

KP CM warrant suspended
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Terrorism Court has suspended non-bailable arrest warrants issued against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in connection with a case registered in Hassan Abdal. The warrants were suspended following a petition filed by Muhammad Faisal Malik, Gandapur's lawyer. The case concerns charges of arson and vandalism.



@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 341

Regd. No. 241

RAJAB 02 1446 -- FRIDAY, JANUARY 03 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayab Sadiq chairing second meeting on negotiations between treasury and opposition at Parliament House.

SIFC reviews initiatives for eco transformation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) convened 11th Apex Committee Meeting on Thursday to review various initiatives being steered through the forum.

The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and attended by Chief of the Army Staff, Federal Cabinet, Provincial Chief Ministers, the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan and high level government officials.

Secretary Apex Committee briefed the forum about strategic focus, initiatives and contributions of SIFC to support National Economic Transformation Plan 2024-2029 'Uraan Pakistan'. The committee showed profound satisfaction in improving the macro-economic conditions of the country while emphasizing upon the importance of collective efforts for ensuring unhindered economic growth and passing on the dividends to the masses.

During the session, the Committee approved the Action Plan for Optimization of SEZs to rejuvenate industrial landscape of Pakistan. The committee also reviewed the proposal of National



Minerals Harmonization Framework with due consent of all stakeholders. Forum was briefed on various initiatives in the domain of HRD, enabling improvement of skills and global standard accreditation. Chief Ministers also shared the ongoing initiatives in each province which will spur the economic growth.

COAS assured firm resolve of Pakistan Army's support to government's initiatives for economic stability ensuring peace and security. At the end, the Prime Minister appreciated the role of SIFC, ministries, departments and affiliated stakeholders in setting the tone for future activities during 2025. He also emphasized upon the importance of collective efforts at all tiers in the larger interest of the country.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif underlined that the economic development was directly linked with political stability as the strength of a country's economy was deeply rooted in its political framework.

Chairing a meeting on Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the prime minister said the country's macroeconomic indicators had significantly improved due to the untiring efforts of the economic team, expressing his confidence that the year 2025 will bring prosperity and growth in the country.

For the first time after 2018, the inflation rate has been eased down to 4.1%, foreign remittances have posted increase of 34%, exports have also jumped, and foreign exchange reserves have jumped from \$4 billion to \$12.5 billion," PM Shehbaz said adding that the policy rate which was now at 13%, had space of further 8% keeping in view the inflation rate.

As regards, foreign investment, the prime minister emphasized that MoUs worth billions of dollars had already been signed with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE. He said having achieved economic stability, the country had now entered the growth stage.

NEPRA suggests formula to cut electricity price

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Thursday prepared a plan for reduction in prices of the commodity by Rs25 a unit.

NEPRA submitted a document to the government suggesting that by revising per-unit capacity payment downwards and revision of surcharges, the electricity tariff can be reduced. It suggested that electricity prices can be reduced by overcoming operational shortcomings. It noted that of Rs45.06 per unit cost, Rs17.01 per unit is capacity charges. Moreover, Rs15.28 per unit are charged as tax and surcharge, and distribution companies charge Rs3.10 per unit as distribution margin from consumers.

NEPRA noted that one paisa per unit is collected in the name of maintenance, revenue generation and adjustment for the next year. In addition to that, Rs1.37 per unit are transmission charges. The power regulator revealed that the net average production cost of electricity is Rs7.62 per unit.

The NEPRA formula states that with the abolition of surcharges of Rs7.52 and adjustment of 67 paise, the price of electricity will be reduced by Rs25.20 per unit. If applied the formula, a unit of electricity that is Rs45.06 at present will come down to Rs20.04 per unit.

On Tuesday, NEPRA released its State of Industry Report 2024 and asked the government to review Rs15.28 per unit taxes on electricity. It also mentioned underutilization of generation capacity as one of the main challenges to the power sector. By the end of fiscal 2023-24, the installed power generation capacity reached 45,888MW, while the average annual utilization during the same period was only 33.88pc.

Kurram peace deal to be implemented from 4th

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Kurram peace deal will be implemented from Saturday January as a convoy of passengers will travel to Parachinar in a security cordon. Under the agreement signed in a jirga all bunkers will be demolished within 15 days. All types of arms will be collected and handed over to the government.

The situation will likely be returned to normalcy after handing over of arms and demolition of bunkers. After the peace deal for normalization in Kurram, sit-ins still continuing in Parachinar and Baggan area of Lower Kurram region.

The participants of Prachinar sit-in demanding of the government to ensure security by opening all roads including the main highway. While the participants of Baggan sit-in insisting that they will not end the protest until handing over of all arms and demolition of bunkers. Protesters also demanding compensation for the shops and homes destroyed in Baggan Bazaar.

The Frontier Post

PTI seeks more time for consultation

— Third round of govt talks set for next week

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) committee presented its list of demands to the government as the second round of political dialogue, initiated last month to address political uncertainty in the country, concluded on Thursday.

Both sides held the first round of formal negotiations on December 23, with the Imran Khan's party asked to bring its demands in writing in the next meeting on Jan 2.

According to a joint declaration after the meeting, the PTI presented demands for the release of all prisoners, including Imran Khan, and the formation of a judicial commission for the May 9 and November 26 incidents. PTI also requested more time for further consultations, and further negotiations will take place next week.

According to reports, the PTI delegation arrived at the Parliament House for negotiations, which included Omar Ayub, Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, Asad Qaiser, Sahibzada Hamid Raza, and Salman Akram Raja. KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur also took part in the talks.

National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, chaired the meeting of the negotiation committee. Other participants included Ishaq Dar, Aleem Khan, Farooq Sattar, Irfan Siddiqui, Rana Sanaullah, Raja Pervaz Ashraf, Naveed Qamar, Khalid Magsi and Ijazul Haq. Speaking on the occasion, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that the third meeting would be held next week.

Ayaz Sadiq mentioned that the opposition presented some of its demands in the committee, and another meeting is required to finalise those demands. Senator Irfan Siddiqui, a senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), stated that after receiving the demands, it will take at least a week to form an opinion and respond. Once the opposition's demands are in

written form, they will assess them and see what is being asked, he added.

He added that they must also consider the Constitution, law, and traditions, and determine what is possible and what is not. Irfan Siddiqui said that Omar Ayub presented his perspective in detail, and the committee requested more consultation with the PTI founder. The formal charter of demands will be presented in the next meeting, which is scheduled for next week, he added.

Reading out the joint declaration of the meeting, Senator Siddiqui said that PTI's Ayub and others presented their point of view in detail. "They [PTI] demanded the release of incarcerated Imran Khan and their workers and formation of judicial commission on the events of May 9, 2023 and Nov 26," he said.

Furthermore, he said, that the opposition wanted to meet the incarcerated PTI founder for consultation to chalk out the "charter of demands". "They [PTI] said Imran had allowed to start this negotiation process... in a bid to continue the process in a positive manner, Imran's guidance is necessary," he added. Siddiqui noted that the opposition agreed to table the charter of demand in written form after consulting the party founder. During the meeting, he said, the government has no objection to the PTI committee meeting the jailed founder. "It was agreed that the date for the third round of talks will be announced after the PTI committee meets Imran," he concluded.

Separately, PTI lawmaker Sher Afzal Marwat held a meeting with the NA speaker before the second round of talks between the government and the opposition. Speaking to media, Sadiq noted that "positive feedbacks" were coming from both sides, stressing that matters would be resolved when all sit on a negotiation table. "We all are Pakistanis... our priority is to speak for the betterment of the country and its people," he added.

Bashar Assad poisoned

LONDON: An assassination attempt by poisoning has been made on former Syrian dictator Bashar Assad. The Sun reported. The ousted leader reportedly fell ill on Sunday in Moscow, where he has resided since fleeing Syria in early December. Assad, 59, requested medical help then began to "cough violently and choke," according to online account General SVR, which is believed to be run by a former top spy in Russia. — Arab News

19 convicts involved in May 9 riots granted pardon

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Sequel to the promulgation of punishments to 9th May Tragedy convicts, they have exercised their right to appeal and have asked for mercy / remission in their punishments.

A total of 67 convicts have given their mercy petitions. 48 petitions have been processed to Courts of Appeal while, petitions of 19 convicts have been accepted purely on humanitarian grounds, in accordance with law. Mercy petitions of remaining will be decided in due course of time, following the legal process.

Those whose punishment has been remitted are:

Muhammad Ayaz s/o Sahibzada Khan, Sami Ullah s/o Meer dad Khan, Laeeq Ahmed s/o Manzoor Ahmed, Amjad Ali s/o Manzoor Ahmed, Yasir Nawaz s/o Ameer Nawaz Khan, Said Alam s/o Maaz Ullah Khan, Zahid Khan s/o Muhammad Nabi, Muhammad Suleman s/o Said Ghani Jan, Hamza Sharif s/o Muhammad Azam, Muhammad Salman s/o Zahid Nisar, Asher Butt s/o Muhammad Arshad Butt, Muhammad Waqas s/o Malik Muhammad Khalil, Sufayyan Idrees s/o Idrees Ahmed, Muneeb Ahmed s/o Naveed Ahmed Butt, Muhammad Ahmed s/o Muhammad Nazir, Muhammad Nawaz s/o Abdul Samad, Muhammad

Ali s/o Muhammad Boota, Muhammad Bilawal s/o Manzoor Hussain and Muhammad Ilyas s/o Muhammad Fazal Haleem.

They all shall be released after completion of procedural formalities. All those convicted retain the right of appeal and other legal remedies as per the law and the constitution. The remission of punishments is a testament to the strength of the due process and fairness, which ensures that justice is served while also taking into account the principles of compassion and mercy. Earlier in April 2024, release of 20 convicts was also carried out on humanitarian grounds in accordance with the law.

PHC dismisses PTI Mashal bail plea

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has dismissed the bail application of Mashal Yusufzai, a leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and former provincial advisor, due to non-compliance, on Thursday.

Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhel of the Peshawar High Court heard the bail application filed by Mashal Yusufzai. However, when the hearing began, no one appeared on behalf of the petitioner. Consequently, the court dismissed the bail application due to non-compliance.

It is worth noting that Mashal Yusufzai was nominated in multiple cases after participating in a protest at Islamabad's D-Chowk on November 24. Subsequently, she filed a bail application to avoid arrest in these cases. However, due to non-compliance with the court's proceedings, the Peshawar High Court dismissed her bail application.

Court restrains TMA from collecting taxes at Khanpur dam on boats: A Two member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Naeem Anwar and Justice Fazal Subhan has issued a stay order against the Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) Khanpur, restraining it from collecting taxes from boat operators at Khanpur Dam, a popular tourist spot. The court has also issued notices to the DC Haripur and the TMA Khanpur, seeking their response, on Thursday.

The writ petition filed by Khanpur Boats Association. The petitioners' lawyer, Sardar Nasser Khan informed the court that the TMA Khanpur had started collecting taxes from boat operators at Khanpur Dam without any legal authority.

The lawyer argued that Khanpur Dam is owned by the WAPDA and the TMA Khanpur has no authority to collect taxes from boat operators. He stated that the petitioners had entered into an agreement with WAPDA to operate boats at the dam, but the TMA Khanpur had started collecting taxes from them without any justification.

FO desires friendly ties with all neighbours

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Foreign Office expressed serious concerns over Indian extra territorial and extra judicial killings inside Pakistan. Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch addressing weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday said this is not just limited to Pakistan but India's network of extra territorial killings and abductions are now global and other countries are also concerned about India's extra territorial activities.

The spokesperson said Pakistan desires friendly relations with all its neighbours, including Afghanistan. She said Pakistan has a robust mechanism of dialogue with Afghanistan and it will like to continue dialogue with the neighbouring country

on all aspects of bilateral relations including the issues related to security and border management. She said Pakistan is fully capable of defending its national security and sovereignty against any internal or external threat.

Responding to a question, the spokesperson said Gwadar port, developed with the support of China, is for the development of Pakistan. She categorically stated Pakistan has no designs whatsoever to offer military bases to any foreign government or entity.

Shafqat Ali Khan appointed new FO Spokesperson: Career diplomat Shafqat Ali Khan has been appointed the new Foreign Office Spokesperson, replacing Mumtaz Zahra Baloch. The announcement was made by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar at a

press conference here on Thursday who hailed the services of the outgoing spokesperson and said that in recognition of her services, the Government of Pakistan had posted her as Pakistan's Ambassador to France.

Mumtaz Zahra was appointed to the slot in November 2022, replacing Asim Iftikhar Ahmed who was also given the ambassadorial job in Paris. Now she will again replace him as Asim Iftikhar has moved to the United Nations as the Additional Permanent Representative. Currently, serving as Additional Secretary for Europe in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Shafqat Ali Khan has served as Pakistan's ambassador to Russia and Poland, DG Europe at MoFA and Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva.

Pakistan formally begins 2-year term at UNSC

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan officially began its two-year term (2025-26) as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, the world body's power centre.

"As a non-permanent member of the UNSC, Pakistan will play its active role in promoting the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, including the right to self-determination of peoples under foreign occupation," Ambassador Munir Akram said in a post on X platform. "We will work with other Council members to promote peace & security," the top Pakistani envoy added.

A formal flag raising ceremony for the new members of the Council —Pakistan, Denmark, Greece, Panama and Somalia — will take place on January 2 (tomor-

row) at the UN headquarters in New York. The new members replaced Japan, Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland whose terms ended on December 31, 2024.

Pakistan will also preside over the 15-member Council in July when it assumes its presidency according to alphabetical rotation of the member states' official names. This will allow Islamabad to set the Security Council's agenda. In addition to this, Pakistan will get a seat on the Islamic State (ISIS) and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee, which is responsible for designating individuals and groups as terrorists and imposing sanctions.

This is Pakistan's eight term on the Council. The country's previous terms on the UNSC were in 2012-13,

2003-04, 1993-94, 1983-84, 1976-77, 1968-69, and 1952-53. Over the decades, Pakistan has played an active role in promoting the principles and purposes of the UN Charter and made significant contributions to international peace and security, including its role as one of the leading troop-contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions across the world.

Pakistan, which was elected to the UN Security Council by the General Assembly in June 2024, has replaced Japan on the Asian seat. Ambassador Akram reaffirmed Pakistan's dedication to strengthening international peace and security during its tenure on the Council, pledging to actively participate in addressing both global and regional challenges.



Birth anniversary of Quaid celebrated



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The 148th birth anniversary of the Quaid e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, titled as "Quaid or Bachy" was celebrated on 2nd Jan 2025 at Marriott Hotel Karachi. The event was hosted by Chairman Youth Parliament Mr. Rizwan Jaffer and was graced by the Chairman Senate Syed Yousif Raza Gillani as Chief guest, distinguished Provincial Ministers Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Saeed Ghani, Youth representatives, civil society and media professionals.

Addressing the gathering, Chairman Senate, Syed Yousif Raza Gillani said, Quaid's life and legacy was a beacon of hope, courage and dedication for the nation. It was an honour for me to address this graceful occasion meant for celebrating the birthday of a person whose determination was to strive for a prosperous nation and its youth, he added.

He further said, "years, the President of Pakistan has had the honor of celebrations of Quaid-e-Azam's birth anniversary with a remarkable initiative called "Quaid aur Bachay" for the past few years. I am deeply honoured to receive nomination from His Excellency President Asif Ali Zardari to take the lead in organizing this event", he remarked.

He delightedly congratulated the members of Youth Parliament for hosting the event and encouraged them to host such type of healthy activities and assured them of every

assistance from the Senate in this regard.

Speaking of Quaid's legacy and passion for Youth Chairman Senate said that he found it most befitting to align that occasion with gathering of the Youth Parliament as there could be no better venue or time to honour Quaid-e-Azam's vision than in the company of young, dynamic minds who were destined to lead Pakistan into a prosperous future.

He recalled his political journey and mentioned that his forefathers were signatory in Pakistan resolution and since then his family is serving the country in politics. "When I was Prime Minister, I made sure to decentralize powers through amendments which were unanimously accepted in Parliament", he remarked further.

He addressed the youth and reminded them about the Quaid's profound beliefs in the transformative power of the youth and high hopes from children and the youth of the country. Therefore, you are not just inheritors of Pakistan, but active builder of its destiny," He continued.

Chairman Senate urged youth to seek new skills in technological advancements, knowledge, and take paths in every walk of life with contributing in the democratic process as well. Chairman Youth Parliament Rizwan Jaffer thanked Chairman Senate for his assistance in organising the gathering and assisting youth in every way.

Lodhran Rescue 1122

Responded to 61401 emergency calls

F.P. Report



LODHRAN: Lodhran Rescue 1122 responded to 61401 emergency calls in time last year and rescued 60988 people.

In an exclusive conversation with *The Frontier Post*, District Emergency Officer Engineer Shakeel Ahmed said that 1122 should be called only in case of emergency.

District Emergency Officer Engineer Shakeel Ahmed, while releasing the performance report of the previous year, said that in the year 2024, the control room received 61401 emergency calls, in which it reached the spot in time and

responded to 7001 road traffic accidents, 48294 medical, 287 fire, 913 crime, 11 drowning and 4895 other miscellaneous emergencies. 60988 victims were rescued, out of which 37883 were provided medical assistance on the spot. 22657 people were transferred to different hospitals in the district after medical assistance.

District Emergency Officer Engineer Shakeel Ahmed has said in his message regarding the recent heavy fog that citizens should avoid unnecessary travel and take precautions while traveling when necessary to avoid accidents.

Keep a reasonable distance from the vehicle in front and slow down. Keep the vehicle lights on and use low beam headlights. He said that citizens should never ride motorcycles without a helmet and obey traffic rules. He further said that providing the best service to the citizens within the available resources is our top priority.

HC designate to Canada arrives in Ottawa



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner-designate Mr. Muhammad Saleem has arrived in Ottawa on December 29, 2024. With a distinguished diplomatic career and a passion for fostering international cooperation, Ambassador Saleem brings exceptional leadership and vision to this role. Muhammad Saleem graduated with a Master's degree in Diplomacy and Strategy from the National University of Malaysia.

He joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan in

1995 and since then has served at various positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, and Pakistan's Diplomatic Missions abroad including the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Bahrain, Romania and Canada. He also served as Pakistan's High Commissioner to the United Republic of Tanzania from 2020-2022.

Ambassador Saleem has consistently worked to build on meaningful partnerships, address global challenges, and promote shared values on the international stage. He is eager to deepen the strong and historic ties between Pakistan and Canada. Through initiatives focused on political, economic, investment, trade, higher education, cultural exchange and people-to-people contacts, he aims to further strengthen the existing collaboration and explore new avenues of cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Tehsil Municipal Administration Chitral NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

Sealed tender based on MRS-2024 (IST Bi-Annual) for the below mentioned works is hereby invited from Government Contractors enlisted with Local Council Board and KPRA in the relevant category and having registration / enlistment renewal for the current year (2024-25) as per following schedule:

