

investment, but the profit is sustainable. I have heard that some young people who try to migrate are shot by border forces of neighboring countries,” said Samiullah, a local vendor.

“Our family consists of 12 members. I push a cart, and my two brothers work as apprentices elsewhere to support our family's expenses. This work has helped me a lot,” said Burhanuddin, another resident of Helmand.

Meanwhile, local officials have announced the provision of facilities for small business owners in the province. “Special places and stalls have been allocated for small business owners in Lashkar Gah so they can earn an income. Job opportunities have also been created for educated youth,” said Sher Mohammad Wahdat, deputy director of the Helmand Department of Information and Culture.

Islamic Emirate officials have emphasized economic growth and self-sufficiency as their key priorities, stressing the implementation of major national projects.

## Germany planning another deportation flight to Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): Germany is planning to fly a group of convicted criminals of Afghan nationality to their home country for the second time since the Islamic Emirate took power.

The newspaper quoted the interior ministry as saying it was working on the measure with the help of a

regional partner and eyeing a departure shortly before Germany's Feb. 23 general election.

A spokesperson for the ministry confirmed that it is working on further deportations, but added that they have nothing to do with the election and that the flights will be carried out as soon

as all conditions will be met.

German politicians are sharpening their stance on migration after violent attacks linked to foreign suspects, with Friedrich Merz, the chancellor candidate for the two allied conservative parties (CDU/CSU) and the front-runner in the election, planning to

submit a controversial migration motion in the parliament next week.

Some critics say this move could potentially open the door to cooperation with the far-right nationalist Alternative for Germany (AfD), which is now in second place in nationwide polls.

Berlin initially stopped returning people to Afghanistan because of human rights concerns after the Islamic Emirate took power in 2021.

It had, however, sent one deportation flight thanks to the mediation of Qatar in August last year, right before regional elections in eastern Germany that saw the ruling Social Democrats and their coalition partner, the Greens, faring poorly.

## Foreign nationals' entry and exit statistics for January

KABUL (BNA): The National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) has reported significant movement of foreign nationals across the country's borders in January, with a total of 2,454 entries and exits recorded.

The data reveals that 1,316 individuals entered the country this month, including 43 women, while 1,138 foreign nationals, and 26 women, departed. Notably, the majority of arrivals, 1,296 people, crossed through land border

points, with only 20 individuals entering via air travel.

Among the visitors, 199 came to explore the country's historical and ancient sites, while the remainder arrived for work-related purposes.

## Cash aid delivered to destitute families in Kabul



KABUL (BNA): A total of 5,166 Destitute families in Kabul have received cash aid, as confirmed by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations.

The families, identified through comprehensive surveys conducted in the

7th, 11th, 12th, and 17th districts of Kabul, were each provided with 2,900 Afghani along with packages of nutritional supplies aimed at addressing malnutrition among children.

A statement from the ministry highlighted that

this initiative is part of a broader strategy to assist vulnerable populations in the region. The distribution of additional financial aid is already underway in several areas of Kabul, with plans for continued support to reach more families in need.





**JAMSHORO:** *Chairman Pakistan People’s Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari awarding degrees and medals to students in the convocation of Mehran University of Sindh.*

## Israel delays withdrawal from Lebanon’s border

BEIRUT: Lebanese Army Command on Saturday urged residents of southern border villages to avoid returning to their homes due to mines and other explosives left by Israeli forces. The “procrastination in the withdrawal” of Israeli forces from the south has complicated the army’s deployment to the area, it said.

The 60-day period for the full withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the southern border area ends on Sunday. The deadline was stipulated in a ceasefire agreement between Hezbollah and Israel, which invaded the Lebanese southern border area on Oct. 1. Residents vowed on Saturday to return to their villages, despite an Israeli decision to postpone the withdrawal of its forces.

Israel blamed the Lebanese state for failing to “fully enforce” the agreement, and threatened to “retaliate with a military escalation against any Hezbollah response” to the delay. The Israeli prime minister’s office said in a statement that the gradual withdrawal will continue, “in full coordination with the US administration.” Lebanon’s new leadership views the Israeli withdrawal as a priority.

Army Command called on citizens to “remain responsible and adhere to its directives and the instructions of the deployed military units, to preserve their safety.” President Joseph Aoun received a phone call from French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday, his media office said. “Macron went over the developments in southern Lebanon, the efforts to control escalation, and the appropriate solutions to ensure the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, and the measures to defuse the situation,” a statement added.