S.#	Name of Schemes with locations	E/Cost Rs. (M)	2% Earnest Money Rs. (M)	Opening date
ADP NO. 929/240308 District Development Initiative Lower Chitral (Identified by MNA NA-1) for the year 2024-25				
1	Provision of Pipe on Need Basis in Tehsil Chitral	14.00	0.280	22/01/2025
2	Repair & Maintenance of Jamme Masjid Toren Mori	1.00	0.020	
3	Repair/Rehabilitation of link road Preyat Bala (Hammid)	1.00	0.020	
4	Construction of PCC Road Mashangole Danin	0.90	0.018	
5	Repair/Rehabilitation of Civil Channel Beghust (Munawar)	0.60	0.012	
ADP NO. 929/240308 District Development Initiative Lower Chitral (Identified by MPA PK-2) For the year 2024-25				
6	Street pavement Jang Bazar bala	0.80	0.016	22/01/2025
7	Irrigation Channel Sanik bala	0.50	0.010	
8	Irrigation Channel Ower Deh	0.50	0.010	
9	Olagh Irrigation Channel	0.70	0.014	
10	Channelization of Geri	0.50	0.010	
11	Improvement of Irrigation Channel at Shoghore	0.60	0.012	
12	Pech och Irrigation Channel	0.50	0.010	
13	Irrigation Channel Shewakht Nechagh	0.50	0.010	
14	Improvement of Irrigation Channel at Cholnik Xetor	0.60	0.012	
15	Kolmok Irrigation Channel	0.50	0.010	
16	Irrigation Channel Pitagram	0.60	0.012	
17	Gerdangah Channel Lasht Susoom	0.50	0.010	
18	PCC Orguch Road	2.50	0.050	
19	Link Road Noroon Ochust	1.20	0.024	
20	Link Road Muxbom Khorkashandeh	4.00	0.080	
21	Link Road Gorkeni Chewdok	0.80	0.016	
22	PCC of Link road Dolomouch	0.60	0.012	
23	PCC of Link road Seen Lalmi	0.70	0.014	
24	Link Road Mroi	0.80	0.016	
25	Link road Mori Payeen	0.80	0.016	
26	Repair of link road Kuju Bala ustazandeh	0.50	0.010	
27	PCC Theng Road Kari Bala	0.60	0.012	
28	PCC Road Shadok Payeen and Bala	1.00	0.020	
29	PCC road Gahtak College Side	0.80	0.016	
30	PCC of Link road Birbolok Broze	0.80	0.016	
31	Link Road PCC At Gahraltie	0.80	0.016	
32	Repair of Link Road at Zondrandeh Ayune	0.70	0.014	
33	Link Road bubagh Lasht Ayune	0.70	0.014	
34	Link Road at Mexigram	0.50	0.010	
35	Link Road at Youngjogh	0.50	0.010	
36	Link Road Besqhar Payeen	0.50	0.010	
37	Link road at Birzeen Dok	1.00	0.020	
38	Jeepable Bridge at Birzeen	0.80	0.016	
39	Link road at Dronil	0.50	0.010	
40	Besghram shooth to Orguch Road	5.00	0.10	
41	Link road to Byunik	0.50	0.010	
42	Link road at Dermal	0.50	0.010	
43	Link road Gole to Ochian Lasht	1.00	0.020	
44	Link Road Beyar	0.50	0.010	
45	Ghomari Link Road	0.50	0.010	
46	Potek Link Road	0.50	0.010	
47	Chattar Khan Link Road	1.00	0.020	
48	Link road Madashil to Shahuli	0.80	0.016	
49	Repair of Sewakht Main Bridge	0.50	0.010	
50	Link Road at Ghooft Khoik	0.70	0.014	
51	Baboch Link Road	0.50	0.010	
52	Street Pavement Muldeh	0.80	0.016	
53	Sanitation Work at Rehan Khot	0.80	0.016	
54	Street Pavement Golder Payeen and Bala	0.80	0.016	
55	Street Pavement at Qalandarmali Bala and Payeen	1.00	0.020	
56	Street Pavement Thordeh Khuguzi	0.50	0.010	
57	Repair of Irrigation Channel at Kuju Bala Lotdeh	0.70	0.014	
58	Street Pavement Hingole Jughoor	1.00	0.020	
59	Street Pavement Shoth Jughoor	0.80	0.016	
60	Pedestrian Paht Berir	0.60	0.012	
61	Sanitation Work at Bumburaite	0.80	0.016	
62	Street Pavement Romandeh Ayune	0.80	0.016	
63	Repair of Street Pavement at Thoriyandeh	0.50	0.010	
64	Sewarge System Portu	0.60	0.012	
65	Sewarge/Sanitation Work at Narkoraite	0.70	0.014	
66	Noghor Bokht School Path way	0.50	0.010	
67	Pipeline Zargarandeh	1.00	0.020	
68	Pipes for DWSS at Singoor	2.50	0.050	
69	Solarization of Dug well at Seen Lasht	0.50	0.010	
70	Pipeline Seen Hayat	0.50	0.010	
71	Repair of Dug Well at Shali	0.50	0.010	
72	Provision of Pipe Line Shali	0.70	0.014	
73	Pipe Line Mori	0.50	0.010	
74	Pipe line at Mori Bala Thak	0.80	0.016	
75	Pipe Line at Istari Gole	0.60	0.012	
76	Solar Dug Well Nool Kuju Payeen	0.80	0.016	
77	Pipe Line Fromm WSU Line at Mashangole	0.50	0.010	
78	Solarization Rezandeh Jughoor	0.80	0.016	
79	Extension of Golain Line Upto Achin Gole	0.80	0.016	
80	Solarization Dug Well at Jutlasht	0.60	0.012	
81	DWSS at Khor Broze	0.60	0.012	
82	Solarization of Dug Well Khor Broze	0.50	0.010	
83	Pipes for DWSS at Gang Gharaltie	0.60	0.012	
84	Zeghar Water Supply Berir Bala	0.60	0.012	
85	Pipe line Tharaloo theng Ayune	0.60	0.012	
86	Pipe line for Arkal and Gahal Ayune	0.60	0.012	
87	Pipe line Bumburaite	0.60	0.012	
88	Pipe line Groom Rumbor	0.80	0.016	
89	Pipe line Muldeh Ayune	0.50	0.010	
90	Repair of Two Dug wells at (Muldeh and bashangagole)	0.50	0.010	
91	Water Tank and Pipes Ocho	0.80	0.016	
92	Provision of Pipes at Merdeen	0.50	0.010	
93	Pipe line Wakht / Lokoh Parabaig	0.50	0.010	
94	Provision of Pipe for Lot Koh	1.00	0.020	
95	Provision of DWSS Pipes for Lower Chitral	4.40	0.088	
ADP NO. 1169/210553 District Development Plan for Lower Chitral in Malank Division during Financial Year 2021-22				
96	Internal Works Masjid Bakerabad (Engr. Hafiz)	0.70	0.014	22/01/2025
97	Jamme Masjid Main Road Broze	0.50	0.010	
98	Jamme Masjid Domoon C/O Fazle Haq	0.50	0.010	
99	Jamme Masjid Jughoor	0.50	0.010	
100	Internal Works Masjid Thingshen	0.50	0.010	
101	Jamme Masjid Faizabad Hone	0.50	0.010	
102	Masjid Jamme Taqwa	0.50	0.010	
103	Reconstruction of Madrasa Zia Ul Quran	0.50	0.010	
104	Masjid Kham Soth	0.50	0.010	
105	Link Road Prayat Bala	0.50	0.010	
106	Link Road Junali To Pislagh	1.00	0.020	
107	Link Road at Gahraltie	0.90	0.018	
108	Dug Well at Said abad	0.60	0.012	
109	Civil Irrigation Channel Ghumurkhune	0.90	0.018	
110	Nekh Link Road Mough Murdan	0.80	0.016	
111	Mough Road at Murdan	1.00	0.020	
112	DWSS at Kuru and Arkal	2.50	0.050	
113	Protection wall at Kuru Ayune	1.30	0.026	
114	Provision of Sewing Machine Faizabad Hone	0.80	0.016	

TERMS & CONDITIONS: 01) Tender Form can be downloaded after publication in the National Dailies & KPRA's Website by the original registered contractors from Local Council Board website (www.lgkp.gov.pk). 02) All the enlisted contractors who renewed license for the current financial year (2024-25) from Local Council Board shall offer their bids by filling rates online. All bidders are required to be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 2013 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No. XXI 2013) for works, consulting and non-consulting services as listed in Schedule-II of the Act. 03) The TMA Chitral shall award print work order through New E-Tendering System. Any work order awarded and work issued by the TMA without E-Tendering System shall henceforth be null and void. 04) The document must be attached with the bids such as:- i) 2% Earnest Money/additional security in shape of original Call Deposit in the name of Tehsil Municipal Officer TMA Chitral from scheduled Banks. ii) Enlistment Copy of Local Council Board / KPRA for the year (2024-25) updated. iii) Registration Copy of Pakistan Engineering Council with relevant codes and updated. iv) Copy of CNIC for each scheme in a separate envelop highlighting name of work & Serial number written over the envelop. 05) Sealed bids must be sent through registered mail/Postal Service (No tender form will be entertained by hand) should be reached on Date 22/01/2025 up to 12:00 pm Noon and will be opened on the same date at 2:00 PM in the presence of bidders by the tender committee. Delay in delivering of the tender documents will be the responsibility of the bidders. 06) As per Notification No. S.R.O. (14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated May 10, 2022 by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority, The Contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security to the extent of 2% only of Engineer Estimate. 07) The Contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineer's Estate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers' Estimate Cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. 08) Similarly, a contractor quotes more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer's Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. 09) In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof. 10) The Procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. 11) The Engineer estimates are framed on the MRS-2024 (IST Bi-Annual). 12) The Tender Forms and BoOs must be signed by the original contractor. 13) The successful contractors have to pay stamp duty along-with contingency charges and all applicable Provincial/Federal Government Taxes issued from time to time. 14) Bid Security of some or all the bidders will be retained by the employer till approval of tender/bid validity period. 15) Complete bids (original) must reach to the office of TMA Chitral on or before the fixed date/time. 16) Incomplete conditional or telegraphic tenders shall not be accepted. 17) The Department will not be bound to provide any machinery/testing laboratory and the total cost on it will be borne by the contractors themselves. 18) Any bidder who provides incorrect information shall be disqualified. 19) In case of bids become tie, the award of the contractor shall be decided through an electronic toss which shall be binding and final. 20) According to letter vide No. 6116-31 Dated 21/11/2024 issued by worthy Deputy Commissioner, Work order will be issued subject to availability of funds from provincial government under mentioned ADP's Schemes 929/240308 DOI. 21) The procuring entity may reject any or all bids after communicating the reasons for rejection at any time prior to the award of the contractor. 22) Any addition made in terms & conditions in the NIT advertised in the newspaper will be implemented as per KPRA Rules.

Tehsil Officer (I&S), TMA-Chitral
INF(P) 3576/24



UNIVERSITY OF PESHAWAR Invitation to Bid for Provision of Furniture items/Computer & other allied equipments and Networking accessories for Department of Computer Science

Sealed bids on prescribed Tender Forms are invited from well reputed & experienced provision of following items:

Tender #	Description	Tender fee	Tender Submission date	Tender Opening date
01/2024-25	Furniture items	Rs.3000/-	21.01.2025 upto 10:00 AM	21.01.2025 at 10:30 AM
02/2024-25	Computer & other allied equipments/Networking accessories	Rs.3000/-	21.01.2025 upto 10:00 AM	21.01.2025 at 10:30 AM

Eligibility:- Firms having valid Sales Tax and Income Tax number, KPRA Registration & minimum three years experience in supplies of similar items to Govt./Semi Govt./Private/Private Companies/Departments.

1. The bidding documents including Contract Conditions and Item Specification can be obtained from the Department of Computer Science, University of Peshawar, during office hours (8:00 AM to 4:00PM) on any working day (Monday-Friday). 2. The bidders shall clearly and boldly mark the Tender number, its description and date/time of opening at the face of sealed bid/envelope. 3. The Sealed bids, complete in all respects, must reach the office of Treasurer, University of Peshawar as per schedule above. 4. The bid shall invariably be accompanied with separate CDRs of prescribed Tender Fee (No-Refundable) and earnest Money @ 200,000/- (Refundable), both drawn in the name of The Treasurer, University of Peshawar. 5. Bids submitted without prescribed Tender fee or Earnest Money shall be liable for rejection at the time of Tender opening. Tender fee and Earnest money shall be submitted separately along with each Tender. 6. For Furniture items the bidders shall present sample unit/piece at the time of bid opening. 7. Tenders will be opened in the Committee Room No.3, Main Administration Block, University of Peshawar in the presence of the bidders. 8. The University of Peshawar reserves the right to reject any or all bids in accordance with rules in vogue.

Treasurer University of Peshawar

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT DISTRICT KHYBER

Sealed tender based on MRS 2024 1st BiANUAL/Non MRS Item for the below mentioned works are here by invited on the basis of SINGLE STAGE SINGLE ENVELOPE PROCEDURE from the government contractors registered with PEC and enlisted with C&W Department as per centralized enlistment policy of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for current financial year for the works ADP # 978/240311 "District Development Initiatives in Bajur, Mohmand & Khyber. (2024-25) District Khyber as per following schedule. (Civil Work Only)

S. No.	Name of Scheme	E/Cost in (M)	Bid Security @ 2% in (M)	Last date for submission of electronic bid	Date & time for opening electronic tender form/Bid
01	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines at Lora Mena.1	0.608	0.0121	21-01-2025 12:00 PM	21-01-2025 02:00 PM
02	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines at Lora Mena. 2	0.334	0.007	--do--	--do--
03	Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Lora Mina. 3	2.411	0.0482	--do--	--do--
04	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Main Morcha Mulagora. 1	2.091	0.042	--do--	--do--
05	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Main Morcha Mulagori. 2	1.204	0.024	--do--	--do--
06	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Surface Water Reservoir at Sheer Bridge Mulagori. 1	2.032	0.0406	--do--	--do--
07	Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Sheer Bridge Mulagori. 2	2.882	0.0576	--do--	--do--
08	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Murad Dand Mulagori. 1	0.628	0.0126	--do--	--do--
09	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines at Murad Dand Mulagori. 2	0.628	0.0126	--do--	--do--
10	Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Surface Water Reservoir at Murad Dand Mulagori. 3	2.647	0.053	--do--	--do--
11	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Pandi Lalma Mulagori. 1	1.964	0.0392	--do--	--do--
12	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Pandi Lalma Mulagori. 2	1.155	0.0232	--do--	--do--
13	Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Surface Water Reservoir at Pandi Lalma Mulagori. 3	2.792	0.0558	--do--	--do--
14	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Tatara Mulagori. 1	1.747	0.035	--do--	--do--
15	Gravity Basis Scheme Water Reservoir and Distribution Line at Tatara Mulagori. 2	1.017	0.0204	--do--	--do--
16	Existing Solar Based Tube Well, Water Supply Lines & Water Reservoir at Bara Dara Mulagori. 1	1.190	0.024	--do--	--do



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs and States and Frontier Regions, Engr Amir Muqam talking to media at Peshawar Press Club.

PTI trying to hide 10 years failure through use of force, says Muqam

Visits Peshawar Press Club to congratulate new cabinet

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs and States and Frontier Regions, Engr Amir Muqam here Thursday said that the doubled standard politics and hollow slogans of PTI that trying to hide its 10 years failure through use of force against peaceful protestors was stand exposed before the nation. The Federal Minister was talking to media at Peshawar Press Club where he congratulated its newly elected Cabinet Including its President M. Raiz and General Secretary Tayyab Usman. While condemning the use of force against peaceful elected local government representatives at Peshawar, Engr Amir Muqam said that it exposed the double standards politics of PTI. He said these LG representatives were demanding funds and others rights from KP Govt through peaceful protest and use of lathi charge and shelling against them are unjustified. Engr Amir Muqam reiterated to raise voice for local government representatives at all forums, demanding resolution of their problems. He said that Govt has started negotiations with opposition parties with an

open heart and only those demands, which are under legal and constitution domain would be fulfilled. He made it clear that cases of PTI founder are of serious nature that would be decided by the courts and not by the negotiation committee. Engr Amir Muqam said that judiciary was independent that would deliver judgments in all cases of the PTI founder, who was in jail in serious nature corruption cases. He said that no one was above the law as PMLN leadership including he himself were appeared in the courts and were later acquitted after trials. Engr Amir Muqam said that when PMLN mandate was stolen in 2018 General Election and PTI founder was brought into power after sitting down RTS and polling rigging, the then opposition leader Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had offered talks to PTI leaderships especially on charter of economy and combating terrorism. However, the PTI leadership did not reciprocate the positive gesture of PMLN and escaped from talks, resultantly, the country was put at the verge of bankruptcy. He said that it was unfortunate that PTI leadership has started threats to government despite the

ongoing negotiations between the two committees. Like the aimless 128 days sit ins of PTI staged in 2014, its Nov 2024 protest call were also proved a miscall as people have kept distance of it, he said. He said attacks on PTV and Parliament House during PTI sit in 2014 was not hid from the nation. Due to PTI sit in, he said the important visit of the Chinese President were postponed while people of Pakistan suffered. The Federal Minister said that CM KP had left PTI workers alone at D Chowk on Nov 26 and disappeared, adding the PTI workers wanted to know why they were left alone in the harsh cold weather. He said politics of all parties are linked with a strong country and we all should forge unity against terrorism. Engr Amir Muqam said that KP Government has been provided all due financial share under NFC award, and that development of erstwhile Fata was now the prime responsibility of KP Government after its merger in KP. He said that development in erstwhile Fata was imperative for lasting peace there. The Federal Minister said that PTI has failed to

deliver in KP during its three tenure on all fronts where problems of masses increased significantly. Engr Amir Muqam said that Khwazakhela-Bisham four lane expressway that was approved by PMLN Govt in 2017 has been approved by CDWP that would be completed with an estimated cost of Rs137 billion. The expressway on completion would open up Swat, Shangla and other districts for tourism, trade and investment. He claimed that this Expressway was halted by the then PTI Government, resulting into economic losses and deprivation of people of better roads connectivity. The project on completion would reduce distance between Shanga and Swat to only 30 minutes. He advised PTI Govt to compete with Punjab Govt in term of development and welfare projects. Engr Amir Muqam said that now children in KP were mocking about the so called agitation calls of Gandapure and called it a miscall. Engr Amir Muqam expressed the hope that the newly elected body of Peshawar press club would use energy for welfare of journalists community and promotion of constructive journalism in the province.

KP Food Authority unveils annual performance report 2024

Modern food labs established, thousands of kilograms of substandard food items discarded

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority has released its Annual Performance Report for 2024, showcasing significant actions in combating substandard and hazardous food products. The report highlights that 102,125 operations were conducted across the province, during which 711,978 kilograms/liters of different substandard and hazardous food items were discarded. According to the Annual performance report issued by the spokesperson, the authority issued 19,832 improvement notices to various food businesses and sealed 547 establish-

ments found in violation of food safety standards. Furthermore, 33,127 business licenses were issued, and 609 new food products were registered. The authority also prioritized public awareness and capacity building, organizing 1,736 awareness sessions and providing training to 2,188 food workers through 142 Level One training programs. Mobile food labs tested 8,871 sample of different food items including milk, oil, tea lives, beverages, spices, jaggery, water and fruit juices, of which 6,616 met quality standards, while 2,255 were deemed substandard and hazardous. The report further revealed that a key mile-

stone achieved in 2024 was the establishment of advanced facilities, including a high-tech equipment MilkoScan, a meat testing laboratory, and five more state-of-the-art mobile food testing labs. Additionally, the authority launched a Nutrition Wing, a Research and Development Unit, and hosted online khuli kachehri, aiming to hear complaints and feedback of the general public. Special campaigns targeting snacks, dairy, bakery items, ghee, and meat testing were also conducted by food authority, ensuring the provision of high-quality food to the public. Director General Wasif Saeed attributed the author-

ity's success to teamwork and credited the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru. Saeed remarked, "Under their visionary leadership, the authority has achieved remarkable progress in establishing cutting-edge facilities and ensuring public health." KP Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru praised the authority's performance, stating, "The establishment of advanced testing equipments is a significant step towards ensuring food safety. In 2025, we aim to introduce further modern testing equipments to continue improving food standards to ensure public health."



PESHAWAR: A man selling gajar ka halwa (a sweet made from carrots) in Saddar. — INP photo

Kundi emphasizes support for talented youth

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Thursday expressed the importance of encouraging the province's talented youth. He said that the Governor House has been actively working towards supporting young individuals. The Governor made these remarks while interacting with a representative delegation from the 71st Harvard National Model United Nations Pakistan at the Governor House in Peshawar. The delegation was led by Fahad Malik, consisted of young people from various cities of Pakistan. Governor Kundi highlighted that when Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited the Governor House for the first time, a representative group of talented athletes from the province was invited on short notice. He praised the exceptional abilities of these individuals. He urged the youth not to be discouraged, emphasizing that Pakistan has both talented youth and ample resources. He stressed the need for collective effort to build a better future for the country. Kundi urged the youth to continue making their country proud on their own, saying that with proper government support, Pakistan's global reputation could be further enhanced. He encouraged young people to take on roles as ambassadors of their country while abroad, emphasizing that the future of the nation lies in education and technology. Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi praised the recent achievements of the Blind Cricket

Team for bringing honor to the country during a meeting with the Peshawar Cricket Club for the Blind, led by Habibullah Khattak. During the meeting, the Governor was informed that two players and one coach from the club participated in the T20 Blind Cricket World Cup, held in December 2024, where Pakistan emerged as the world champion. Additionally, one player from the club served as the head coach of the Afghanistan Blind Cricket Team. The club representatives presented their demands to the Governor, including requests for jobs, grounds, the organization of the Governor's Cup, and financial support for sports activities. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi acknowledged the exceptional talent in Pakistan's sports community, citing the success of the Blind Cricket Team as a prime example. He highlighted the lack of adequate facilities for players, whether it be training grounds or other essential resources. The Governor assured that he is in contact with relevant officials to address the challenges faced by players and improve the promotion of sports activities in the province. Kundi further pointed out that the provincial government has not been sufficiently proactive in supporting sports initiatives. He stressed that these athletes are valuable assets to the province and bring great pride to the region. He urged the provincial government to provide them with the necessary support and facilities to enhance their performance and continue making the province proud.

Similarly, Chairman of the FATA Tribunal, Kifayatullah Khan, met with the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, at the Governor House. During the meeting, discussions were held on judicial matters, public issues, and the provision of justice in the former FATA regions. The Chairman briefed the Governor on the tribunal's performance and progress in the resolution of cases. He highlighted the complexities of legal matters in the region and the challenges of delivering prompt justice to the public. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi praised the performance of the FATA Tribunal, emphasizing that the provision of justice in the former tribal areas and resolving their issues with federal departments are top priorities. He assured full cooperation in strengthening the role of the Tribunal and facilitating the public. He further said that the people of the tribal areas have high expectations from the FATA Tribunal, and the Governor House will provide all possible support in this regard. Meanwhile, Deputy Auditor General (North), Sajid Ali Nadeem held a meeting with Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House. The meeting was attended by Director of Audits, Dr. Ameen Ullah, Sajid Khan, and Liaqat Ali. During the meeting, the Deputy Auditor General presented the Special Study Report for the year 2023-24 on the Water and Sanitation Services Company (WSSC) in Abbottabad District. The report provides a

detailed assessment of water supply and sanitation services in Abbottabad's four urban union councils and 11 neighborhood councils. Additionally, the Deputy Auditor General also presented the Performance Audit Report for the Double Shift Schools Program in Charsadda District for 2023-24. The report highlighted several key findings and made recommendations for the program's improvement. Among the recommendations were the immediate closure of non-functional programs and the introduction of greater transparency in the process of transferring students from morning shifts to evening classes. The report also called for the confirmation of records for teacher payments under the program within a month. Governor Kundi emphasized the importance of financial discipline and adherence to rules and regulations in order to navigate the province out of the financial crisis. He stressed that financial transparency is crucial for good governance across all sectors. Speaking about local governance, Governor Kundi highlighted the pivotal role of local representatives at the Union Council level, saying that they are closely connected to the local population and district administration. He urged local representatives to work with audit bodies to ensure transparency in development initiatives at the Union Council level. "The implementation of good governance in all sectors will require ensuring financial transparency in all matters," Governor Faisal Karim Kundi added.

Health Dept clarifies report F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Responding to social media reports about the absence of health department officials in the KP Assembly Standing Committee on Health meeting, the spokesperson for the Department of Health clarified that the KP Assembly and its committees hold paramount importance for the department. The spokesperson explained that all staff related to Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) were present at the meeting. If any staff members were absent and their presence was deemed necessary, it was not intended to undermine the dignity of the parliamentary process. It was clarified that the Secretary of Health was in Islamabad to attend an important health-related meeting. Additionally, the Special Secretary and MTI staff attended the committee meeting on time. However, the Director General (DG) Health was unable to attend due to high blood pressure. The spokesperson reiterated that the absence of certain officials was in no way intended as a disregard for the parliament. Both the Secretary of Health and the DG Health have previously attended all committee meetings in person. The department has assured the committee and the public that, moving forward, the Secretary of Health and DG Health, along with relevant staff, will ensure their timely presence in all standing committee meetings.

PHC suspends NOC for new sugar mill

Humayun Khan
PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Naeem Anwar and Justice Fazal Subhan has suspended the issuance of a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the establishment of a new sugar mill in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Thursday. The court has also issued notices to the provincial government and the mill's administration. The writ petition filed by Dera Chashma Sugar Mill. The petitioner was represented by Ishaq Ali Qazi Advocate. During the hearing, Ishaq Ali Qazi advocate

informed the court that the Peshawar High Court had previously imposed a ban on the establishment of new sugar mills in Dera Ismail Khan in 2018 and 2024. The court had also directed the provincial government not to issue NOCs for new sugar mills. However, the provincial government had ignored these orders and issued an NOC for the new sugar mill, Al-Maan Siyam. The advocate argued that this decision was in violation of the Peshawar High Court's orders and Supreme Court decisions. According to the petition, the existing sugar mills in the province were already facing difficulties

in crushing sugarcane, and that 30-40% of the sugarcane was being imported from Punjab. The petition also highlighted that the establishment of a new sugar mill would exacerbate the existing problems faced by the sugar industry in the province. The petition requested the court to suspend the NOC issued by the provincial government and direct the government not to take any further action in this regard. After hearing the arguments, the Peshawar High Court suspended the NOC and issued notices to the provincial government and the mill's administration, directing them to respond to the petition.

Mayor condemns violence against LG representatives

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor of Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, has expressed deep regret over the alleged shelling and violence against local government representatives from various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal areas. Addressing these representatives, the Mayor described the incident as a disgraceful act, calling for immediate action against those responsible. "Violence and shelling against these representatives, who are our guests, is deeply regrettable," stated Haji Zubair Ali. "The government must take swift action against the perpetrators. These elected represen-

tatives deserve respect and dignity, as they have been chosen by the people. Such behavior is shameful." The Mayor criticized the provincial government for its double standards, pointing out that while it protests for its own rights in Islamabad, it fails to provide basic rights to local government representatives within the province. He also urged the government to compensate the injured representatives, similar to how it provided financial aid to its workers injured during protests in Islamabad. Haji Zubair Ali apologized to the attendees for his absence during the past two days, explaining that he had

been in Islamabad attending to his ailing sister. Despite his personal challenges, he reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the local government system through collective efforts. The Mayor also highlighted previous incidents of violence during protests, mentioning that after such incidents, the government had formed a committee. During discussions with this committee, it was agreed that funds would first be allocated to tribal districts, followed by other areas in need, and then to the remaining districts. However, he lamented the government's failure to fulfill its commitments.

KPRA collects Rs24.2bn in six months of FY 2024-25

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) has successfully collected Rs24.2 billion in the first six months of the financial year 2024-25, marking an impressive 45% growth compared to the same period last year. Last year it collected only Rs 16.7 billion in the first six months which shows an impressive Rs7.5 billion increase in the revenue. As per the details shared by the KPRA's media wing,

the Authority has collected Rs18.15 billion from the sales tax on services, and Rs6.07 billion from the Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC). Last year, collections from sales tax on services amounted to Rs14.6 billion, while Rs2.1 billion was collected from the IDC, reflecting a 24% growth in sales tax on services and an astonishing 189% growth in IDC. Director General KPRA, Fouzia Iqbal, praised the dedication and hard work of

the KPRA team, which has resulted in an impressive performance over the past six months. She expressed her confidence that with sustained efforts, not only will the annual revenue target be achieved, but it will also be exceeded significantly. "With the same level of commitment and our strategic approach, I am confident that we will surpass this year's target. And by the end June, KPRA will once again stand out as a beacon of

excellence in performance," she remarked. The Director General also extended her gratitude to taxpayers for their trust, confidence, and cooperation, which have been instrumental in KPRA's achievements so far. Additionally, she acknowledged the support and guidance of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, and Advisor to the CM on Finance, Muzzammil Aslam.



In brief

JJIY Salarzai demand inquiry F.P. Report

BUNER: The people of Salarzai area one hundred and twenty thousand people are longing for medical facilities for quite long when this rural health center Jowar was demolished for reconstruction but not constructed in last four years. Siraj Hashmi, president of JI Youth Circle Salarzai, has said in a press release and video statement that he went along with the JI Youth and a medical team to review the medical facilities in the RHC. Jowar where it came to knowledge the male dental technician was on general duty at RHC Dewana Baba and Salarzai were deprived. Hashmi claimed a detailed meeting was held with the in-charge of the hospital to review the problems and difficulties faced by the patients. During it came to knowledge that construction work has not started on the building which was demolished on the name upgradation. Due to no posting DHO in Buner for two consecutive years, the fund of the hospital has lapsed. Because of this, every department of the hospital is facing financial difficulties, which is affecting the patients who come to the hospital. He further said that demolished building bricks and steel are missing. It has been demanded to be brought forward so that the requirements of justice can be fulfilled. In the press release, it was further said that due to the lack of first aid medicines in the hospital, the patients are facing severe difficulties and demanded that immediate arrangements should be made for the supply of medicines. Anesthesia post is vacant and urgent appointment is required. He has demanded that ENT and dermatologist doctors should be assigned one day duty in a week. He further said that doctors' hostels and flats have also been demolished due to which the hospital staff are facing difficulties.

Man shoots sister dead in house

ZOB (INP): A man shot dead his sister inside their house located on Jail Road in Zhob district of Balochistan. According to police sources, the accused managed to escape from the crime scene after killing her sister. The deceased woman was identified as Musarat Aziz. The body of the deceased woman was shifted to the Civil Hospital. The police have started searching for the accused for further legal action. It is yet to be ascertained what was the motive behind this gruesome murder.

Two killed in separate incidents F.P. Report

WAH CANTT: A tragic Wednesday unfolded in Wah as two persons lost their lives in four separate incidents across the city. According to police sources, the first incident occurred when a 40-year-old woman was shot dead by unknown assailants in her own home. In another shocking turn of events, a man named Mushtaq was killed in a robbery-cum-murder incident in Liaquatabad area, within the limits of Wah Saddar Police Station. Mushtaq had visited the area to collect house rent and was attacked by unknown bandits while returning home. Despite resisting, he was shot and the assailants fled with the looted cash. In a separate incident, a motorcyclist, Mohsin Ayaz, was crushed to death by a speeding car in the limits of Wah Cantonment Police Station.

Minority youth adventure program successfully completed



F.P. Report

GALIYAT: A five-day adventure program was organized for minority community youth in Galiyat under the annual development program of the Department of Auqaf, Hajj, Religious and Minority Affairs, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Under the program, more than 200 minority youth men and women from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa traveled and participated in trips.

The participants belonged to the Christian community, Sikh community, Kailash and Hinduism. The aim of the program was to strengthen the youth mental and physical attitude for struggle, endurance, self-confidence, fighting harsh weather, competition, commitment by going out of comfort zone. While on the other hand, tourism promotion, geographical information, environmental friendliness, interfaith harmony, teamwork, discipline and sightseeing were also among the objectives of the program.

Keeping all these aspects in mind, the participants were provided with adventure activities for five days in Nathiagali, Chaglagali, Dongagali and other nearby areas. In which hiking, trekking, mountain climbing, water crossing, shooting, wild walk, rope climbing, sack race, tug of war and other physical activities conducted. In addition to these, the program participants were briefed on the tourism, opportunities, wildlife, climate change and environmental issues of the area. Under the program, sessions were conducted for the participants by experts on civic responsibilities, climate change, legal and effective use of digital media.

The participants were briefed on the importance of regional tourism, eco-friendliness and tree plantation by Aqeel Joshi, in-charge of Tourist Facilitation Center Dongagali. A cleanliness campaign was organized in Khanspur to raise awareness among the society and especially the youth. Under which the program participants cleaned the Khanspur Cricket Ground and the nearby area. Various teams of participants were formed and sports competitions were held among them, including cricket, badminton, tug of war, target shooting, sack race, indoor games including ludo, carrom board, etc. After enthusiastic and tough competitions, cash prizes were given to the successful teams.

Function held to mark year of quantum sciences

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The International Year of Quantum Science and Technology was celebrated in a scientific manner by the Department of Physics, University of Malakand (UoM) here. The Center for Computational Material Sciences organized a function to mark the day. A cake cutting ceremony and a walk were held with the special assistant to chief minister on prisons MPA Humayun Khan in the chair.

The UoM vice chancellor Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad, educationist Professor Dr. Fida Younis Khattak, Professor Dr. Ifthikhar Ahmed, faculty members and students were also in attendance.

The speakers gave insightful talks on quantum science and technology in Pakistan and paid tribute to the university administration and the Department of Physics for introducing quantum physics in an easy-to-understand scientific manner.

Eminent scientist Professor Dr. Ifthikhar Ahmed, Chairman of the Department of Physics and Director of the Center for Computational Material Sciences, and VC Professor Dr. Rashid Ahmed, reiterated the commitment that it was necessary to bring innovation in education and research for the develop-

ment of quantum science and technology in Pakistan so that long-term solutions to the problems faced by Pakistan could be made possible. They emphasized harnessing the power of quantum science & technology to develop new medicines, sustainable energy resources & ultra-fast computers to transform our lives.

The VC UoM Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad pledged to empower young minds with knowledge, skills & latest research in quantum science and technology to make a positive impact. They said that they had to take practical steps to promote quantum science and technology to put the country on the path of social and economic development. All faculty members, students and guests were welcomed to this New Year event at the varsity.

Drug inspector visit: The Lower Dir drug inspector Dr. Muhammad Saleem Marwat visited the hospital and medical stores in Samarbagh and appreciated the hospital MS Dr Adil for providing free medicines to poor patients in emergency unit. He appreciated Dr. Adil's professional attitude and passion for serving patients and praised his work.

The official also checked medical stores in Samarbagh, Mayar and Kambat bazaars. During the inspection, legal action

The participants were made to hike six kilometers to Mashkpuri, hike Lalazar, trek four kilometers to the pipeline track from Ayubia to Donga Gali and were briefed on the historical importance of the pipeline track and Ayubia Tunnel. The participants were also given a tour of churches in Khanspur and Nathia Gali, where they were briefed on the historical importance of the churches. The participants were also given a tour of historical places in the area, the bazaar and the Peshawar University Bara Gali Summer Campus. Bonfire and music were also arranged for the participants, which the participants enjoyed. A simple and dignified ceremony was held on the occasion of International Minority Rights Day under the program.

On the occasion of this day, the chief guest DSP Circle Imtiaz Khan cut the cake and while speaking said that the youth can truly bring about change in the society by utilizing their talents. Along with education, the youth should focus on training and mental, physical health so that a healthy society can be established. On this occasion, Imtiaz Khan appreciated the efforts of the department and the consultant liaison Corporation for organizing the best program. Monitoring Officer of the Department of Auqaf, Hajj, Religious and Minority Affairs Mian Asjad while speaking thanked the security of the local police, the guidance of the Tourism Police, the Tourist Facilitation Center, Rescue 1122 and the cooperation of the GDA.

On the last day of the program, a walk was organized in Nathia Gali Bazaar for creating awareness on climate change and cleanliness with the aim of highlighting the importance of cleanliness, environment friendliness and tree plantation at tourist places among the public.

The participants of the program were divided into three groups and each group was given a five-day tour, bringing the total number of participants to more than two hundred. In which a separate tour was arranged for women. The participants were provided with the best accommodation, food and other facilities in a local hotel by the consultant. While the participants were also given a bag, water bottle, notebook, pen and keychain at the beginning of the program. The participants described the organization of the program as excellent and useful and emphasized the organization of more such programs.

was taken against two medical stores for violating rules and regulations, while warnings were issued to several medical stores.

Dr. Saleem Marwat indicated that strict action against the sale of substandard and illegal medicines would be taken to protect public health in the area. He directed all the owners of medical stores to follow the relevant rules and regulations and ensure the sale of only authentic medicines.

Jail inmates' issues: A meeting of the district oversight committee for jail was held with at district jail Timergara with the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Relief) Muhammad Ishtiaq in the chair. The committee members and the jail superintendent Muhammad Ayub Bacha attended the meeting.

On this occasion, the electricity load shedding at night inside the jail, health facilities, the nature of various cases of prisoners and the promotion of education of prisoners were discussed. The committee expressed satisfaction over the steps taken by the jail administration to solve the problems and difficulties of the prisoners inside the jail. Speaking on the occasion Muhammad Ayub Bacha said that all available resources were being utilized for the welfare of the prisoners.

sion of the slain dacoit.

The dead robber was involved in the martyrdom of 12 police personnel including Sub-Inspector Ramzan. The dead robber was registered in several serious cases like firing on police, kidnapping for ransom, murder and robbery. Machhaka police had set up a blockade at the Sutarki Bachao Dam on a tip-off

about a major incident in the area by Tanveer Andhar gang.

The robbers opened indiscriminate fire on seeing the police party and in a strong police response, one robber was killed while his other accomplices escaped. All police personnel remained safe in the robbers' attack but the vehicle was partially damaged.

Law Minister hails Kurram agreement F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Member of the Supervisory Committee on District Kurram Peace Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate while welcoming the Peace Agreement reached with the mutual consent of both the parties and the personal efforts of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Kurram district, has expressed the hope that this agreement would prove to be a milestone in lasting and durable peace of the Kurram and its rapid development.

In a statement, the Law Minister said, Alhamd-o-Lillah, the Peace Agreement has been signed between the parties, now all the parties are requested to reject the elements spreading hatred and create consensus and unity in their ranks. He added that it is his utmost desire that the atmosphere of peace and brotherhood should be established in the district and routine life is restored as usual there.

Aftab Alam said that violence always gives rise to violence, which is neither in the interest of the parties, nor the region, nor the government. If there is peace in the area, there will be development and there will be positive changes in the lives of the people, he asserted. The Minister especially appreciated the tireless work and efforts of the Divisional Administration Kohat, District Administration Kurram and Grand Jirga in finalizing the peace agreement.

Meanwhile, Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Kohat Shafi Jan MPA held an important meeting regarding the extension of Bannu Road (Kachery Chowk to PAF Chowk) in the camp office of the Deputy Commissioner Kohat which besides the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali was also attended by the authorities concerned of the District Administration, C&W Department, Cantt Board, Military State and other concerned departments and institutions.

The meeting was given a detailed briefing on the progress so far made on the said project. Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan directed the authorities concerned to ensure the timely completion of Bannu Road Kohat (Kachhri Chowk to PAF Chowk) extension project so that all possible facilities can be provided to the people and uninterrupted flow of traffic can be ensured.

Meanwhile, Shafi John MPA along with the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram also held a special meeting with the PESCO authorities regarding the recent electricity crisis and unannounced load shedding and directed them to resolve this issue without any delay. PESCO officials gave assurance to the Chairman DDAC to take immediate steps in this regard.

Protest held against Kurram violence F.P. Report

LARKANA: Various Shia organizations staged a protest demonstration at Jinnah Bagh Chowk against the lack of justice for the martyrs of the Parachinar incident and against the sticj charge on protesters in the country in support of the martyrs.

The demonstrators carried placards and raised strong slogans. On this occasion, leaders of various Shia organizations including the city's mourning Anjuman Jafri Imambargah Shahzad Ali Asghar, Asghariyya Saman Imambargah, Anjuman Darbutul, Maulana Mushtaq Ali Mashhadi, Maulana Imran Ali Chandio, Jawad Hussain Jafri and others addressed the gathering and said that about 3 months ago, anti-national terrorists attacked Parachinar and martyred more than 100 citizens and injured many innocent children, women and men.

The terrorists involved in the incident have not been arrested by the government yet, nor has justice been done to the martyrs.

Family Festival & Expo kicks off



Fazal Haq

MARDAN: A 2-day "Family Festival and Expo" on the arrival of New Year at Zamong Park Mardan organized jointly by Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and City Local Government while which Deputy Commissioner (DC), Mayor, Central Organization of Traders Provincial General Secretary cut inaugural ribbon, on Thursday.

The members of Mardan Chamber and the business community participated in large numbers on this occasion. On this occasion, more than 30 stalls were set up by local traders which included various brands of local food, clothing, decoration, culture and others, as well as detergent and soap items. On this occasion Deputy Commissioner Mardan Azmatullah Wazir while addressing the event said that the district admin-

istration will do its best for the development and prosperity of Mardan and all the problems of the businessmen will be solved at their doorstep.

The Deputy Commissioner assured full cooperation with all the business community. He said that investors are being brought to this district so that the local people will benefit from the economic activities. Deputy Commissioner Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir while appreciating the wide range of innovations and technological advancements presented at the exhibition hoped that such events would spur further development in the renewable energy sector.

Mayor Mardan Himayat Ullah Mayar said in his address that Mardan has become a big center in terms of trade. The business system is moving towards further expansion. Hundreds of employees are

involved in the business in the shopping malls and mega marts of Mardan. In the coming time, there will be further increase in industrial sectors; Mardan holds an important place in terms of tourism.

We will continue to work together for the beauty, development and ideal district of Mardan. Provincial General Secretary of Traders

Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Zahir Shah while speaking said that Mardan is the second largest city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and there are many opportunities for trade and there are more opportunities for trade and investment in Mardan district. The "Family Festival and Expo" aims to highlight the local economic and commercial sectors. The expo and conference have an important purpose to attract investors towards the important potential investment sectors.

7th Agriculture Census launched in Hafizabad

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: The seventh agriculture census has been launched by the Department of Statistics. Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Abdul Razzaq inaugurated the seventh agriculture census. During the agricultural census, which will continue until February 10, the records of all agricultural land, crops, agricultural machinery, and livestock will be computerized and digitized.

The Department of Statistics has formed 66 teams across the district for the 7th Agriculture Census, which will go to the rural and urban areas of the district and compile all the records related to agriculture and livestock of the people.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Tanvir Yaseen, Statistics Department Officers Muzammil Ahmed and Naveed Ahmed also accompanied the DC. Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq has said that the 7th Agriculture Census is auspicious in the sense that it will computerize all the records of all the farmers, landlords and livestock keepers living in the country.

DC also said that this agriculture census is being conducted across the coun-

try by the Government of Pakistan's Department of Statistics and during this agriculture census, which lasted for about one month and ten days, a record will be compiled of all the people of the district, especially the landlords who have their own agricultural land and are cultivating crops on it.

In this regard, the teams of the Department of Statistics have also been instructed to record the agricultural land, crops, livestock and agricultural machinery of all the citizens, especially the land owners, farmers, and livestock keepers of the rural areas. Make entries and computerized records so that there are no omissions or errors of any kind, he added. He also appealed to the citizens and rural landlords, farmers and livestock keepers to cooperate with the teams of the Statistics Department and register all their agriculture and livestock related records when they come to them.

Teachers seniority list issued: In order to promote primary and elementary teachers, District Education Officer (Male Hafizabad has prepared Interim seniority lists on the directions of Chief Executive Officer Education Madam Nazia Shahzadi. The Seniority lists have been pasted at

education complex for perusal of teachers. CEO Education Madam Nazia Shahzadi was directed the officers to prepared seniority lists of teachers after a meeting with District Chairman Mutahida Mahaz Asatiza Hafizabad Riaz Ahmad Tarar.

All teachers checked their name in the lists and teachers could submit their objections by 3 January 2025 in case of missing of particulars of teachers, CEO added.

PMA elects cabinet: Dr. Farooq Ahmad Mughal was elected as the President and Dr. Muhammad Shoaib Akbar as the Secretary General in the elections of Pakistan Medical Association (PMA). Among the other office bearers, Dr. Adeel-ur-Rehman Senior Vice President, Dr. Nadia Rehman Bhutta Lady Vice President, Dr. Athar Majeed Vice President Pindi Bhatian, Dr. Uzair Hasan Joint Secretary, Dr. Meer Ishaq Press Secretary and Dr. Asim Ifthikhar Finance Secretary were elected. All office-bearers were elected unopposed. In this regard, Election Commissioner Dr. Munir Ahmad issued a notification. Other members of the Election Board included Dr. Rana Sultan Sikandar and Dr. Muhammad Amjad.

Rescue 1122, Khyber responds 3261 emergencies in 2024

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Rescue 1122 has responded 3261 various types of emergencies in across the Khyber. This was said by the District emergency officer Shareq Riaz Khattak while revealing annual performance report of the Rescue 1122, Khyber last day.

He said that the district Rescue 1122 provided timely services in 3261 emergencies in addition with 1653 referral cases. Sharing details of these emergencies, he said rescue teams responded to over 2494 medical emergencies and 343 traffic accidents.