The French president told his Lebanese counterpart that he is holding talks to maintain the ceasefire and complete the implementation of the agreement. Aoun highlighted the need to pressure Israel into implementing the provisions of the deal. This would put end to its successive violations, notably the destruction of villages near the southern border and the leveling of lands, which will hinder the return of residents, Aoun said.

Ghassan Hasbani, a member of the Lebanese Forces parliamentary bloc, said: “The renewal of war is not the current concern, but rather the prolonged presence of the Israeli army in the south. “It is Hezbollah that brought the Israeli army into Lebanon, and what will drive it out is adherence to the terms of the ceasefire agreement and international pressure,” he added. Hasbani spoke of “deliberate or inadvertent tardiness in implementing the ceasefire agreement, whether through the delay in forming the monitoring committee or Hezbollah’s failure to seriously hand over its weapons and dismantle its infrastructure.

## Aseefa inaugurates groundbreaking of People’s School Project



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, First Lady of Pakistan, Member National Assembly, and Chairperson of Sindh Peoples Welfare Trust (SPWT), inaugurated the groundbreaking ceremony for the People’s School, a transformative educational initiative aimed at fostering quality education and youth empowerment.

The Sindh Peoples Welfare Trust (SPWT), founded by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in February 1987, continues her legacy of uplifting communities through education and healthcare.

Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was accompanied by Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Chancellor of SZABIST University and Sindh’s Minister for Health, along with the SPWT Board of Trustees, including Syed Qaim Ali Shah, Mr. Abdul Aziz Edhi, Mr. Khurshed Junejo, Ms. Lubna Khalid, and Dr. Suleman Shaikh.

The People’s School will

be constructed in Karachi and is designed to provide a state-of-the-art educational environment. Under the first phase, the project will include primary and secondary school facilities, an administrative block, and external development works, ensuring a modern and holistic learning experience for students.

The People’s School is envisioned as a beacon of academic excellence, operating on a hybrid model to provide free education to underprivileged students while offering affordable options to others. With its modern infrastructure and comprehensive facilities, the school aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills required to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Speaking on the occasion, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari highlighted the enduring vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and the role of education in shaping Pakistan’s future. She remarked, “This groundbreaking represents our unwavering commit-

ment to providing quality education and creating opportunities for future generations. This project is not just about building a school; it is about building a better future.”

Dr. Suleman Shaikh, Member Board of Trustees, reflected on the trust’s journey and the commitment of its founding members. He shared, “Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto envisioned initiatives like this school. It is heartwarming to see her daughter turning this vision into reality, ensuring access to education and hope for the community.”

The event was attended by several distinguished personalities, including SZABIST University Board members Mr. Zahoore Hussain Shujra, Mr. Ali Mandviwala, Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Dr. Talib Lashari, and Mr. Ghulam Shabbir Shah. Prominent MPAs and officials present included Mr. Saeed Ghani, Ms. Sadia Javed, Mr. Shiraz Shoukat Rajper, Mr. Asif Khan, Senator Waqar Mehdi, Najmi Alam.

## Allies should work on peace talks with Moscow: Kyiv

KYIV (AFP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday said allies should work towards determining a format for potential peace talks with Russia, reiterating that only talks involving Kyiv could bring about sustainable peace.

His comments are the latest to pile on speculation over the possibility of negotiations to end the brutal conflict that has cost tens of thousands of lives after almost three years of fighting. “I understand that contacts can be in different formats,” Zelenskyy said, referring to possible negotiations that would lead to “a just peace.”

“I think we should focus on this today,” he said. President Vladimir Putin earlier this week said he was ready for talks with US counterpart Donald Trump on Ukraine, praising him as a “smart” leader who might have prevented the conflict from starting in February 2022. Putin did not say when talks could take place, and the Kremlin said earlier it was still waiting for “signals” from Washington, despite Trump announcing on Thursday he was willing to meet Putin “immediately.”

Trump, who was inaugurated on Monday, has called the conflict “ridiculous” and threatened Russia with tougher economic sanctions if it does not agree to stop its offensive. Zelenskyy said in Kyiv that talks to end the war should be held between the United States, Ukraine and Russia, as well as the European Union, saying peace could only be achieved with robust security guarantees for his country.

## Mexico refuses US flight deporting migrants

WASHINGTON/MEXICO CITY (Reuters): Mexico has refused a request from President Donald Trump’s administration to allow a US military aircraft deporting migrants to land in the country, a US official and a Mexican official told Reuters. US military aircraft carried out two similar flights, each with about 80 migrants, to Guatemala on Friday. The government was not able to move ahead with a plan to have a C-17 transport aircraft land in Mexico, however, after the country denied permission.