He maintained that in the same way, the Rescue 112, Khyber supplied services in 51 fire incidents, 12 drowning incidents, 108 crime-related incidents, 12 cases of building and roof collapses, 07 incidents involving explosions, 234 recovery and other emergencies 5661 other emergencies were successfully tackled, provided medical aid to 4851 patients and transported them to different

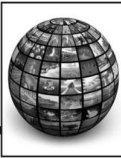
hospitals of the district. A total of 167426 calls had been received out of that 164000 were drop ones and 165 calls were fake, report stated. To create awareness, how to respond in emergencies, the training wing of the department organized free training sessions in schools, colleges and government offices, he added. Shareq Riaz Khattak reaffirmed that the mission of Rescue 1122 is to protect lives and property, and the organization will continue to serve the public with the same dedication in the future.

Buner rescue received 128526 calls in 202: The rescue 1122 buner district has received 128526 calls, claimed in the year 2024, clai According to it, during the yearly report 2024.

District Emergency Officer Buner, Engineer Kashif Khan Yousafzai, in the performance report claimed, it provided facilities to 2904 affected people by responding to 20904 emergencies in a timely manner. In which services were provided in 523 road traffic accidents,

2055 medical emergencies and 94 fire incidents. 03 houses collapsed while 01 accidents of cylinder or other types of explosions occurred. Rescue 1122 personnel provided professional services in 162 different emergencies. In these accidents, 56 people died either in the Rescue 1122 ambulance or on reaching the hospital. 1122 provided medical assistance to some patients on the spot and transferred them to different hospitals in time. Average response time was 7 minutes.

In addition, under the Referral Ambulance Service, 1548 patients were transferred to other hospitals within Zula and outside Zula without any charges under the supervision of the trained personnel of Rescue 1122 for better medical care. This year, Rescue 1122 Buner provided training to more than 21 thousand people regarding basic life support, fire safety and disaster in public and private institutions across the district, schools and communities under safety programs.



Montenegro mourns after gunman kills 12 people



CETINJE, Montenegro (AP): Shock and dismay prevailed in Montenegro on Thursday after a gunman fatally shot 12 people, including two children, in a western town before killing himself. At least four others were wounded in the shooting rampage in Cetinje that followed a bar brawl, officials said. This was the second such incident in the town in the past three years.

The shooter, identified as 45-year-old Aco Martinovic, killed the owner of the bar, the bar owner's children and his own family members, officials have said. The attacker, who first fled after the rampage, was later located and surrounded by police. He died after shooting himself in the head, Interior Minister Danilo Saranovic said.

Residents of Cetinje were stunned and grief-stricken. Vanja Popovic,

whose relatives are among the victims, said that "we are all in shock." "How can I feel after this?" Popovic said. "No one expected it. You can't even ask anyone anything." Police had dispatched a special unit to search for the attacker in the town, which is located about 30 kilometers (18 miles) northwest of Podgorica, the capital. All roads in and out of the city were blocked for hours as police swarmed the streets.

Saranovic said that the shooter had died while being taken to a hospital in the capital and succumbed from the "severity of his injuries." Officials have said that the attacker was at the bar throughout the day with other guests when the brawl erupted. He then went home, brought back a weapon and opened fire at around 5:30 p.m. Prosecutor Andrijana Nastic said Thursday that the attacker

went to six locations during the shooting rampage, including the last one, where he shot himself.

Four men were killed at the bar, Nastic said. The shooter then moved on to another location where he killed four more people, and then two children at a third site. He then went on to kill two more people at two other locations before eventually shooting himself, Nastic said. "Further investigation will determine the exact circumstances of the events," she added. The government has declared three days of national mourning starting on Thursday, and all planned New Year's festivities have been canceled throughout the country.

Prime Minister Milojko Spajic said that the government may try to impose a total ban on weapons "because we must ask ourselves after this who should be allowed to have guns in Montenegro." The small Adriatic Sea nation, which has a population of around 620,000 people, is known for its gun culture and many people traditionally have weapons. In August 2022 in Cetinje, which is Montenegro's historic capital, an attacker killed 10 people, including two children, before he was shot and killed by a passerby.

Police have said that the suspect in shooting received a suspended sentence in 2005 for violent behavior and had appealed his latest conviction for illegal weapons possession. Montenegrin media have reported that he was known for erratic and violent behavior. "Instead of holiday joy ... we have been gripped by sadness over the loss of innocent lives," Montenegro's President Jakov Milatovic said in a post on X.

Parts of UK flooded by heavy rain

LONDON (AP): Parts of the United Kingdom were flooded as heavy rains and powerful winds continued to disrupt New Year's celebrations. Several communities in the Manchester area were flooded, with several homes evacuated and cars submerged up to their roofs on roads and in parking lots after nearly a month's worth of rain fell in two days.

A major incident was declared and mountain rescue teams were called in to help firefighters respond to swamped properties and stranded vehicles. Greater Manchester Police said. "There's still probably likely to be further flooding across the course of the day," Met Office meteorologist Tom Morgan said. "We are potentially expecting the flood situation to get worse before it gets better." Tom Coulthard said the rain started and poured all night where he lives in Didsbury, south of Manchester, topping river banks and forcing a hotel to be evacuated before dawn. Roads and highways were closed in the area.

"All the local rivers and water courses have sort of filled up and flooded around the area," said Coulthard, a geography professor at the University of Hull. "That's really probably a sign of just how our weather is changing, how climate is shifting." The deluge and gusts derailed New Year's Eve fireworks celebrations, leading to cancellations in Edinburgh and several other cities. Events planned for New Year's Day, including nippy outdoor swims and a bathtub boat race, were scrapped.

London, which was able to launch its massive fireworks display on the River Thames in front of Big Ben, had to postpone the start of its New Year's Day parade and grounded inflatable floats due to the blustery and soggy conditions. Cheerleaders and members of bands that marched through central London pulled transparent coverings over their bright costumes to take shelter from rain.

Warnings that indicate flooding is expected were issued at one point to more than 150 communities across the U.K., with most being in northern England. Later in the day, dozens of those warnings had been lifted. Several trains were canceled because of high water around the tracks and some highways were closed. With temperatures dropping, there were ice warnings until late Thursday morning for Northern Ireland, parts of North Wales, England and Scotland. And a three-day snow warning was issued for the coming weekend for much of England and Scotland.

Foreign fighters given senior Syrian army posts

DAMASCUS (BBC): The new Syrian authorities are reported to have given some foreign Islamist fighters senior official posts in the country's armed forces. The army is being re-organised by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Islamist group that is now effectively in charge of the country following the overthrow of former President Bashar al-Assad earlier this month.

There's been no confirmation by the new leadership of the move, but it seems likely to raise concern inside and outside Syria over the role such foreign militants may play in the country's future. It comes amid reports that Syria's new de-facto leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, has held separate meetings with representatives of the Kurds and Christians in the country – two communities that are most concerned about the potential agenda of the new authorities.

Several Syrian sources have deduced that out of almost 50 new military roles that have been announced, at least six have gone to foreigners. Based on the names that have been published, they are said to include Chinese Uyghurs, a Jordanian and a Turkish national. All are said to have been given high-ranking positions as colonels or brigadier-generals. The role of foreign fighters in various armed groups during the civil war is one that stirs strong feelings in Syria.

Thousands of fighters from many different countries joined the uprising against Assad as it became an all-out armed conflict when mass protests were

met with violence by the security forces. Jihadists from abroad were seen as trying to impose their extremist ideology on Syria – something which Syrians from all communities are now saying they will not accept in the country's future after Assad. Some formed their own groups and others provided the core of the Islamic State (IS) group, which took control of large regions in the east of Syria.

Opponents of HTS had long accused it of being largely made up of foreign jihadists – a charge Assad supporters used to try to delegitimise the group as it mounted its final, decisive offensive against the regime. But in the years that he ran the rebel enclave in Idlib, Ahmed al-Sharaa – the leader of HTS and now Syria – had been getting rid of some of those foreign fighters in a bid to bolster his group's credentials as a nationalist rather than overtly jihadist force. Since taking power al-Sharaa has repeatedly stressed the vision of a unified Syrian state, in which all communities must be respected and have a stake.

A Syrian official said the first talks between members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and al-Sharaa since he became the most powerful man in Syria three weeks ago have now taken place and were positive. The SDF is backed by the US and controls much of the north-east of Syria. But Turkey, which has backed al-Sharaa's group HTS, sees them as terrorists, which has raised fears of a looming confrontation.

Al-Sharaa has also met high level members of the Christian clergy. The Christian minority in Syria has long felt threatened by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. HTS once espoused such an ideology, but al-Sharaa has for some time embraced a more moderate stance. He has stressed that he wants all communities to have a stake in Syria's future and is preparing a National Dialogue Conference to try to ensure that this process can begin.

For those who are concerned that his actions might not match his words, this apparent move to formalise the positions of some prominent foreign fighters may give them further pause for thought. The appointments appear to have been made in order to reward those fighters – whether from Syria or elsewhere – who played a significant role in the final triumph over the regime. For the same reason, some of the remaining foreign fighters – along with their families – now seem likely to be given Syrian citizenship.

The issue is just one of many that could complicate any successful transition to a new political and social framework in Syria. The new authorities are putting a lot of weight on a National Dialogue Conference that is being prepared to bring together representatives from all sections of society – although no date has been set. The hope is that the conference will set in motion the process to rebuild the institutions of the broken and divided country.

Ivory Coast says French troops to leave West African nation

IVORY COAST (BBC): Ivory Coast has announced that French troops will withdraw from the West African nation, further reducing the military influence of the former colonial power in the region. In an end-of-year address, Ivory Coast's President, Alassane Ouattara, said the move was a reflection of the modernisation of the country's armed forces.

Separately, Senegal, which last month announced France would have to close its military bases on its territory, confirmed the withdrawal would be completed by the end of 2025. Ivory Coast is home to the biggest remaining contingent of French troops in West Africa. There are some 600 French mili-

tary personnel in the country with 350 in Senegal.

"We have decided in a concerted manner to withdraw French forces from the Ivory Coast," President Ouattara said. He added that the military infantry battalion of Port Bouet that is run by the French army would be handed over to Ivorian troops. France, whose colonial rule in West Africa ended in the 1960s, has already pulled its soldiers out of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger following military coups in those countries and growing anti-French sentiment. The government of Chad – a key Western ally in the fight against Islamic militants in the region – abruptly ended its defence co-operation pact with France in November.

Senegalese President Bassirou Diomayeaye said: "I have instructed the minister for the armed forces to propose a new doctrine for co-operation in defence and security, involving, among other consequences, the end of all foreign military presences in Senegal from 2025."

Faye was elected in March on a promise to deliver sovereignty and end dependence on foreign countries. France will retain a small presence in Gabon. Military leaders of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso have moved closer to Russia since kicking out French troops from their countries. Russia then deployed mercenaries across the Sahel to help them fight off jihadist insurgents.

Endgame in Ukraine: How the war could come to a close in 2025

KYIV (BBC): "I must say that the situation is changing dramatically," Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, declared at his end-of-year news conference in December. "There is movement along the entire front line. Every day." In eastern Ukraine, Moscow's war machine is gradually churning mile by mile through the wide open fields of the Donbas, enveloping and overwhelming villages and towns.

Some civilians are fleeing before the war reaches them. Others wait until the shells start exploding all around them before packing what belongings they can carry and boarding trains and buses to safety further west. Russia is gaining ground more quickly than at any time since it launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, despite Kyiv's impressive record of well-publicised asymmetric attacks against its powerful neighbour.

As the invasion reaches the end of its third year, at an estimated cost of a million people, killed or wounded, Ukraine appears to be losing. In distant Washington, meanwhile, the unpredictable Donald Trump, not famous for his love of Ukraine or its leader, is about to take over in the White House. It feels like an inflection point. But could 2025 really be the year when this devastating European conflict finally comes to a close – and if so what could the endgame look like?

Trump's promise to end the conflict within 24 hours of taking office is a typically grandiose boast, but it comes from a man who has clearly lost patience with the war and America's costly involvement. "The numbers of dead young soldiers lying on fields all over the place are staggering," he has said. "It's crazy what's taking place." But the incoming US administration faces twin challenges, according to Michael Kofman, senior

fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"First, they're going to inherit a war on a very negative trajectory, without a tremendous amount of time to stabilise the situation," he said in December. "Second, they're going to inherit it without a clear theory of success." The president-elect offered some clues during recent interviews about how he intends to approach the war. He told Time Magazine he disagreed "vehemently" with the Biden administration's decision, in November, to allow Ukraine to fire US-supplied long-range missiles at targets inside Russia.

"We're just escalating this war and making it worse," he said. On 8 December, he was asked by NBC News if Ukraine should prepare for less aid. "Possibly," he replied. "Probably, sure." But to those who fear, as many do, that America's new leader is inclined to walk away from Ukraine, he offered hints of reassurance. "You can't reach an agreement if you abandon, in my opinion," he has said. The truth is: Trump's intentions are far from clear.

And for now, Ukrainian officials reject all talk of pressure, or the suggestion that Trump's arrival necessarily means peace talks are imminent. "There's a lot of talk about negotiations, but it's an illusion," says Mykhailo Podolyak, advisor to the head of President Zelensky's office. "No negotiation process can take place because Russia has not been made to pay a high enough price for this war."

For all Kyiv's misgivings about negotiating while Russian forces continue their inexorable advance in the east, it's clear that President Zelensky is anxious to position himself as the sort of man Trump can do business with. The Ukrainian leader was quick to congratulate Trump on his election victory and wasted little time sending

senior officials to meet the president-elect's team. With the help of France's President Emmanuel Macron, Zelensky also secured a meeting with Trump when the two men visited Paris for the reopening of Notre Dame cathedral.

"What we're seeing now is a very smart strategy exercise by President Zelensky," his former foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba told the US Council on Foreign Relations in December. Zelensky, he said, was "signalling constructiveness and readiness to engage with President Trump." With little obvious sign that the Kremlin is making similar gestures, the government in Kyiv is clearly trying to get ahead of the game. "Because Trump hasn't fully explained how he's going to go about it, Ukrainians are trying to give him some ideas that he may present as his own," says Orysia Lutsevych, head of the Ukraine Forum at Chatham House.

"They know how to work with that ego." Even before the US election, there were signs that Zelensky was looking for ways to bolster Ukraine's appeal as a future partner for a president-elect like Trump who is both instinctively transactional and reluctant to continue underwriting wider European security. As part of his "Victory Plan", unveiled in October, Zelensky suggested that battle-hardened Ukrainian troops could replace US forces in Europe after the war with Russia ends. And he offered the prospect of joint investments to exploit Ukraine's natural resources, including uranium, graphite and lithium. Such strategic resources, Zelensky warned, "will either strengthen Russia or Ukraine and the democratic world".

But other elements of the Ukrainian leader's Victory Plan – Nato membership and its call for a "comprehensive non-nuclear strategic

deterrence package" – seem to have met with a lukewarm response among Kyiv's allies. Nato membership in particular remains a sticking point, as it has been since well before Russia's full-scale invasion. For Kyiv, it's the only way to guarantee the country's future survival, against a rapacious Russian enemy bent on subjugating Ukraine. But despite declaring last July that Ukraine was on an "irreversible path to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including Nato membership" the alliance is divided, with the US and Germany not yet in favour of issuing an invitation.

President Zelensky has indicated that if an offer of membership was extended to the whole country, within Ukraine's internationally-recognised borders, he would be willing to accept that it would apply, initially, only to territory under Kyiv's control. This, he told Sky News in November, could end the "hot stage" of the war, allowing a diplomatic process to address the question of Ukraine's final borders. But, he said, no such offer had yet been made. If not Nato, then what? With the possibility of Trump-led peace talks looming and Ukraine losing ground on the battlefield, the international debate is all about shoring up Kyiv's shaky position.

"It's critical to have strong, legal and practical guarantees," Andriy Yermak, head of President Zelensky's office, told Ukraine's public broadcaster on 12 December. Ukraine's recent past, he said, had left a bitter legacy. "Unfortunately, from our experience, all the guarantees we had before did not result in security." Without concrete mechanisms akin to the sort of collective defence concept embodied by Article 5 of Nato's founding treaty, observers fear there will be nothing to prevent another Russian attack. "Zelensky understands that he cannot just have a

naked ceasefire," Orysia Lutsevych says.

"It has to be a ceasefire plus. It would be suicide for Zelensky just to accept a ceasefire and not to have any answer how Ukraine is protected." In European policy forums, experts have been looking at ways in which Europe might help to shoulder this heavy responsibility. Ideas have included the deployment of peacekeepers in Ukraine (a proposal first floated last February by Macron), or the involvement of the British-led Joint Expeditionary Force, which pulls together forces from eight Nordic and Baltic countries, plus the Netherlands. But Kofman is sceptical. "Security guarantees that don't have the United States involved in them as one of the guarantors is like a donut with a giant missing middle in it." It's a view echoed in Kyiv. "What alternative could there be? There are no alternatives today," says Mr Podolyak.

Pieces of paper, like the 1994 Budapest Memorandum (about Ukraine's post-Soviet borders) or 2014-15 Minsk agreements (which sought to end the Donbas War) are worthless, he argues, without the added threat of military deterrence. "Russia must understand that as soon as they start aggression, they will receive a significant number of strikes in response," he says. In the absence of agreement on Ukraine's long term future, its allies are doing what they can to bolster its defences. In December, Nato's secretary general, Mark Rutte, said "everything" was being looked at, including the supply of additional air defence systems, in part to protect the country's battered energy infrastructure from a renewed wave of coordinated Russian missile and drone attacks. With Ukraine continuing to experience severe shortages of manpower, the UK Defence Secretary John Healey said the gov-

ernment might be willing to send British troops to Ukraine to help with training.

For its part, the departing Biden administration seems determined to deliver as much congressionally approved military assistance as it can to Ukraine before leaving office, although reports suggest it may run out of time to send everything. On 21 December it was reported that Trump would continue to supply military aid to Ukraine, but would demand that NATO members dramatically increase their defence spending. Kyiv's allies have also continued to ratchet up sanctions on Moscow, in the hope that Russia's war-time economy, which has proved stubbornly resilient, may finally break.

"There's been deep frustration that sanctions haven't just shattered the Russian economy beyond repair," a US congressional source said, on condition of anonymity. After multiple rounds of sanctions (fifteen from the EU alone), government officials have grown wary of predicting their successful impact. But recent indicators are increasingly alarming for the Kremlin. With interest rates at 23%, inflation running above 9%, a falling rouble and growth expected to slow dramatically in 2025, the strains on Russia's economy have rarely seemed more acute.

Putin is putting on a brave face. "The sanctions are having an effect," he said during his end of year news conference, "but they are not of key importance." Along with Russia's staggering losses on the battlefield – western officials estimate that Moscow is losing an average of 1,500 men, killed and wounded, every day – the cost of this war could yet drive Putin to the negotiating table. But how much more territory will Ukraine have lost – and how many more people will have been killed – by the time that point is reached?

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

US pharma firms raise drug prices

PFIZER has raised the price of Paxlovid, the anti-COVID medicine, by 3 per cent, the migraine treatment, Nurtec, and cancer drug Adcetris between 3 per cent and 5 per cent. The company's spokesperson Amy Rose said that the increases were needed to support drug development and meet the costs.

She has however said that the list of medicines whose prices have been increased – there are 60 – has been adjusted to stay below the inflation rate of 2.4 per cent. The American drug companies are used to increase the prices of medicines by a larger margin but they have kept it below 10 per cent this year because of public criticism.

The other pharmaceuticals that are raising the drug prices are Bristol Myers, which has increased its cancer cell therapy medicines, Abecma and Breyanzi, by 6 per cent and 9 per cent. A Bryers Bristol spokesperson said that the company is "committed to achieve unfettered" access to patients, and pointed out that the rise in price of Breyanzi "is reflective of the potentially transformative, individualised treatment in a one-time infusion."

The French pharma major, Sanofi, has raised its prices of vaccines between 2.9 per cent and 9 per cent. The exception is Leadiant Pharmaceuticals, a branch of Italy's Essetifin, which raised the price of its cancer drug Matulane, used in Hodgkin's disease treatment, by 15 per cent, and of Cystaran, used in the treatment of a rare eye condition called cystinosis, by 20 per cent.

According to experts, the drug companies do not have much leeway to increase the prices of medicines except at the time of launching new ones. The news agency Reuters analysis shows that the price of new medicines was higher by 35 per cent in 2023 compared to 2022. According to healthcare research firm 3 Axis Advisors President Antonio Ciaccia, "Drug-makers do not have much real estate any longer to increase prices over time, which means taking liberties on launch prices is really the only option they have in the face of expanded penalties for year-over-year price increases."

The issue of healthcare in one of the most advanced countries, in terms of both scientific research and economic output, has become a matter of concern because healthcare has become unaffordable to most people in the US despite their complicated health insurance arrangements.

As a matter of fact health insurance in America is considered one of the most predatory systems in the world. This came to the fore when Luigi Mangione killed United Health CEO Brian Thompson last month. On the face of it, the rise in the price of drugs and the issue of health insurance might appear unconnected, and there will be many who would argue that they are separate issues.

But there is a connection. Health insurance would be less of a problem if the drug prices are reasonable and within reach of the common people, and the hospital establishments would not be in a position to make treatment a costly business.

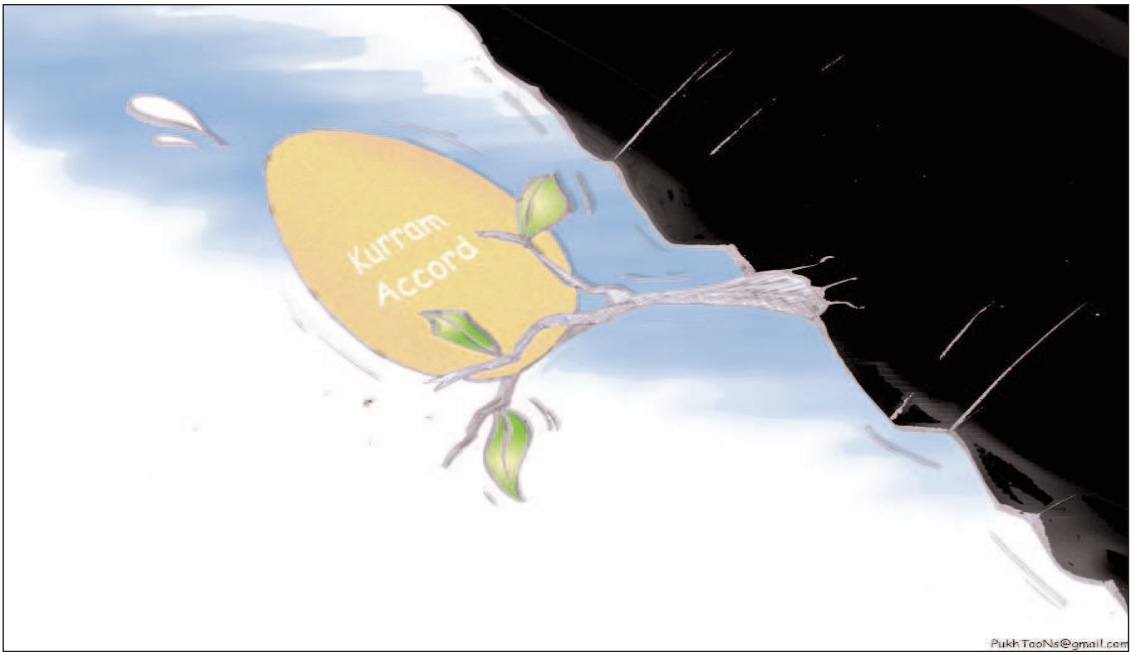
Health care in American needs an overhaul, not just in terms of health insurance but also in terms of drug prices and hospital expenses. The whole thing is in a mess because the free market principle of competition and profits makes it a vile venture.

The drug companies have an argument that they need to spend money on research and development to get new, breakthrough drugs. But if pharma R&D is moved to the public sector sphere, which does not seem to exist in the US, then things can be rationalised.

If government funding of R&D increases through universities and research laboratories, then commercial companies making drugs would have little justification to make profits through higher prices. And this will have a cascading effect across the whole health care system.

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.



Trump wants to transform America but time is against him

Hussein Ibish

THE coming year, 2025, will almost certainly be a pivotal one in US politics, determining the trajectory of the country for years or even decades. Donald Trump has been re-elected in a clear victory, this time with a popular vote majority. The election was much closer than originally thought, but he is, predictably, proclaiming a landslide and claiming a popular mandate for his election platform.

He appears intent on an immediate charge to implement his promises "from day one". He and his inner circles have evidently learnt a great deal from the highly inexperienced and unfocused beginnings of his first term and seem determined not to repeat that unimpressive performance.

While it is unclear what his precise policy focus will be, Mr Trump has said he intends to operate as a "dictator" just for the first day to push his agenda through. But he won't be able to transform the US into a dictatorship, or anything close to one, in the four years remaining to him (according to the US Constitution, presidents may serve a maximum of two terms). But if his administration is focused, ruthless and disciplined, he can do tremendous damage to the system of checks and balances, legal limitations, independent institutions and rule of law that has come to characterise the US constitutional order.

Mr Trump faces many challenges and obstacles. The most significant – apart from opposition from courts, independent agencies, the media, the administrative structure and the Democrats – is that he will rapidly turn into a "lame duck" president. The last two years of a presidency are generally weak, with most opportunities centred on foreign policy where the White House can act

with relatively independent authority.

But, after the 2028 midterms, at least two developments are likely to restrict his freedom of action and authority. First, the incumbent party usually suffers significant congressional setbacks, and the Republicans have a tiny majority in both the House and Senate. There is a high probability Mr Trump won't be able to do much legislatively after that.

Second, among Republicans, focus will shift to an intense battle for succession, with existing factions, already at loggerheads, likely to start coalescing around champions for the 2028 election, potentially leading to infighting, rivalry and possible paralysis.

Third, Mr Trump is elderly, and there is the possibility of a significant health event for him in the coming years. Even if not, everyone is going to have to proceed based on the assumption that it could happen any time. This creates an additional disadvantage.

Divisions among Republicans and within his coalition are already obvious. Thirty-eight Republican legislators defied him on the recent budget resolution, insisting spending cuts weren't deep enough. But Mr Trump intends to spend a great deal on tax cuts and mass deportations, among other things. That's why he sought to eliminate the debt ceiling. He's clearly out of step with Republican "budget hawks" who won't care for his apparent carefree spending plans.

Moreover, a bitter ideological split recently ensued over immigration. The "tech bros" from Silicon Valley, led by Elon Musk, have been aggressively defending the H1B visa programme for highly educated immigrant

workers. This elicited howls of outrage from immigration hardliners, especially since the visa programme champions appeared to critique US culture as mediocre and American workers as undereducated underperformers.

Mr Trump eventually sided with the H1B programme – which he has angrily denounced in the past. But there is now a clear internal war between the maga nativist anti-immigration hardliners versus the Silicon Valley and venture-capital business interests, with both factions having been central to his re-election.

This is a massive fault line in his coalition that is going to be tested early on. Immigration hardliners hope for a "reconciliation" bill soon after his inauguration to begin an effort to deport millions of migrants, while these oligarchs will demand, at the very least, an exception for their indispensable H1B employees and prospective hires.

Moreover, if the deportation scheme cuts deeply into the migrant worker pool, other industries, including agriculture, meatpacking, construction, food preparation, building maintenance, waste disposal and many other interests are likely to push back. A surge in inflation may give them additional leverage, even as xenophobic fanatics like White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller – who is likely to be authoring new legislation and executive orders – try to charge forward at full speed.

Mr Trump's autocratic instincts may be tested early on as he tries to impose his will on an unco-operative Congress or administrative agencies and Democratic-run states. He will also likely face crucial standoffs with courts and other independent sources of authority in the

US system. That may be especially true if he tries to quickly reshape the administrative structure with mass sackings of apolitical experts and their replacement with handpicked ideologues.

He may face an even bigger test if he seeks to use the Justice Department and FBI for the "retribution" he promised against his political opponents. Professional employees at both agencies may refuse such unethical assignments or slow walk them into oblivion. And courts may, and certainly should, dismiss all such efforts as unlawful and disgraceful.

Mr Trump will certainly have to choose between a limited set of policy priorities, most of which will prove controversial, even within his party and inner circle. Despite his obvious efforts at a running start, he appears considerably weaker than he did immediately after the election, in part because of a series of implausible nominations of unqualified candidates, and the emergence of these new internal divisions.

His appointments also reflect ideological incoherence, despite uniform fealty to the incoming president. But personal loyalty does not translate into policy coherence. Even on an issue as basic as military aid to Ukraine, one can sense a fight brewing.

Mr Trump appears to want to transform the US into a kind of "illiberal democracy". But he doesn't have four years to do that. It's more like two years. And between the internal infighting and opposition from external forces, it is going to be extremely difficult.

In all likelihood, the most he can do is set the stage for a like-minded successor. And if that's going to happen at all, the key groundwork will have to be established in 2025.

Tackling anti-Muslim hate should be a priority

Chris Doyle

ONE of the most disheartening trends of this century is showing no signs of diminishing. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred courses through much of European and American society, but also elsewhere, not least India. For Muslims in these areas, hatred of them or anyone who might be perceived as Muslim has become a fact of life.

The far right is flourishing, not least in Europe. In France, which has a Muslim population of nearly 6 million, Marine Le Pen's National Rally revels in its Islamophobia. It won 33 per cent of the vote in France's first round of parliamentary elections in June.

It appears that anti-Muslim messages will only be amplified by the likes of X. The social media site's owner, Elon Musk, even wrote an opinion piece arguing that the far-right, virulently Islamophobic Alternative for Germany is the only party that can "save" Germany.

The network of the right and far right is bound by a glue of hate – an ever-hardening bond of antipathy to anything to do with Islam.

Yet one must not lazily assume that the leftist and centrist parties are immune to all of this. Far from it. They may be less boastful about it, but it is

a common phenomenon. The Biden administration's record in engaging American Muslim communities was lamentable, one reason among many why Kamala Harris fared so poorly among these communities in November's election.

Last month's attack on a Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany, highlighted how toxic the debate remains. Battalions of online trolls launched their usual hate before a single fact had emerged about the killer, who it turns out was an ex-Muslim with a history of anti-Islamic rhetoric.

Muslims have seen all this before – attacks for which they are blamed either wrongly or collectively. Yes, extremists have carried out attacks, but far-right extremists have too. The focus is always on "Muslim extremists" depicted as terrorists, whereas far-right killers are one-offs, not part of a formalized ideology, despite the myriad groups they have formed.

But 2024 will largely be remembered by Arabs and Muslims for the utter indifference and even complicity in their suffering. An Israeli genocide in Gaza is downgraded to a humanitarian situation that has to be addressed by a few more trucks getting in. Syrians spent another year in the hell-hole of the Assad regime,

but the world only woke up once Syrians succeeded in ousting the Assads. Sudan and Yemen are just footnotes in the news. Some victims, some refugees just do not matter as much as others.

Yet these conflicts have domestic repercussions in terms of social cohesion. In the aftermath of the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7, 2023, anti-Muslim hate crimes in the US rose significantly. Who can forget the horrific lethal stabbing of six-year-old Palestinian American boy Wadea Al-Fayoume?

It does not end there. The contrast between the way in which those accused of antisemitism and those accused of Islamophobia are treated is terrifying. Many charges of antisemitism have simply been false, designed solely to deflect legitimate criticisms of Israel's crimes. In this case, the UN, Ireland, Spain, the Pope, the BBC, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice have all been falsely maligned. It is often a career-ending charge. As for Islamophobia, it is largely brushed off.

This was most notable following the violence in Amsterdam in November, before and after the European football match between Maccabi Tel Aviv and Dutch club AFC Ajax. Israeli hooligans

screaming "death to Arab" chants were largely ignored or downplayed, while the riots against Israeli supporters were not.

But this is far from a lost cause. Muslims and those who believe in a pluralistic society that is welcoming of those of all faiths make a major difference. Despite the obstacles, many European Muslims are making inroads in the political elites, albeit they still have to ward off waves of abuse and constantly prove themselves to be part of European culture and act as "acceptable" Muslims. All too often, this means pretty much disowning their Muslim identities.

March 15 is designated as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, but the truth is this cannot be a one-day-a-year struggle. Our societies will be richer, more united and more productive if communities of all identities, backgrounds and faiths are treated fairly.

Governments, businesses and civil society need to develop long-term plans to challenge anti-Muslim hatred, just as anti-Black racism and antisemitism are being tackled.

All these forms of discrimination cannot be ignored, but Islamophobia currently is. Worse, too many see an interest in stoking it rather than defeating it.

The case for optimism in 2025

Yossi Mekelberg

IN the blink of an eye, we have completed the first quarter of the 21st century. It has been, to say the least, extremely eventful and challenging. At the dawn of 2025, the general mood is one of pessimism – and not without reason. But as we all know, there is something of a self-fulfilling prophecy in such talk of doom and gloom. This is equally true of optimism and history has demonstrated that, as per the Latin phrase "post tenebras lux" (after darkness comes light), humanity has repeatedly managed to find light in the darkest of times and reach new heights. Is the current generation not capable of rising above what divides us and collaborating to face the existential threats we are confronted by, just as past generations have done?

It would be almost too easy to claim that the unprecedented, simultaneous challenges humanity is now facing, in terms of their severity, magnitude and speed, are insurmountable. This is exacerbated by failed leaderships and by the centers of leadership and power becoming more opaque than ever, and not necessarily in the hands of those whom we traditionally perceive to be in charge of taking decisions that determine our lives. But at the same time, people across the world have shown their resilience, imagination and capacity for innovation in the face of adversity, not only merely surviving but even prospering.

The label "the year of elections" was attached to 2024, as billions of people voted across more than 80 countries, including some of the most influential and populous, yet not necessarily free or stable, polities. The impact of these elections will be felt in the coming years. In the US, the coming inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump for a second term, which is the most notable and consequential result of last year's many elections, is dividing opinions between high expectations and even deeper concerns.

However, as divisions and polarization within and between societies continue to increase, they inevitably induce dangers, while also introducing great opportunities that require us to create a different discourse, engagement and agency, since the ones we currently employ are not fit for purpose in navigating the stormy waters ahead of us.

The so-called old-fashioned types of conflict, including kinetic wars, are still prevalent and displaying their devastating effects in the prolonged wars in Ukraine and Gaza, among others. However, without discounting the appalling devastation they inflict and the desperate need to resolve such conflicts, there are other issues that threaten our very existence. By working to solve them in a more consensual manner, we could also lessen the scale and the severity of that kind of warfare.

Climate change, artificial intelligence, which is now permeating almost every aspect of our lives, the social implications of technology in general and social media in particular, and the growing inequalities that are leading to increased polarization on issues such as migration and trade wars are just a few of our immediate and long-term challenges. These will determine our future, even our existence, and they demand that we closely cooperate if we are to meet them.

History has taught us that there is nothing like a profound crisis to concentrate the mind.

between societies continue to increase, they inevitably induce dangers, while also introducing great opportunities that require us to create a different discourse, engagement and agency, since the ones we currently employ are not fit for purpose in navigating the stormy waters ahead of us. The so-called old-fashioned types of conflict, including kinetic wars, are still prevalent and displaying their devastating effects in the prolonged wars in Ukraine and Gaza, among others. However, without discounting the appalling devastation they inflict and the desperate need to resolve such conflicts, there are other issues that threaten our very existence. By working to solve them in a more consensual manner, we could also lessen the scale and the severity of that kind of warfare.

Climate change, artificial intelligence, which is now permeating almost every aspect of our lives, the social implications of technology in general and social media in particular, and the growing inequalities that are leading to increased polarization on issues such as migration and trade wars are just a few of our immediate and long-term challenges. These will determine our future, even our existence, and they demand that we closely cooperate if we are to meet them.

History has taught us that there is nothing like a profound crisis to concentrate the mind. And, right now, humanity is facing multiple crises that could either change it beyond recognition and even fast-track it to destruction or result in 2025 becoming the year when all societies wake up to the realization that there is an alternative way forward that will not just pull us back from the abyss, but will also signal a new and a brighter dawn.

Consider, for instance, the two heavily armed conflicts that have been the center of attention for some time now. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have demonstrated their futility by their failure to achieve any political gains and instead have only caused immense suffering. In both cases, even the marked asymmetry in capabilities, elements of surprise, vulnerability to losses and international standing have not led to any decisive outcome. And the resort to the use of force, instead of settling differences diplomatically, has resulted in nothing but unimaginable suffering with no achievements to show for it.

Russia is more isolated than ever, its economy is in a shambles and its people pay the price, as they are oppressed at home and sent to die for no good reason. In the Middle East, Hamas might have scored a "success" on Oct. 7 by badly hurting its arch-enemy Israel, but what good has come out of that for the Palestinians? Only death and devastation. Israel, in its disproportionate response, has crushed much of Hamas' military capabilities. But by killing thousands upon thousands of civilians, maiming many more, reducing the Gaza Strip to rubble and failing to reach a deal to bring the hostages back, it has also created severe cracks in its own society and its democracy that no military force is capable of fixing, while internationally its reputation is at its lowest ebb.

And yet, at the same time, scientists are, for instance, getting close to developing a cancer vaccine, an effective treatment for Alzheimer's disease and a solar-powered box that will extract hundreds of gallons of drinking water from the air every single day – all of which can improve our quality of life and our longevity. The threat of climate change also, more than ever, showed its devastating impact on communities in 2024. In December, European scientists confirmed that it would be the hottest year ever recorded, surpassing 2023, and also the first year that our planet's average temperature rise compared to pre-industrial levels exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius, the critical threshold set out in the Paris Agreement.

However, this looming disaster also represents a great opportunity. According to some economic forecasts, uncontrolled climate change would wipe 6.5 percent off the world's economic activity by 2050. On the other hand, there is the potential of the green economy creating \$10.3 trillion in global gross domestic product in the next quarter of a century, which could only be regarded as a win if we grab this opportunity to fix our relationship with nature, induce a new green industrial revolution and reduce the current huge inequalities in wealth between rich and poor countries by making the latter equal partners in this human endeavor.

Similarly, one of the greatest challenges of our time is to deal with the accelerated introduction of AI into every aspect of our lives. This could be a force for ending humanity as we know it or for its transformation into an improved global community that is peaceful and prosperous. So, instead of entering 2025 with a sense of pessimism, as many are doing, we can – to give a twist to Mark Twain's quip about his rumored death – declare that reports of the end of humanity as we know it have been grossly exaggerated. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reflect on the watershed moment we are at and for the world to come together and improve the human condition. It is a moment of together we stand or divided we fall. The new year could and should be one of global renewal and of standing together as one.

Parents: You need to talk to your kids about deepfakes

IF your child hasn't seen a deepfake of someone associated with their school, it's likely that a friend or their teacher is aware of one.

Deepfakes are inauthentic images, videos or audio recordings created by artificial intelligence that appear real but have been digitally manipulated, or faked.

Forty percent of students and 29% of teachers said they were aware of a deepfake of someone associated with their school that was shared in the last school year, according to a recent survey by the Center for Democracy & Technology, a nonprofit that focuses on digital rights.

Fifteen percent of students and 11% of teachers were aware of deepfakes of people at their school that were intimate or sexually explicit.

I recently saw how deepfakes can play out in schools when I agreed to be an expert in a legal case involving a teacher accused of creating nude deepfakes of his students. According to my research, when real or fake nude images of a person end up online, it can put the victim at greater risk of depression, suicide and sexual assault. It can also make it harder for victims to date or find a job, because these images could turn up when people search for them online.

Yet most students, teachers and parents said their schools have not shared policies and procedures with them about deepfake nonconsensual intimate imagery, including 57% of high school students, 62% of secondary teachers and 67% of parents of middle and high school students, according to the Center for Democracy & Technology survey.

Instead of trying to prevent these incidents, the study found schools tend to act once they've happened. Then they focus on punishing perpetrators without provid-

ing appropriate support to the victims, the survey found.

So what are parents to do? With schools often failing to take measures to protect students, parents need to talk to their kids about why they should never create or engage with intimate deepfakes.

Even when deepfakes aren't real, parents should discuss that their harms can be. Lindsay Lieberman, a

Victims often "experience psychological harm, including significant distress, anxiety, depression, a sense of humiliation and helplessness, and some even report having suffered post-traumatic stress disorder," she warned. They also frequently suffer emotional and social harms. "This kind of humiliation, whether it's her body or not, can cause her to lose friends; it can damage her reputation," Lieberman said. "It can make her afraid to show up in online spaces which she might need to do for her college applications or for her future career. Some victims wind up not being able to attend school because they're suffering so much."

Victims often face financial harm, she

added, because many hire companies to try to remove the content from the internet. That's why we need to teach kids not only that they shouldn't create deepfakes but also why they should never engage with them by sharing or liking them. In having these conversations, parents should lean into empathy by asking their kids to imagine how they would feel if it happened to them, said Dr. Devorah Heitner, the Chicago-based author of "Growing Up in Public: Coming of Age in a Digital World." "All young people recognize that we don't want to be part of victimizing others. We don't want to be part of making other people feel less safe." Parents also need to educate their kids about the risks of becoming victims.

Washington, DC-based attorney who represents victims of deepfakes, said, "The technology is so sophisticated that it looks like it is my client, and the harm can be just as profound as if it was actually my client's body."

Victims often "experience psychological harm, including significant distress, anxiety, depression, a sense of humiliation and helplessness, and some even report having suffered post-traumatic stress disorder," she warned.

They also frequently suffer emotional and social harms. "This kind of humiliation, whether it's her body or not, can

Kara Alaimo

cause her to lose friends; it can damage her reputation," Lieberman said. "It can make her afraid to show up in online spaces which she might need to do for her college applications or for her future career. Some victims wind up not being able to attend school because they're suffering so much."

Victims often face financial harm, she

added, because many hire companies to try to remove the content from the internet.

That's why we need to teach kids not only that they shouldn't create deepfakes but also why they should never engage with them by sharing or liking them.

In having these conversations, parents should lean into empathy by asking their kids to imagine how they would feel if it happened to them, said Dr. Devorah Heitner, the Chicago-based author of "Growing Up in Public: Coming of Age in a Digital World." "All young people recognize that we don't want to be

part of victimizing others. We don't want to be part of making other people feel less safe."

Parents also need to educate their kids about the risks of becoming victims.

"I always encourage parents to delay social media and phone use for as long as possible," Lieberman said. "But if your kids are on social media, you want to talk to them about privacy

settings and making sure that they know every single person that they are connected with, and that can see their content."

By sharing content privately — only with people whom they've accepted as friends or followers — children can make it harder for strangers or people they consider untrustworthy to access photos of them that can be manipulated.

When I speak to students in schools about deepfakes and other dangers they could experience on social media, I also advise them to talk offline to the people who send them friend or follow requests to confirm they are the ones who

created the accounts.

Lieberman also recommended that parents model good cyber hygiene by being careful what they share online. She said parents should make sure kids know that if they see deepfakes they can come to them for help without worrying about being punished.

While it's important not to minimize the harms victims experience, Heitner said that parents should also teach children that they can recover if it happens to them. "We also don't want to tell girls, 'This has happened to you, now you're broken. You can never date. You can never move forward,'" she said.

It's important, Heitner noted, to "treat people who are survivors like survivors and not just victims, and give them opportunities to find community, to move on and to recognize their own strength."