A US official and a Mexican official confirmed the decision, which was first reported by NBC News. Mexico’s foreign ministry, in a statement late on Friday, said the country had a “very great relationship” with the US and cooperated on issues such as immigration. “When it comes to repatriations, we will always accept the arrival of Mexicans to our territory with open arms,” the ministry said.

The Mexican official did not give a reason for the denial of permission to land, while the foreign ministry did not mention the incident. Trump’s administration earlier this week announced it was re-launching the program known as “Remain in Mexico,” which forced non-Mexican asylum seekers to wait in Mexico until their cases in the United States were resolved. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Wednesday such a move would require the country receiving the asylum-seekers to agree, and that Mexico had not done so. The US State Department and the Pentagon did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

# Bilawal stresses need for collective action to combat climate change

### F.P. Report

JAMSHORO: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has highlighted climate change, digital rights protection, and social inequality as the most pressing challenges facing Pakistan today. Emphasizing the need for collective action, he stated that these complex issues “cannot be resolved by any individual or group alone.” He called on the youth to take the lead in building a brighter future for the country while advocating for the removal of barriers that hinder their progress and empowerment.

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP, while addressing the convocation of Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) in Jamshoro, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the graduates and their families. He said that it is a day of celebration but also one of reflection—reflection on your roots, the values you uphold, and the future you will help create. As graduates of Mehran University, you are inheritors of a legacy that goes beyond academic excellence.

He highlighted Sindh’s rich historical significance and said that this land is the cradle of the Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished thousands of years ago as pioneers of progress and sustainability. They built cities like Mohenjo-Daro with advanced drainage systems, grid-like streets, and a profound respect for nature. Their wisdom and vision still resonate today.

Bilawal reminded the graduates of

their duty to honor this remarkable heritage. He said that they must carry forward this legacy with innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity. Sindh, with its beauty and resilience, stands at the frontline of the climate crisis. Rising sea levels, erratic weather patterns, and devastating floods have impacted communities across the province. While these challenges are daunting, they also present opportunities for meaningful change.

Encouraging the graduates, he said that as engineers, scientists, and leaders, they hold the power to drive transformative solutions. From developing renewable energy technologies to designing climate-resilient cities and promoting sustainable agriculture, your efforts can address not just environmental challenges but also the issues of justice. Those least responsible for global emissions are often the ones most affected. Your work can ensure a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

Chairman PPP also emphasized the importance of addressing the challenges of the digital era. While technology has unlocked vast opportunities, it has also brought challenges like data privacy, misinformation, and cybercrime. Just as the Indus Valley Civilization set standards for fairness in trade and governance, we must establish guiding principles for the digital age. This is why I advocate for a Digital Bill of Rights to ensure universal internet access, protect privacy, and combat misinformation. Technology must serve humanity, not the other way around.

He urged graduates to uphold the

spirit of collaboration they had nurtured at Mehran University. Your time here has shown the transformative power of teamwork. As you step into the world, build bridges, not walls. Seek unity over division. Education is not just about knowledge acquisition; it is about empowerment. The degree you receive today is a key to unlocking opportunities and a responsibility to uplift your communities, your province, and your country.

Bilawal expressed immense pride in the graduates’ accomplishments. Mehran University is making waves in academia. Your high ranking in Times Higher Education and achievements like excelling in the Huawei competition in Riyadh, the Digital Pakistan Cyber Security Hackathon, and other international and national platforms, are testaments to your talent and hard work. These milestones highlight the immense potential of our youth, and it is our collective duty to support and guide you as you work to shape a better future for Pakistan.

He also highlighted the university’s role in nurturing leaders within the PPP, noting that Sindh’s Chief Minister, the Speaker of the Assembly, and several ministers are proud alumni of MUET. This demonstrates the bright and promising future awaiting you. Concluding his address, he congratulated the graduates and their families, and said that it is a moment of immense pride and joy, not just for you but for all of us. Your achievements shine as a beacon of hope for a brighter and more prosperous tomorrow.

## Parliament supreme institution, says Sharjeel

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information and Transport, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has stated that drafting the constitution and legislating are the responsibilities of the Parliament. According to the Constitution of Pakistan, the Parliament is the supreme institution. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has made it clear that the Pakistan People’s Party will protect the Constitution.

In a statement, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Pakistan People’s Party believes in the supremacy of the Constitution in Pakistan. During his first term in office, President Asif Ali Zardari strengthened and stabilized the Parliament.