Lieberman said parents and victims can report incidents to the police and FBI, but she also advised reaching out to nonprofits for support, including the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network and National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

Parents can reach out to a lawyer if they or their child are victims, and Lieberman said victims shouldn't assume they can't afford one. Many lawyers — including Lieberman — offer free consultations, and they sometimes take contingency cases in which they're only paid if the victim gets paid by winning a judgment or receiving money in a settlement.

While schools clearly need to educate children about deepfakes and implement policies to protect them from becoming victims, it's essential for parents to warn children about how they can protect themselves and avoid participating in this form of sexual abuse.

— CNN

Abu Dhabi's stewardship of minors' funds is more than a financial exercise

Michael Jansen

that fosters in them a sense of belonging and opportunity.

Third is the long-term economic sustainability. Effective management of minors' funds drive sustainable returns, allowing funds to grow over time. This benefits individual minors and contributes to the overall economic prosperity of communities.

There are several examples from around the world that underscore the importance of managing minors' funds. For example, in the US, the Uniform Transfers to Minors Act - or UTMA - provides a framework for managing minors' assets. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, the states have adopted some form of the UTMA, underlining its recognition as a crucial tool for protecting minors' financial interests. The US Department of Education

has also pointed out that this initiative has helped millions of children access educational opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach.

Other global examples include the Government Pension Fund of Norway, which sets aside funds for children's welfare programmes, while the South Africa Child Support Grant has contributed to reducing poverty rates.

In the Islamic world, the concept of guardianship of minors' wealth is deeply rooted in religious and cultural traditions. According to the Islamic Financial

Services Board, a significant portion of Islamic finance assets are dedicated to wealth management, including minors' funds. This reflects the growing recognition of the importance of the financial stewardship of minors' funds in the Arab world.

For people in the Arab world and beyond, gaining an understanding and supporting comprehensive minors' funds management is crucial, as it is not only about financial security but also about creating a more equitable and sustainable future.

By ensuring that the next generation has the resources and knowledge to thrive, we are investing in the stability and prosperity of our societies. To further strengthen the support to these noble initiatives, it is important for all stakeholders, including government entities, civil society organisations, the private sector and individuals, to

collaborate and extend their commitment to agencies that work towards protecting minors' interests.

The management of minors' funds is far more than a financial exercise. It is a remarkable tool for promoting social inclusivity, ensuring sustainability, and shaping the future of our societies.

As the world faces challenges ranging from economic inequality to climate change impact, effective minors' funds management helps protect the financial future of our youth, and in turn, protect the future of our coming generations.

What does a possible Pax Americana mean for Lebanon

Michael Young

Americans, and has shown a willingness to stand up to Hezbollah.

Turkey can be expected to play a major role in Syria. In what was a remarkable sign of confidence, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently declared that Ankara would help the new Syrian leadership restructure its administration and help draft a new constitution. Turkish intervention has led to a sense of reaffirmation by Syria's Sunni community, a feeling that will have repercussions in Lebanon.

Caught in the middle of all this is Hezbollah. The group still retains what remains of its weapons, but for what strategic end? Facing communities that opposed its opening of a front with Israel, the group is more isolated than ever. It has lost its strategic depth in Syria and its more obvious weapons supply lines from Iran and Iraq. This will entail a rebalancing of its role at home, where the prospect of Hezbollah hegemony has all but evaporated.

Two decades of a sense of marginalisation among many in the Sunni community, after the assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, is bound to be reversed. But in what direction? The community still does not have a unifying leader, and it's not yet clear whether Turkey can assert influence over Lebanon in the face of the traditionally strong ties between Lebanon's Sunni population and key Arab states. Beyond the Levant, the redrawing of the region may continue.

While US president-elect Donald Trump has vowed to bring an end to American wars in the world, his administration sends a very different message in the Middle East.

Whether it's his nominees for defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, secretary of state, Marco Rubio, national security adviser, Mike Waltz, or ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, all are staunch supporters of Israel, therefore

may embrace an Israeli project of regime change in Iran.

Moreover, Iran is more vulnerable than ever. With two of its Axis of Resistance allies situated closest to Israel militarily neutralised, and Iranian air defence systems believed to have been seriously damaged in the Israeli attack on Iran last October, Israel's backers in Washington may see an opportunity to strike in tandem with Israel.

Some of Mr Trump's major funders, notably Miriam Adelson, who gave his campaign \$100 million, would probably favour such an outcome. Mrs Adelson and her late husband have long financed Republican candidates, and did so for Mr Rubio's presidential campaign in 2015, so she has powerful allies throughout the new administration.

If Mr Trump is compelled to take such a route, it is conceivable the region could find itself under a new Pax Americana, even if there is an infinite number of potential complications that would undermine such a neat plan. In that case, what may emerge from this is actually a growing rivalry between Turkey and Israel, as each country seeks to assert its predominance in a region transformed.

Lebanon would be at the heart of such struggles for influence. Hezbollah might no longer pose a major threat to Israel, but if Iran's regional sway were to be crippled, the group would have to adopt a radically new outlook at home. Faced with a re-energised Sunni community, it may have few options than to engage in an unexpected sectarian repositioning, for example working towards an alliance with Maronite Christian parties.

All possibilities remain open in the coming period, a decade and a half after the Arab uprisings of 2010-2011. Change can bring hope, at least in the Middle East, but it can also bring new tensions and fears. Expect Lebanon to experience the full gamut of this.

The year Israel became a pariah state

THERE is a famous quote that states: "There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen." This, I believe, best describes 2024 — a year of tumult, political upheavals, unyielding atrocities, apocalyptic devastation and historical legal precedence.

For the Middle East, this was a year where nations were caught in a vicious loop: the images of bloody rampages, imploding buildings, broken families, shell-shocked children, gutted hospitals and grieving parents. There has been no reprieve. Gaza has become one ever-expanding killing field, a gushing wound in the belly of humanity.

In the beginning, numbers meant something. So many children killed, so many women, so many journalists, so many doctors, so many buried under the rubble; numbers that were meant to deliver shock and awe — and shame.

But then, Israel managed to do something no country has been able to pull off before: it normalized genocide.

Politicians and pundits argued among themselves: Is what is happening in Gaza genocide? They squabbled as the world saw the images of emaciated babies, the headless bodies of children, the mass exodus of civilians, the faces of bereaved parents, wailing mothers and stricken fathers holding little white shrouds containing what was left of their sons and daughters.

As it turned out, it all came down to semantics. Killing thousands in Gaza was justified as Israeli "self-defence." Politicians defended the massacres because "Hamas was using civilians as human shields." Collateral damage, they said, which is another arbitrary and callous term.

Yes, semantics matter. If it was genocide that Israel was carrying out in

Gaza, then the US and the West would have acted differently, right? While nations joined South Africa at the International Court of Justice in arguing that, yes, it is genocide, a US State Department spokesperson disagreed and insisted that "we are not seeing any acts that constitute genocide," adding that South Africa's case was "unproductive."

While the debate over what constitutes genocide went on, Israel was quick to describe a clash between Israeli football hooligans and pro-Palestine groups in Amsterdam as a "pogrom." The mainstream media and Zionist influencers were quick to adopt the term. No one died in Amsterdam and social media activists soon exposed the truth about the events there: Israeli hooligans provoked the clashes by chanting "death to Palestinians." The term pogrom refers to the organized massacre of Jewish people in Russia and Eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. So, no genocide in Gaza, but a pogrom in Amsterdam.

The mainstream Western media continued to manipulate the coverage of the war in Gaza, particularly the indiscriminate killing of civilians by Israel. "Dozens killed in a strike at a UN school in Gaza," read one headline in an influential daily newspaper in America, blaming an unnamed third party.

In Gaza, according to the Western press, people "die," which is a euphemism for "Palestinians killed by Israel." The dehumanization of Palestinians has not subsided. The disinformation, the bias, the hatred and the allegations that are never fact-checked or corrected have become the poisoned legacy of the Western press.

On the other side of the world, the elections in the US took an unexpected turn. President Joe Biden, a self-described Zionist

Osama Al-Sharif

and Israel's best friend, was forced out of the race due to fears over his health. Vice President Kamala Harris was pushed into the fray as the presumptive Democratic nominee. She was to challenge Donald Trump, who led the polls against Biden.

Late in 2023 and in the spring and summer of 2024, students at Ivy League universities became the center of media coverage and political jockeying by US lawmakers. The students held sit-ins, vigils and marches calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the severing of ties between universities and Israel.

In the ensuing maelstrom, Gaza, Israel and the Palestinian cause became a consequential election issue. University presidents were summoned to Congress to receive a lashing for allowing antisemitism to spread in American universities. Pro-Palestine protests had already spread across the world in an unprecedented manner. There was what one could call a global awakening. People were protesting their own governments' pro-Israel policies, citing the contrasts between their policies toward Ukraine and Gaza.

Palestine had become a matter of moral standing. The narrative that Israel had built with precision and deceit over decades began to crumble. Its hasbara lost ground to social media. The deep state and the corporate media were on the defensive.

The culmination of this gaping gulf between the state and the people occurred when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was invited by defiant US House Speaker Mike Johnson to address a joint session of Congress for the fourth time — a record.

The invite was issued following a bold announcement by the prosecutor of the

International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, that he had asked the court to issue warrants for the arrest of Netanyahu and his then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, in addition to Hamas' military leader Yahya Sinwar, his second-in-command Mohammed Deif and the movement's political leader, Ismail Haniyeh. Netanyahu and Gallant were accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Khan's announcement sent shock waves across the world. For the US, which is not a member of the court, it was a time to demonstrate fealty to Israel and present yet another example of Western double standards. Khan and the court were attacked by US lawmakers, who made direct and explicit threats of sanctions against the judges and their families.

Netanyahu's arrival in Washington to deliver his speech prompted mass protests that engulfed the Capitol.

Many Democratic lawmakers boycotted the event. An animated Netanyahu did what he does best: he lied all the way, even claiming that there were no civilian casualties in Gaza. He received more than 50 standing ovations. That scene epitomized decades of the complex US-Israeli alliance. It underlined a bitter and dark reality: the Palestinians were not only facing Israel, but also Washington's Zionist cult.

Arab and Muslim voters in America were making their position on the elections known. Earlier, during the primaries, they had shunned Biden in Michigan by voting "uncommitted." Harris had tried to woo them by showing empathy with the Palestinians in Gaza. But she would not allow any representatives of these Arab and Muslim voters to take the stand at the Democratic National Convention to plead their case.

Trump saw an opportunity to address their



PSX stays bullish, gains 111 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 111.57 points, a positive change of 0.10 percent, closing at 117,119.66 points as compared to 117,008.08 points on the last trading day.

A total of 1,037,862,969 shares were traded during the day as compared to 956,274,456 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs46.570 billion against Rs46.440 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 464 compa-

nies transacted their shares in the stock market, 193 of them recorded gains and 225 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 46 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Fauji Foods Limited with 89,478,727 shares at Rs19.24 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 72,001,410 shares at Rs1.79 per share and Telecard Limited with 61,073,411 shares at Rs10.52 per share.

Hallmark Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs85.23

per share price, closing at Rs1,091.40, whereas the runner-up was Excide Pakistan Limited with Rs80.86 rise in its per share price to Rs889.49.

Indus Motor Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs96.96 per share closing at Rs2,036.49 followed by Sazgar Engineering Works Limited with Rs29.34 decline to close at Rs1,102.33.

Gold rates increase by Rs1,100 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs1,100 and was traded at Rs274,700 on Thursday

against its sale at Rs273,600 on the last trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs943 to Rs235,511 from Rs234,568 whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat went up to Rs215,885 from Rs215,021.

Per tola and ten gram silver were sold at existing prices of Rs3,350 and Rs2,872.08 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$11 to \$2,635 from \$2,624, the Association reported.

ICCI, SECP host awareness session on ‘ezifile’ Portal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) organized an awareness session at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on ezifiling and the Companies Regulations 2024.

This session aimed to inform the business community about the newly introduced filing system and regulations, which provide a unified regulatory framework for company registration and post-incorporation compliance.

The session was well-attended by ICCI executive members and other business professionals seeking guidance on company incorporation and post-incorporation compliances and easy compliance with the updated regulations, said a press release issued here Thursday.

In his welcome address, the acting President of ICCI, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, commended the SECP for taking proactive steps to modernize and simplify business operations.

He highlighted the importance of the SECP's initiatives in promoting incorporation and introducing e-filing systems, which have streamlined processes and enhanced ease of business.

He brought Pakistan's practices in line with international standards.

Lost Documents

I have misplaced my educational documents, including my Matric, Intermediate, Bachelor's, and MBA. Please send them to me if found.

Arbab Farhan Ali, son of Arbab Faiz Muhammad Mohalla Jahangir Abad, Tehkal Bala, Peshawar.

بیان حلفی

مک مسماۃ الجن مقصود بیوه مقصود احمد سکت سفید ڈھیری پشاور کی ہوں خالفا بیان یوں کہ من حالہ کا شوہر مقصود احمد ولد فضل محمد مورخہ 16/05/2019 کو وفات پا چکا ہے جن کے شرعی و قانونی وارثان درج ذیل ہیں 1 الجن مقصود بیوه 2 لائبہ مقصود ملائکہ مقصود 3 جنت مقصود دخان 5 مقصود 6 اشفاق احمد برادران 7 مسماۃ صالحت 8 عذرا و شکیلا 10 رخشندہ 11 نورین بشیرہ کان 12 غرابہ والدہ مقصود احمد درج بالا افراد کے علاوہ موتی کا دیگر کوئی وارث نہیں ہے اس بات اگر کسی کو کوئی عذر و اعتراض ہو تو منصفہ پنوازی حلف یا تحسیندار سے رجوع کریں الجن مقصود

Court Notice

In the court of Amjad Ali, Civil Judge-I, Topi, Mst.Yusra VS. Abid AnwerSuit number: 34/PC-NeemInstitution Date : 18-11-24Hearing Date: 25-01-2025Notice to : Abid Anwer Son Hakeem Jan R/o Mohallah Shakoor Banda, Kunda, Teh. Lahor, The service through ordinary means is difficult , so you are informed to attend the court on 25-01-2025 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairing 3rd meeting of Revenue Mobilisation, Investment and Trade Programme Steering Committee.

SBP injects Rs823b in market

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Thursday, injected Rs823.45 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO).

The SBP conducted Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on January 2, 2025 for 8-day tenor and, as per results issued, accepted an amount of Rs627.95 billion offered through 11 bids.

The central bank received 11 bids cumulatively offering an amount of Rs627.95 billion at the rate of return ranging between 13.06 to 13.09 percent.

The central bank accepted the entire amount offered at 13.06% rate of return. Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for 8-day tenor and injected Rs195.5 billion into the market.

The central bank received 4 bids quoting an amount of Rs195.5 billion at the rate of return ranging between 13.10 to 13.12%. The SBP accepted all the 4 quotes with the entire offered amount at 13.10% rate of return.

Bilateral trade discussed

KARACHI (APP): The Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Alisher Tukhtaev and Trade Counsellor Bakhtrom Yusupov called on Trade Development Authority Chief Executive Zubair Motiwala and Sheryar Taj here at TDAP Headquarters on Thursday.

Various issues related to enhancement of bilateral trade between the two countries were discussed during the meeting.

A brief presentation was given by the Ambassador of Uzbekistan followed by a video on investment opportunities and trade potential in Uzbekistan.

The Chief Executive TDAP also briefed the Uzbek Envoy on working and functioning of TDAP. He also emphasized the importance of TDAP's official web portal, PTP.

The two sides also agreed to participate in more than the existing number exhibitions in the respective countries and exchange trade delegations simultaneously.

Secretary TDAP apprised and invited Uzbek Ambassador to attend upcoming mega events of TDAP like Healthcare and Engineering Show at Lahore and Food Agri Manufacturing Exhibition, Lahore.

Services exports grew by 7.8%

ISLAMABAD (APP): Services exports from the country during first five months of the current financial year grew by 7.8 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July-November, 2024 services worth \$3.275 billion were exported as compared to the exports of \$3.044 billion of the same period of the last year, according to the trade data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

During the period under review services imports into the country also grew by 2.88 percent as it was recorded at \$4.425 billion as against the imports of \$4.301 billion of the same period of the last year, it

added. In first five months of the current financial year, the services trade deficit contracted 9.48 percent as compared to the five months of the last financial year, the data revealed.

On year on year basis, the services exports from the country during the month of November 2024 grew by 6.15 percent as it was recorded at \$657.69 million as compared to the exports of \$634.39 million of the same month of the last year, it added.

Meanwhile, the services imports into the country grew by 4.60 percent and reached to \$828.56 million in November 2024 as compared to the imports of \$792.15 million of the month of November 2023, it added.

On year on year basis, the services trade balance narrowed by 3.10 percent as compared to the trade balance of the same period of the last year, the data revealed.

On month on month basis, the services exports from the country decreased by 1.76 percent in November 2024 against the month of October 2024 as it was recorded at \$675.69 million as compared to the exports of \$687.79 million, it added.

Meanwhile, services imports went also down by 13.07 percent during the period under review as it was recorded at \$828.56 million as against the imports of \$953.16 million of the previous month (October), it added.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships, MSC Positano, CMA CGM Cendrillon, Amabiko, Ivan-6 and IVS Crimson Creek carrying Container, Canola, LPG and Coal, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Grain Terminal, Sui Southern Gas Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively on Wednesday, meanwhile two more ships, SC Hong Kong and Khairpur carrying Chemicals and Mogas are also arrived at outer anchorage on Thursday.

Twelve ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Rui Ning and Aramon left the on today morning while five more ships, CMA CGM Cendrillon, MSC Positano, Jaru Bhum, F.Line and Ginga Ocelot are expected to sail on Thursday.

Cargo volume of 163,520 tonnes, comprising 130,246 tonnes imports cargo and 33,274 tonnes export cargo carried in 5,127 Containers (3,618 TEUs Imports &1,509 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24

hours. Seventeen ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Renad, SC Hong Kong and Jaru Bhum & two more ships, Vienna Express and Medrose carrying Gas oil, Chemicals, Container and Coal are expected to take berths at FOTCO, EVTL, QICT and MW-3 & 4 respectively on today Thursday.

Meanwhile two more container ships, SSL Brahmputra and MSC Desiree are due to arrive at outer anchorage on Friday.

President GCCI hails five-year economic plan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of the Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI), Rana Muhammad Siddique Khan on Thursday hailed the five-year homegrown national economic Plan, "Uraan Pakistan" (2024-29) and said that this comprehensive plan will play significant role for sustainable economic development in the country.

The five-year homegrown national economic Plan, "Uraan Pakistan" (2024-29) announced by the government to be milestone in sustainable economic growth and termed it as a significant step for the restoration of the country's economy.

President of the Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rana Muhammad Siddique told APP here. The President GCCI said that currently the country's

economy is facing major challenges and the business community of Gujranwala welcomes "Uraan Pakistan" and considers it pivotal for the country's economic development.

He said that this five-year homegrown national economic Plan would help achieve sustainable economic growth through competitiveness and productivity. He said that this comprehensive five-year economic plan (2024-29) has three main pillars including the leading role of Private sector, exports led growth and managing the public debt, which was quite relevant for the restoration of the national economy.

Rana Muhammad Siddique Khan said that because of the continuity of prudent economic reform by the incumbent government, country economic

indicators are going in the right direction and all international financial rating agencies have positive views about the country's economy.

Meanwhile, praising the economic strategy evolved by the current economic team of the government, he said that now "We achieved the economic stability and through the comprehensive economic road of" Uraan Pakistan" country's economy to achieve sustainable economic growth also."

He said that this five-year plan announced by the government is significant for increasing productivity and competitiveness to revive the economy adding exploration of new markets; diversification of exports; lowering the exchange rate were the key for sustainable export-led economic growth in the country.

Global markets down on 1st trading day of new year

ISTANBUL (APP): Global markets were down on Thursday, the first trading day of 2025, due to uncertainties over the new decisions to be made when President-elect Donald Trump takes office on Jan. 20, as well as the Fed's future roadmap.

Significant progress was made in the global fight against inflation in 2024, and all eyes are now on the macroeconomic policies the world's major economies will follow this year to address inflation

and recession concerns.

The S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller US National Home Price Index increased 3.6% year-on-year in October, according to data released on Tuesday, which revealed that a slowdown in house price hikes continued in 2024. The house prices in 20 US cities rose 4.2% over the same period, the slowest increase since September 2023.

The US Steel shares rose close to 10% following the reports that Japan's Nippon Steel made a new offer to

acquire the American steel producer.

The ounce price of gold ended 2024 at \$2,623, completing the year with a 27.16% increase, while it is trading at \$2,632 on Thursday, up 0.3%.

The US 10-Year Futures bond completed the year at 4.58%, and it is currently balanced at 4.57%.

The US Dollar Index wrapped up 2024 at 108.5, and it started the new year at 108.3, down 0.2%.

The barrel price of Brent crude oil, having followed

a fluctuating course throughout the year due to various uncertainties, completed 2024 at \$74.7 with a 2.8% decrease, and it is currently trading at \$74.8, up 0.1%.

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 fell 0.43%, the Nasdaq 0.90%, and the Dow Jones 0.07%, while American index futures started Thursday on a positive course.

On an annual basis, the Dow Jones increased 13% in 2024, the S&P 500 23%, and the Nasdaq 29%.

As for Europe, recession

concerns continue across the region as weak manufacturing activity is one of the main topics on the bloc's economic agenda.

Analysts say that the European Central Bank (ECB) is expected to continue dovish policies in 2025, while the bank's data to be announced on Thursday may impact its future roadmap.

On the last trading day of 2024, the FTSE 100 rose 0.64% and the CAC 40 0.92%, while European index futures started Thurs-

day on a positive trend.

Annually, the FTSE 100 climbed 5.69% last year, the DAX 40 18.85%, and the FTSE MIB 30 12.63%, while the CAC 40 fell 2.15%. As for Asia, a mixed course came to the fore on Thursday, while Japanese markets are closed due to a holiday.

China's Caixin manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for December came in below expectations at 50.5, according to data released on Thursday. Analysts say

China's manufacturing industry continues to expand, but its loss of strength continues to feed concerns over the country's economy.

On Thursday, the Shanghai Composite Index and the Hang Seng Index are down 2.2% and 2%, respectively, while the Kospi Index is flat.

Last year, the Nikkei 225 rose 19.22%, the Shanghai Composite Index 12.67%, and the Hang Seng Index 17.67%, while the Kospi Index declined 9.63%.

As for Türkiye, the BIST

100 lost 0.60% on Tuesday, ending the day at 9,830.56 points.

The BIST 100 rose 31.60% in 2024.

The short-selling ban on the BIST 50 that was imposed after the earthquakes in southeastern Türkiye in February 2023 will be lifted on Thursday.

The US dollar/Turkish lira exchange rate closed 2024 at 35.3647 on a horizontal course, and it is currently trading just above the previous close at 35.3740 on Thursday.



Local Tennis Stars shine in National Ranking Championship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 10th Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Tennis Championships continued 2nd day at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, showcasing top tennis talent from across Pakistan.

According to press release issued here on Thursday, the tournament named in honor of Begum

Kulsum Saifullah Khan, mother of PTF Patron Senator Salim Saifullah Khan, saw impressive performances in multiple categories.

In Men's Singles 2nd Round matches, Abdullah Adnan defeated Uzair Khan 6-3, 6-0 while Muzammil Murtaza dominated Omer Jawad with a 6-0, 6-1 victory. Other

notable winners included Aqeel Khan who defeated Saqib Hayat 6-2, 6-3 and Muhammad Shoaib who overcame Hamza Asim 6-2, 6-2.

The Ladies Singles 2nd Round featured Mahrugh Sajid beating Natasha Zaman 6-2, 6-0 and Lalaruhk Sajid edging out Laiba Iqbal 6-1, 7-5.

Young talents also made

their mark in the Boys 18 and under Quarter-Finals with Muhammad Yahya staging a comeback against Ahtesham Humayun, winning 2-6, 6-4, 7-5.

The tournament continues to provide a platform for emerging tennis players to showcase their skills and compete at a national level.

POA President for revival of int'l sports in Pakistan

LAHORE (APP): The newly-elected President Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) Arif Saeed has vowed to gear up efforts for the revival of international sports in the country and improve country soft image globally though sports.

Chairing the executive committee meeting of the POA here on Thursday, he stressed the need for restoring the trust of international sports community through consolidated efforts, adding that he would foster harmonious relations with all stake-holders including Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) for revitalizing sports sector in the country.

"Pakistan held world titles in sports like cricket, hockey, snooker and squash during its heyday but

ups and downs are natural part of sports as no one remains at the top forever," President Arif Saeed remarked, adding continuous efforts were needed to improve.

He also emphasized his commitment to put up efforts so that sports and athletes get due recognition in the country.

Urging the office bearers of various sports federations, the POA President invited proposals for promoting sports at national and international levels within the first 100 days, adding that their proposals would be key to outlining actionable steps for the advancement and development of sports in Pakistan.

He said the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was

actively supporting well-being of athletes worldwide, and similarly, the POA and National Sports Federations (NSFs) should strive to do the same.

He stressed the need for benefit from and learn from the programs offered by the IOC and International Sports Federations.

The meeting was attended by POA Secretary General Muhammad Khalid Mahmood, Vice Presidents Maj (R) Majid Wasim and Andleeb Sandhu, Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association of Pakistan Javed Lodhi, President of the Softball Federation of Pakistan Asif Azeem, and Secretary General of the Islamabad Olympic Association Rizwan ul Haq Razi.



ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND: A general view of match action in the snow during a William Hill Premiership match between Aberdeen and Ross County at Pittodrie, on Thursday, in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Deflated Pakistan look to set record straight

Cape Town (ESPNCricinfo): The attempt to give this Test series context may ironically have stripped some from this Test match, especially as far as South Africa are concerned. The hosts have already qualified for the World Test Championship final after beating Pakistan by two wickets in Centurion, and as such, don't necessarily have a bigger picture to play for. However, they have won eight consecutive Test matches at home against Pakistan, and never not won a home series against these opponents, and in that bilateral context, there remains plenty to play for.

In the days since South Africa qualified, there has been some attention towards the perceived softer nature of their draw en route to the World Test Championship, one that their coach Shukri Conrad made "no apologies" for. But with no Test cricket between this Test and the WTC final, South Africa will want to storm into the final in style, and extend a winning run that already stretches to six games.

Pakistan's WTC hopes had long ago gone up in smoke, but they need to break out of a habit of letting slip winning positions, a habit in this particular cycle. As a result, they have

now lost seven of the last nine Tests, and all of the last eight in South Africa. Centurion was the closest they came to breaking that hoodoo, at one stage two wickets away from a stunning win with South Africa still 49 runs away from victory. But, as has been the case with Pakistan too often, they struggled to finish off the tail with the ball, and watched another one slide through their fingers.

Newlands arguably plays slightly more to their strengths, lacking the express pace South Africa possess.

It is a surface that both captains expect to take a bit more spin than Centurion, and should revert back to its natural characteristics after a freak Test last year against India that ended in a day and a half. Both sides are expected to field a spinner, while Pakistan's seam and swing bowlers may find more joy, especially in the early stages of the Test before the surface flattens out.

With just two Test wins in South Africa across three decades of playing here, a victory here - and a drawn series - will go down as their most impressive away Test series result in years.

With spin likely to play a more significant role at Newlands than it did in Centurion, Keshav Maharaj

returns to the side. But for all of Newlands supposed accommodation for slower bowling, the left-arm orthodox spinner has a surprisingly indifferent record in Cape Town, managing just 9 wickets in 6 matches at an average in excess of 52. That's almost double his average of 30.44 in South Africa in general, and Maharaj is returning from an adductor strain that ruled him out of the ODI series. Whether he can begin to turn his Newlands record around may be an intriguing plot point as the Test develops.

It's not a vintage age for openers in Test cricket, and particularly not Pakistani openers. Until the final Test, they hadn't produced a partnership over 15 all year, but offered faint glimpses of turning that around with the new pairing of Saim Ayub and Shan Masood, putting up 36 and 49.

But neither opener managed to kick on in either innings, something Masood brought up as a point of frustration in Centurion. Against the kind of world-class new ball bowling attack South Africa possess at home, runs for the first wicket are not exactly easy, but Pakistan desperately need them all the same.

Team news

South Africa have rung the changes after the first

Test, with Maharaj, Wiaan Mulder and debutant fast bowler Kwena Maphaka coming into the side. Opener Tony de Zorzi has a thigh strain, while fast bowling allrounder Corbin Bosch and Dane Paterson also drop to the bench.

South Africa: Ryan Rickleton 2 Aiden Markram, 3 Wiaan Mulder (capt), 4 Tristan Stubbs 5 Temba Bavuma (capt) 6 David Bedingham, 7 Kyle Verreyne (wk), 8 Marco Jansen, 9 Keshav Maharaj 10 Kagiso Rabada 11 Kwena Maphaka

Pakistan have not yet named an eleven, unsure about playing Noman Ali or simply making do with Salman Ali Agha as lead spinner.

Pakistan: 1 Shan Masood (capt) 2 Saim Ayub 3 Babar Azam 4 Kamran Ghulam 5 Saud Shakeel 6 Mohammad Rizwan (wk) 7 Salman Ali Agha 8 Aamer Jamal/Noman Ali 9 Naseem Shah 10 Mohammad Abbas 11 Khuram Shahzad

Pitch and conditions

"I don't think I'm allowed to speak about the wicket," Temba Bavuma joked during the press conference following the ultra-short Test here last year. There's less grass on it than Centurion, though, with spin coming into it later in the Test.

'Everything under control,' says Gambhir

SYDNEY (Agencies): India coach Gautam Gambhir was strong in saying he has "everything under control" in the dressing room but admitted he had "honest" conversations with the team after losing the MCG Test to go 2-1 down in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. In the days between that Melbourne defeat and the New Year's Test in Sydney, there was a report citing Gambhir had lost patience with the way India had played in Australia.

"I don't think I need to answer to any reports," Gambhir said on the eve of the fifth Test. "There are some honest words. That's all I can say. Honesty is extremely important if you want to go on and achieve some great things."

Gambhir was "extremely, extremely confident" though that India could get the win that they need in Sydney to draw the series and retain the trophy. "If someone had said 40-45 days ago that we would be in this situation, that we can come to Sydney and draw this series, it's a good position to be in. And I don't think so that anything is out of control."

"When you come to a Test like this, it's not that batting didn't do well or bowling didn't do well. If batting and bowling hadn't done well, we wouldn't have won a Test match or we wouldn't have been 2-1 down. We could have been in a worse situation. So, as I said, I don't think so that anything is worrisome."

"We know we've got the skill set. We've got the individuals. We've got everything in that dressing room that can win a Test match here. Not only here, probably go on to do some unbelievable things in the future as well."

India have a few senior players out of form: Rohit Sharma - Gambhir wouldn't confirm if he will play on Friday - Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant have all had a lean run in Australia.

"First of all, all the individuals, all the individuals know which area they have to work in," Gambhir said. "And it's not like I'm talking about individuals here. Because ultimately, you win as a team and lose as a team. And when you're playing for your country, everyone tries to contribute their maximum. So, that's important."

"And it's not like the debate between a player and a coach should be known to everybody. It should just be between them. You [the outsiders] just see the results. And, fortunately or unfortunately, this sport is known only for the results. But the conversations between the individuals and the dressing room, they should stay there."

In Melbourne, when

India were trying to draw the Test match, several of their batters, from Rohit to Kohli to Yashasvi Jaiswal to Pant, playing attacking shots to get out. Gambhir, ahead of his first series in charge as India's Test coach in September last year, had highlighted he wanted to be a part of a team that could adapt to various situations, whether it is scoring 400 in a day or batting time to secure a draw. On Thursday, he was asked whether a batter playing their natural game could be at odds with the match situation.

"It's the team-first ideology that matters," Gambhir said. "It's a team sport and you've got to play what the team needs you to do. That's as simple as it can get. People can play in a team sport, individuals only contribute. It's the team [that is important]. If you need to play in a certain way, I think you've got to do it. "I don't want to talk about individuals. I think

everyone knows where they are. And as I just mentioned, in a team sport, it's only the team. You have to expect players to do what the team needs you to do. Whether they go to bad sessions, whether they go to be attacking, because that is all that matters in a team sport for me."

Gambhir reiterated that Indian cricket - despite its ups (a T20 World Cup win last year) and downs (a home series whitewash against New Zealand) - will always be strong.

"I think Indian cricket will always be in safe hands till the time you've got honest people sitting in that room," he said. "And honesty is the most important thing for any transition. And it is not about phasing out senior players or getting the youngsters in."

"Ultimately, the only thing that can keep you in that dressing room is the performance. And it starts from all of us. Not only from the players, from the coaches as well."



SYDNEY: Muhammad Siraj looking at the statue of Stan McCabe.

Najmul Hossain Shanto steps down as Bangladesh T20I captain

DHAKA (ESPNCricinfo): Najmul Hossain Shanto has quit as Bangladesh's T20I captain. BCB president Faruque Ahmed told a local newspaper that Shanto had informed the board of his decision but that he will continue to lead in Tests and ODIs.

"Shanto has finally informed us that he will not continue as the T20I captain. We have accepted his decision. There's however no T20s coming up, so we will not think about a new captain just yet. We have an understanding

with Shanto that when he is fit, he will continue as the Test and ODI captain," Faruque told the Dhaka-based Prothom Alo on Thursday.

This puts to rest the captaincy debate after Shanto had expressed reluctance towards being all-format captain back in October. At the time Faruque convinced Shanto to continue as captain across formats. Shanto however got injured during an ODI against Afghanistan in November, which prevented him from

touring the West Indies.

There, Bangladesh handed the Test and ODI captaincy to Mehidy Hasan Miraz. The visitors drew the Test series 1-1, before they lost the ODIs 3-0. Litton Das then led the T20I side to a 3-0 series win. Whether that T20I result pushed the BCB into agreeing with Shanto is unknown, but the fact that Mehidy and Litton were good enough to be considered part of the leadership group was good news for Bangladeshi cricket.

Shanto became Bangladesh's all-format captain in February 2024. The appointment came on the back of impressive stints against New Zealand at home and away, in the absence of then-captain Shakib Al Hasan. Bangladesh's subsequent T20I performances however were great as they lost bilateral series against Sri Lanka and USA. They managed to reach the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup last June but did not win a match in that round.

Debut at 18, still playing at 40 - James makes more history

NEW YORK (BBC): LeBron James became the first person in NBA history to play as a teenager and past the age of 40 as the Los Angeles Lakers lost to the Cleveland Cavaliers.

James, who made his NBA debut as an 18-year-old in 2003, turned 40 on 30 December.

He scored 23 points in the 122-110 defeat at the Crypto.com Arena in LA, but 27 from Jarrett Allen helped Cleveland to an eighth straight win.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest basketball players of all time, James last year became the NBA's all-time leading points scorer.

He has won four NBA Championships, been named Most Valuable Player four times and is in his 22nd season in the NBA, a record he shares

with the now retired Vince Carter.

The Cavs remain top of the Eastern Conference and the Lakers are seventh in the West.

Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 30 points, 12 rebounds, five assists and two steals in the Milwaukee Bucks' comeback win over the Indiana Pacers.

The Bucks were 19 points adrift late in the third quarter but rallied to win 120-112 in Indianapolis.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 113-105 home victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves with 40 points, three rebounds, two assists and two steals.

It was a 12th straight win for the Thunder, who remain top of the Western Conference.

The Toronto Raptors suffered an 11th successive

defeat as they were thrashed 125-71 at the Boston Celtics, for whom Jayson Tatum scored 23 points and made eight rebounds.

The San Antonio Spurs cruised to a 122-86 home win over the Los Angeles Clippers thanks to Victor Wembanyama's 27 points, nine rebounds and five assists.

The Memphis Grizzlies won 117-112 at the Phoenix Suns, who have now lost six of their past seven matches.

Jaren Jackson Jr finished with 38 points, 11 rebounds and four assists for the Grizzlies, while Kevin Durant contributed 29 points and 10 rebounds for the Suns.

Knicks extend winning run with victory over Jazz

The injury-hit New York Knicks extended their winning streak to nine games with a 119-103 victory

against the Utah Jazz.

Josh Hart and Karl-Anthony Towns starred for the Knicks, with the latter becoming just the third player in team history to record at least 30 points and 10 rebounds in three consecutive games.

The Knicks, whose record improved to 24-10, were missing star point guard Jalen Brunson for the first time this season because of a calf issue. Back-up guard Miles McBride sat out with a tight left hamstring.

The Jazz had raced into an 18-8 lead before falling to a fifth straight loss (7-25).

Elsewhere, Nikola Jokic scored 23 points, 17 rebounds and 15 assists for his 14th triple-double of the season as the Denver Nuggets defeated the

Atlanta Hawks 139-120.

In Detroit, the Pistons' 105-96 win over the Orlando Magic was overshadowed by a potentially serious leg injury suffered by Jaden Ivey.

The star point guard scored 22 points before injuring his left leg early in the fourth quarter when Orlando's Cole Anthony collided with his leg while diving for a loose ball.

Ivey's team-mates were visibly upset when he left the court on a stretcher.

The Toronto Raptors ended an 11-game losing streak with a 130-113 victory against the Brooklyn Nets, while the New Orleans Pelicans slipped to a 11th consecutive loss in a defeat by the Miami Heat.

The Washington Wizards disposed of the Chicago Bulls 125-107, while the Sacramento Kings overtook

the Philadelphia 76ers with a late comeback win in California (113-107).

The Houston Rockets returned to winning ways with a 110-99 victory against the Dallas Mavericks.

Meanwhile, Karl-Anthony Towns scored 31 points and corralled 21 rebounds, and Josh Hart recorded a triple-double as the Knicks grabbed a ninth-straight win, topping the visiting Utah Jazz, 119-103, on Wednesday night.

Jalen Brunson missed the game due to a tight right calf, the first time he's been absent this season. But after a slow start to the first quarter, his teammates found their footing without him -- erasing a 10-point deficit for a convincing win.

"They all stepped up... KAT just a monster game," head coach Tom Thibodeau

said. "A good hard-fought win, just find a way to win. And that's what the season is, next guy get in there and get the job done." For the shorthanded Knicks, who used just an eight-man rotation, it all came down to playing their team game.

"As a team, if you prioritize winning and doing what's best for the group, that's what makes it enjoyable," the head coach said. "You have everyone committed to each other. When you do that, good things come from that."

New York improved to 24-10 on the season and 11-4 at Madison Square Garden. Utah fell to 7-25. Hart, the player who is anywhere and everywhere all at once for the Knicks, cashed in with eight rebounds and five assists in the first half. A triple-double seemed unlikely as he had just three

points, but he took care of that with three in the third and nine in the fourth. He had 14 rebounds and 12 assists but was dinged for six turnovers. He finished as a plus-15 in 45 minutes. With that he became the first Knick since Michael Ray Richardson in 1981 to record triple-doubles in back-to-back games, and the fifth player in franchise history to do so. Without Brunson, the Knicks' offense started slow - 4-for-12 from the floor - and found themselves down 18-10 at the midway point of the first quarter. But the defense, which has been maligned in recent weeks, tightened the screws, getting three turnovers on three straight possessions. That was all part of a 16-7 run by the Knicks to close the quarter and cut it to a one-point deficit after 12 minutes.



In brief

ICT admin cracks down

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has intensified its efforts to control artificial price hikes and enforce official rates for essential goods in the Federal Capital. In a recent operation directed by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, Magistrate Saddar Zone, Mir Yamin conducted a price inspection across several markets within the Tarnol police station's jurisdiction, said the spokesman of ICT's administration. During the inspection, Mir Yamin visited fruit and vegetable shops, dairy stores, and grocery outlets in Tarnol area. The focus was on ensuring that shopkeepers adhered to the official pricing of essential commodities. The magistrate arrested seven shopkeepers while heavy fines were also imposed to the violators. These traders were found guilty of not displaying the official price lists and charging inflated rates for items like fruits, vegetables, and meat. They were handed over to Police Station Tarnol for further legal action. Magistrate Yamin urged residents to buy goods at approved prices and report cases of overcharging to the authorities. The initiative is part of broader efforts to ensure compliance with market regulations and protect citizens from unfair practices. The administration has called for public cooperation in addressing price violations, emphasizing that collective vigilance can help stabilize the market.

ANF recovers 287 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country arrested three accused including a woman and recovered over 287 kg drugs worth Rs 209 million, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 231 kg morphine was recovered from an uninhabited area of Hazarganji, Quetta. In second operation, 35 kg opium, 12 kg ice and 6 kg heroin were recovered from Goth Lakha Othal area of Lasbela. 3 kg ice concealed in secret cavities of a vehicle was recovered near M-1 Motorway, Islamabad. 740 grams ice was recovered from the possession of two accused including a woman arrested in two operations near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza Attock. Separate cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

27,100 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 27,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1473.05 feet and was 75.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,500 cusecs and 6,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.90 feet, which was 82.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,800 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 15,100, 20,000, 10,700 and 1,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Envoy inaugurates scenic photo display

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki on Thursday inaugurated an amazing display of Pakistan's scenic photos on the boundary wall of the Diplomatic Enclave opposite the Saudi Embassy, symbolizing the enduring friendship and cultural ties between the two brotherly nations.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by the Chairman of Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, along with other dignitaries and officials.

Speaking to the media, Ambassador Al-Malki described the initiative as a

tribute to Pakistan's vibrant culture and rich heritage. "This effort highlights the beauty and diversity of Pakistan to the world while celebrating the deep-rooted brotherhood between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan," he stated.

The photo display captivated participants with its vivid portrayal of Pakistan's cultural and natural diversity. Among the highlights were the majestic Badshahi Mosque, the lively Shandur Polo Festival, the rustic charm of desert life, the architectural wonder of the mosque located within the Khewra Salt Mine and K2, the second highest mountain on

earth. Other images showcased traditional activities, such as jaggery-making, and featured Pakistan's unique wildlife, including the partridge and cheetah providing a window into the country's lifestyle and biodiversity.

The event underscored the profound and enduring relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, rooted in shared values and mutual respect. This initiative forms part of a larger effort to promote cultural exchange and strengthen the historic ties between the two nations, further enriching their longstanding partnership.

Technological cooperation in OIC states:

COMSTECH to launch Expert Service Program

ISLAMABAD (APP): COMSTECH, the OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation has decided to launch its Expert Service Program to foster technological collaboration among member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), as follow up of preliminary discussion with Secretary General OIC.

It was decided during an important meeting of the Advisory Committee for the COMSTECH Expert Service Program held on Thursday.

The meeting was presided over by Coordinator General COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary while convener of the Committee Prof. Dr. Shahid Mahmood Baig, former Chairman Pakistan Science Foundation and Head of Life Sciences Department, Health Services Academy, Prof. Dr. Moazur Rahman Director Centre of

Excellence in Molecular Biology, University of the Punjab, and officials from COMSTECH attended the meeting.

Coordinator General COMSTECH remarked that recognizing the abundant yet underutilized technical expertise within OIC member states, this initiative aims to build a robust network of experts, engineers, technologists, and professionals to provide hands-on training and knowledge sharing.