He said that, for the first time in Pakistan’s history, President Asif Ali Zardari transferred his presidential powers to the Parliament. He reduced presidential authority and reinforced the Parliament and democracy.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized that it is the responsibility of every institution in the country to uphold the Constitution approved by the Parliament. Struggling for the stability of democracy and the strengthening of the Parliament has always been part of the Pakistan People’s Party’s history.

## Fazl ready to play role for restoring peace in KP

### F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that he is ready to play his role for restoring peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Addressing the tribal elders in Dera Ismail Khan on Saturday, the JUI-F chief proposed to convene ‘Jirga’ meeting to discuss the law and order situation of KP. “I am ready to play my role in this regard. The Jirga meeting should be convened before the holy month of Ramadan,” the veteran politician said.

It was decided by the notables of all the sects that the use of weapons should be discouraged, he added.

According to JUI-F chief, he also played an active role in the tribal areas in the aftermath of US invasion in Afghanistan. “I always consider myself as part of tribal areas. The issues should be resolved amicably with the consultation of tribal elders,” Fazl said.

# Faryal Talpur acquitted in fake accounts case

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Accountability Court has acquitted PPP Leader Faryal Talpur in the Fake Accounts case after a thorough review of the evidence and final charge sheet. The court found no incriminating evidence against her, concluding that the Rs. 30 million attributed to her was a legitimate business transaction.

According to NAB’s investigation, the amount was part of a documented sale of sugarcane from her family farms to Omni Group sugar mills, which

was verified under “Zardari Group Pvt. Ltd.” Based on the investigation, her name was placed in Column No. 2 of the charge sheet, marking her as “not sent up for trial.”

The court also addressed the status of other accused individuals in the case. Five accused, including Aslam Masood, Noreen Sultan, Kiran Aman, Naseer Abdullah Hussain Lootah, and Syed Hussain Faisal Shah Jamote, became approvers and will serve as witnesses.

Six others were found to be involved in separate criminal activities during

the inquiry, and proceedings against them have been initiated separately. Additionally, two accused, Bilal Shaikh and Muhammad Iqbal Arain, passed away during the trial, leading to the closure of their cases.

The court noted that the investigative process was conducted fairly and objectively, particularly in reassessing Mrs. Talpur’s role, where her claims were verified through evidence and testimonies. Accepting the final charge sheet, the court canceled the sureties of those not sent for trial and discharged their bonds.



**PESHAWAR:** *Bangladesh’s High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mohammad Iqbal Hussain Khan talking to media persons at Press Club.*

## FPCCI team, KP CM discuss promotion of industrial activities

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and discussed matters relating to promotion of industrial and commercial activities.

Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Industry, Abdul Karim, Secretary for Industry and other relevant officials were also present on the occasion. Steps and initiatives of the provincial government to attract private investment in the region came under discussion.

Talking to the delegation, the Chief Minister empha-

sized the need for close collaboration and mutual consultation between relevant government departments and the chambers of commerce to improve the industrial and commercial sectors. He stated that the provincial government is working under a comprehensive strategy to resolve issues faced by the industrial sector. He underscored the vital role of industries in economic development and job creation noting that KP offers immense opportunities for private investment.

The provincial government, he said, is committed to encourage private investors and providing them with all necessary facilities including offering locally produced electricity at concessional rates for industries.

He highlighted that provincial government has launched interest-free loan programs to promote entrepreneurship including loans for technical degree holders adding that an agreement has been signed to implement Home Stay Tourism Project aimed at boosting tourism and employment. FPCCI delegation appreciated the provincial government’s initiatives to promote industrial and commercial activities and expressed gratitude to CM for taking a keen interest in resolving the challenges faced by industrialists and traders.

# Tarar lauds role of University of London in educational system

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Saturday that the University of London has been playing an important role in Pakistan’s education system.

Addressing the alumni of the University of London here, the minister remarked that the university played an important role in raising the standard of legal education in

Pakistan. He said that meeting the alumni of the University of London was a source of joy for him as he had started his career as a tutor at that university.

Appreciating the University of London for its invaluable partnership with Pakistan, the minister remarked that graduates from the university were today making outstanding contributions in important sectors of the country. They have a key role in the development of Pakistan and the field of

law, he opined.

The minister said the alumni network of the University of London has been continuously developing for the past several decades expressing hope that it will continue to develop in the future as well. He said that the Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the great thinker and philosopher poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal got their education from the great educational institution of England Lincoln’s Inn.