The program addresses critical developmental sectors, enabling recipient institutions, such as universities, research centers, industry, companies, and laboratories, to access specialized technical services and enhance their capacities.

The key objectives of this initiative would include facilitating the transfer of technical expertise and best practices, strengthen technical capabilities through training and capacity-build-

ing programs, establishing a collaborative network of experts and promoting solidarity, volunteering, and shared responsibility within the OIC community.

The program will support diverse fields, including biomedical engineering and health, renewable energy, information technology, manufacturing and engineering sciences, agriculture, urbanization, and smart cities, etc.

The participants appreciated the initiative and assured their utmost cooperation in making it a successful, vibrant, and productive one.

This program is a strategic step toward enhancing technological self-reliance, fostering sustainable development, and mitigating brain drain in OIC member states. It also underscores the values of collaboration and mutual benefit, reinforcing the collective progress of the OIC community.

Pak Railways earn Rs46b in six months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has earned an amount of Rs46 billion in the first six months of the current fiscal year 2024-25 due to the organization's effective policies which reflects the institution's positive trajectory.

"The department has achieved a revenue of Rs46 billion in the first half of the fiscal year, marking an increase of Rs5 billion as compared to the same period last year," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

As per the figure, he said Pakistan Railways has generated Rs24 billion from passenger trains and Rs16 billion from freight services while Rs6 billion was earned through land leases, coaching, and other sources.

To a question, the official said around 41.91 million passengers traveled by train during 2023-24 compared to 35.40 million in 2022-23 - an increase of 6.51 million in the annual count.

He said a total passenger earning in the fiscal year 2023-24 was Rs. 47.712 billion, exceeding the budgetary target by a margin of Rs. 8.712 billion. Besides, there is an increase in earnings by Rs. 13.799 billion as compared to the earnings of the previous financial year 2022-23.

The official said Pakistan Railways has made special arrangements to facilitate passengers at stations and in trains enroute including provision of state-of-the-art dining cars, mobile charging sockets in coaches, and provision of water dispensers in coaches to provide clean drinking water to passengers.

Besides this, the department has installed Ticket Vending Machines (TVM) for purchasing tickets, information counters to guide and facilitate passengers, digital display boards for the arrival and departure of trains, and provision of wheelchairs and ramps for disabled people.

To improve the punctuality of trains, he

said Pakistan Railways is removing speed restrictions through special maintenance of track, the signaling system is being improved through computerized interlocking and installation of solar system, locomotive failures are being removed through timely maintenance, and new passenger coaches are being inducted.

Redressal of passenger complaints, he said the department has established a state-of-the-art call center under Railway Automated Booking and Travelling Assistance, passengers can also lodge their complaints on Pakistan Railways' website, and complaint registers are also provided at stations and in trains so that the passengers can lodge their complaints. "If a contractor is found selling substandard products, they are fined and issued a warning. Upon receiving three fines, the contractor's agreement with Pakistan Railways is terminated," he added.

Road accidents claimed 190 lives in 17,520 accidents during year 2024

RAWALPINDI (APP): During the year 2024, a total of 17,520 road accidents were reported in which 190 people died.

According to the details released by the District Emergency Service, Rescue-1122, a total of 17,848 people were victims in road accidents. The details show that 7,645 were seriously injured in the said number of accidents.

Rescue Service Rawalpindi reached all the accidents on time while maintaining the average response time.

Moreover, the majority of road traffic accidents involved cars and bikes. Whereas 15,003 men and 2,845 women were the victims of the accidents with the age group between 11 to 40 years.

Over speeding, carelessness while driving, one-wheeling, wrong turns and tyre burst remained major causes of the road accidents. The degree of response by the Rescue-1122 also remained successful as majority road accidents were timely addressed by the rescue personnel.

UNCHR-PPAF host youths' graduation ceremony

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Science and Technology Park (NSTP)-NUST recently hosted a graduation ceremony to celebrate the achievements of 30 Afghan refugee graduates, marking the successful completion of the UNHCR-funded Poverty Graduation Programme.

This initiative, led by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and implemented by IDEA, aims to empower Afghan refugees through entrepreneurial skills development and support for sustainable livelihoods.

The ceremony recognized the remarkable jour-

ney of 30 startups, which underwent four months of intensive training and mentorship. Notable dignitaries at the event included Mr. Sohail Sajid, Country Head of Turkish Aerospace Industries; Dr. Usman Hassan, Pro-Rector Academics, NUST; Arshad Rashid, Chief Programmes, PPAF; Ms. Saadia Tariq, Project Manager, PPAF; Muhammad Riaz, Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer, UNHCR; and Muhammad Ammad, Executive Director, IDEA.

The event was graced by Dr. Usman Hassan, Pro-Rector Academics, NUST, who served as the Chief

Guest, and Sohail Sajid, CEO of Turkish Aerospace Industries, who participated as the Guest of Honor. Distinguished speakers highlighted the program's significant impact in fostering self-reliance, resilience, and sustainable livelihoods for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Dr. Hassan expressed his admiration for the participants' dedication and resilience, emphasizing the critical role of entrepreneurship in empowering youth and building stronger communities.

Muhammad Riaz, Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer at

UNHCR, highlighted the importance of the Entrepreneurship Skills Program in empowering Afghan refugee youth. "Through this initiative, UNHCR has equipped young refugees with the skills and resources they need to create sustainable livelihoods, enabling them to build a better future. The graduates are now empowered to drive positive change in their communities," he said.

Arshad Rashid, Chief Programmes at PPAF, thanked UNHCR for its longstanding partnership with PPAF since 2017, emphasizing the shared

commitment to improving the livelihoods of marginalized populations. He proudly shared that the program had achieved a 54% graduation rate out of poverty among its beneficiaries, alongside significant improvements in household income and the quality of productive assets. "This graduation ceremony represents not only the completion of a training program but the beginning of a new chapter for these entrepreneurial graduates," he remarked.

The ceremony also featured speeches from representatives of IDEA, with Mr. Ammad, Executive

Director, commending NSTP-NUST for its exceptional role in providing high-quality training and mentorship. He stressed the importance of such programs in preparing Afghan refugees to overcome entrepreneurial challenges and succeed in the business world.

The Entrepreneurial Skill Development for Startups and Youth program provided a comprehensive curriculum covering customer discovery, market research, business model development, and financial planning. Participants received hands-on guidance from experienced trainers

and industry experts, ensuring they were well-equipped to launch and sustain their startups.

The highlight of the event was the distribution of cheques worth PKR 400,000 per participant, intended as seed funding to help graduates further develop their businesses.

This graduation ceremony serves as a testament to the transformative impact of the UNHCR-PPAF Poverty Graduation Programme, which has successfully empowered Afghan refugees, providing them with the skills and support necessary to build a brighter future.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Ch. Muhammad Ali Randhawa and Nawaf Bin Said Al-Maliki cutting ribbon at inauguration ceremony to unveil mural painting of Pakistani culture at Saudi Arabia Embassy.

CTP issue over 8,000 challans to unfit PSVs

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi issued over 8,000 challans under special campaign against unfit Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) and heavy vehicles during December.

According to a CTP spokesman, 16 fatal road accidents occurred including six in the city area within the limits of CTP during December. Eight accidents occurred due to negligence and carelessness of the drivers of heavy vehicles and PSVs, speeding, one-way violation and wrong overtaking. 16 persons lost their lives in the fatal road accidents, he informed.

He said that City Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Beenish Fatima sent a letter to the concerned authorities requesting to fix entry hours on the main roads of the rural areas like the timing restriction for heavy vehicles in the city area so that fatal road accidents could be prevented and the loss of precious lives could be controlled.

In addition, on the special orders of the CTO Rawalpindi, a 3-day training workshop would also be organized at the Traffic Headquarters Race Course in which heavy and public service drivers across the city would be made aware of the causes of the accidents, preventive measures, and casualties so that such fatal accidents could be controlled.

He informed that 21 persons were injured in 19 other road accidents reported in December.

CTP Rawalpindi is taking all possible steps to prevent road accidents and also spreading awareness through the Traffic Education Wing about preventive measures.

He urged the citizens to obey traffic rules and demonstrate patience and tolerance on the roads.

Friendship gesture:

Saudi Arabia gifts 100 tons of dates to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Thursday gifted 100 tons of dates to Pakistan, symbolizing goodwill and solidarity between the two brotherly nations.

A formal handover ceremony was held at the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in the federal capital, where Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki and the Director of King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Centre (KSrelief), Abdullah Al-Baqami, officially presented the consignment to Director General Military Wing, Brigadier Alamgeer

Ayub.

Continuing its annual tradition of generosity, the Saudi government, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the people of Pakistan through this heartfelt gesture.

The gift exemplifies the enduring bonds of friendship and brotherhood between the two countries, rooted in shared values of generosity and mutual support.

On the occasion,

Brigadier Alamgeer Ayub expressed his gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the leadership of Saudi Arabia for their unwavering generosity and consistent support for Pakistan.

"This noble act of solidarity not only strengthens our ties but also reflects the profound relationship our nations cherish," Brigadier Ayub remarked.

The annual donation of dates is part of Saudi Arabia's efforts to enhance its humanitarian outreach and foster bilateral relations with Pakistan.

Rawalpindi Police arrest 21 law breakers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Thursday arrested 21 lawbreakers involved in different criminal activities from across the district.

A police spokesman, in a statement, said a total of seven accused were nabbed in a crackdown against drug peddlers with more than 8.5 kilograms of hashish.

The Taxila Police recovered 2.2 kg hashish from accused Babar and 1.65 kg hashish from Shahzad while the Gujar Khan Police held Imran with 1.46 kg hashish and the Civil Lines Police nabbed Uzair

with 1.4 kg hashish.

Similarly, the Race Course Police recovered 1.15 kg hashish from accused Inzamam, while the Kallar Syedan and RA Bazaar Police arrested accused Usama and Ijaz on the recovery of 550 grams and 520 grams hashish respectively.

Likewise, 10 accused were arrested with 38 litres and four bottles of liquor throughout the district. The Sadiqabad Police recovered 10 litres of liquor from accused Danish, while the Ratta Amral Police nabbed Rashid with 8 litres of liquor.

The Bani Police recovered 5 litres of liquor from accused Qamar and 5 litres of liquor from Shahzad, while the Waris Khan Police arrested Wasif with 5 litres of liquor and the Race Course Police arrested Bilal with 5 litres of liquor.

The Airport Police recovered 4 bottles of liquor from accused Noman, Suleman, Tashfeen and Waqas.

Meanwhile, four accused Umar, Matar Syed, Kafeel and Jawad were arrested during search operations for violation of the Tenancy Act.

13 held for carrying illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 13 illegal arms holders and recovered arms and ammunition from their possession during a crackdown.

According to police spokesman, Sadiqabad, Waris Khan, Race Course, Taxila, Saddar Wah, Pirwadhai, and Bani Police rounded up 13 illegal arm holders namely Jahanzaib, Shawal, Shahid, Abdul Rehman, Faisal and others and recovered 11 pistols 30 bore, a 12 bore rifle and ammunition.

Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress.

SSP Operations commanded police teams and instructed to take strict action against those carrying illegal weapons.

Ganjmandi Police arrest 2 murder accused

The Ganjmandi Police on Thursday arrested two accused involved in the murder of a person in its jurisdiction two days ago.

According to a Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the accused Junaid and Murad had shot dead the deceased Fahim over a personal grudge. The police arrested the accused with the help of technical means and human intelligence.

The two accused are reportedly nominated in

various cases registered in police stations of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Pickpocket held with stolen money

The Ganjmandi Police on Thursday held a pickpocket who had stolen some amount from a citizen a few days ago.

According to a Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the victim reported to the police that someone had stolen Rs 105,000 by pickpocketing him in the market.

The Ganjmandi Police registered a case and arrested the accused Shahid with the help of technical means and human intelligence.

Nighttime curfew imposed

BADGHIS (Amu TV): Local sources in Badghis reported on Thursday that Taliban authorities in Qadis District have implemented restrictions on nighttime movement. According to a letter obtained by Amu, residents have been instructed not to travel in villages or markets after 9 p.m. unless they have a "legitimate religious excuse." The directive was issued jointly by the Taliban district governor's office, the Taliban police command, and the Taliban's intelligence agency in Qadis.

Over 1,100 youth recruited

PANJSHIR (TOLONews): Local officials in Panjshir have announced that, over the past two years, more than 1,100 young people from the province have been recruited into the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior at the directive of the Islamic Emirate's leader. According to them, the directive to allocate positions for youth in the security forces is exclusive to Panjshir province. Some of these youths have been sent to Kabul to receive military training.

Air pollution in Kabul: A growing concern for residents

KABUL (TOLONews): Air pollution in Kabul, which worsens with each passing day, has become a source of frustration for the city's residents.

Kabul residents told TOLONews that due to severe air pollution, they cannot easily move around the city and have urged the caretaker government to address this issue.

According to them, air pollution in the capital is "concerning."

Mohammad Qaseem, a Kabul resident, said: "The air is polluted, and people cannot walk around outside."

Amaruddin, another Kabul resident, stated: "Our request is that build-

ings install purifiers so that illnesses can be reduced."

Officials from the National Environmental Protection Agency acknowledge the issue of air pollution in Kabul and other major cities and assure that efforts are underway to address the challenge using various methods.

Mohammad Basir Amin, Director of Pollution Analysis, said: "With the arrival of winter and due to Kabul's geographical location, air pollution has increased significantly."

On the other hand, Kabul Municipality has announced that it has deployed monitoring teams to control air pollution in

the capital.

Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of Kabul Municipality, said: "Since the beginning of Qaws this year, Kabul Municipality has initiated nightly patrols to prevent air pollution. In accordance with the law, Kabul Municipality inspects all high-rise buildings and structures in the city to ensure they are equipped with active filters during operation."

Meanwhile, some families, due to poverty and lack of access to electricity, resort to using non-standard and smoke-producing fuels during winter, which perpetuates the problem of air pollution in the capital.

PVPV enforcers responsible for reforming society, youth

KANDAHAR (Amu TV): Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, in a two-day meeting in Kandahar with Khalid Hanafi, the Taliban minister for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (PVPV), and provincial PVPV chiefs, outlined the role of the morality police, or PVPV enforcers, as "reformers of society" responsible for fostering a "healthy community" through youth guidance and the enforcement of Islamic principles.

"The mohtasibs [PVPV enforcers or morality police] have the responsibility of reforming the people and the younger generation," Akhundzada said, according to a Taliban statement. "Promoting virtue and preventing vice is one of the main goals of an Islamic system, and its implementation ensures the stability and strength of such a system."

In August, the Taliban introduced their morality law, granting PVPV enforcers the authority to detain and punish individuals. While the law has raised concerns about abuses, Akhundzada stressed that the morality police should serve the community with care and fairness.

"Mohtasibs must listen to the problems of the people," he said. "They should work to resolve issues that harm society, such as price gouging and hoarding, ensure the rights of the oppressed, and strive to improve the intellectual and moral well-being of the youth. Only through such efforts can a healthy environment be created in society."

Akhundzada also emphasized, "The enforcement of virtue must be accompanied by gentleness and appropriate behavior."

Speaking at the same gathering, Khalid Hanafi highlighted the personal attributes required of PVPV enforcers. "A mohtasib must embody knowledge, sincerity, piety, justice, and composure," he said. "The ministry plays a vital role in strengthening the connection between the people and the government, and our efforts to protect the rights of the people will continue."

Over the past month, PVPV enforcers have detained more than 40 individuals across the country, according to ministry statements. Many of these arrests have targeted women and girls for alleged violations of the Taliban's dress code or engaging in relationships outside marriage.

Under the Taliban's new law, morality police have sweeping authority to penalize women for actions deemed noncompliant, including failing to cover their faces or voices. One of the most contentious sections of the law prohibits women's voices, including public singing or recitations, branding them as inappropriate (awrah).

Article 13 of the regulations mandates that women cover their entire bodies, including their faces, to avoid what the Taliban describes as "temptation." It states: "A woman's voice, whether in the form of songs, recitations, or public speech, is inappropriate. If a woman leaves her home for any essential need, she is obligated to conceal her voice, face, and body."

The regulation also allows mohtasibs to detain women who fail to comply.

These restrictions have sparked widespread criticism within Afghanistan and internationally. Women's rights advocates and global organizations have condemned the laws as oppressive and discriminatory. However, Taliban officials continue to defend the regulations, asserting they are essential for building an Islamic society.

Despite calls for reform, Akhundzada reiterated the Taliban's commitment to enforcing these policies. "The system's stability depends on the proper implementation of these principles," he said, reaffirming the central role of the PVPV enforcers in maintaining what the Taliban views as a virtuous society.

First snowfall blankets Kabul: Heavy snowfall closes Kabul-Bamiyan Highway

KABUL (Amu TV): Kabul woke up to its first snowfall of the season on Thursday, with a blanket of white covering the city and its surrounding hills.

Kabul residents took to social media to share photos and videos of the snow-draped streets, expressing a mix of joy and nostalgia for the city's winter traditions.

For many, the snowfall evoked memories of old Kabul, when winter was celebrated with community gatherings and a rich cultural heritage. "The snow today reminds us of the Kabul of the past," one resident remarked.

However, not everyone viewed the snowfall with the same enthusiasm. Many Kabul residents face severe economic hardships and unemployment, challenges that become even more pressing during the cold months. Rising fuel costs and worsening air pollution add to the burdens of daily life, leaving many to view winter as a season of struggle rather than celebration.

Adding to the cultural sentiment, former President Hamid Karzai shared a photo of the snowy capital on his social media platform, X, captioning it with a well-known Afghan saying: "Kabul may be without gold, but it should never be without snow."

Meanwhile, the Kabul-Bamiyan highway has been closed to traffic due to



heavy snowfall, according to a statement by the Taliban's security command in Maidan Wardak Province.

The statement said the highway was blocked in the Kotal-e-Oni area of Jalezi District, a key route connecting central Afghanistan to the capital. It added that efforts are underway to clear the road and restore access.

The closure comes as several provinces, including Kabul, have experienced heavy rain and snow since Tuesday.

While some residents have welcomed the snowfall as a respite for water supplies, rural communities and those living in remote areas have raised concerns about travel disruptions and the challenges posed by impassable roads.

UN calls for lifting ban on women working in NGOs



KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) has called for the repeal of the ban on women working in non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan.

Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the High Commissioner, stated that the Islamic Emirate must reconsider its decrees regarding women for the future of Afghanistan. She emphasized that

banning women's activities in these organizations would directly impact people's access to humanitarian aid.

Ravina Shamdasani said: "We urge the de facto authorities in Afghanistan to reverse this deeply discriminatory decree. And all other measures which seek to eradicate women and girls' access to education, work and public services."

But what will be the consequences of this decision for women?

"Working women play a very significant role in improving the economic situation of families, and restricting them could impose further financial pressures on households," said Bahara Atayi, a women's rights activist and university professor.

Siyar Quraishi, an expert on economic issues, spoke about the negative impacts of this decree:

"This could create more challenges in delivering aid to various provinces, districts, and villages."

The Islamic Emirate has recently not commented on this matter. However, on December 29, the Ministry of Economy once again issued an order to stop women from working in NGOs. At the same time, the spokesperson for this ministry announced that 853 NGOs, of which 175 are foreign and 678 domestic, are registered with the Ministry of Economy.

Land distribution for industrialists announced

KABUL (TOLONews): Nooruddin Azizi, Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, said in an exclusive program with TOLONews that the process of land distribution for Afghan industrialists will begin within the next three months.

According to the Acting Minister, 150,000 acres of land have been allocated nationwide, and 1,200 companies have requested land in the country's industrial parks. Azizi added that the Islamic Emirate has curbed capital flight and money smuggling from Afghanistan and has taken significant steps to attract investment.

The Acting Minister also regarded the approval of the Industrial Parks Law during 2024 as a transformative step toward positive development in Afghanistan's industrial sector.

Azizi stated: "We have about 1,200 companies

requesting land; we have reviewed 108 of them, which account for approximately \$130 million in investments. Gradually, all companies will be assessed."

Referring to the increase in Afghanistan's trade with Central Asian countries and the introduction of Afghan products in various regional exhibitions, Azizi emphasized that an industrial revolution will occur when industrialists support farmers and the public uses Afghan-made products.

The Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce stated: "Our farmers must be supported by our industrialists, and our industrialists must be supported by our nation. Our people should prioritize high-quality Afghan products above all else." In this program, which was attended by representatives of the private sector, industrialists, and

economic experts, participants identified inviting investors to the country, establishing insurance systems, regulating banking operations, ensuring electricity supply, and reducing taxes for investors as key ways to advance Afghanistan's economic growth.

Sayed Masood, an economic affairs expert, said during the program: "Until a constitution is established, all existing laws remain in limbo because the foundational rule of governance is missing. I believe the constitution must be created first."

According to statistics from the Chamber of Industries and Mines, Afghanistan's self-sufficiency capacity increased from 69 sectors to 87 in 2024, with approximately 400 small and medium-sized factories starting operations in the country during the same year.

Declining water levels affect 50% of fish farms



KANDAHAR (Ariana News): Fish farmers in Kandahar say that the water level in the province has decreased significantly and the problem has affected 50 percent of fish farms in the southern Afghan province.

Mohammad Ibrahim, head of the Kandahar Fish Farmers' Union, says: "The number of farms has decreased by 50 to 60 percent. In the past, there were

up to 1,800 farms, but now there are about 250 active farms left. There are also inactive farms, but their number is small." Fish farmers call for building dams to divert water. They say that surface water should be used for raising fish, not groundwater.

Toryalai Agha, a farmer in Kandahar, says: "Drought has made fish farms very dry. The water level has

decreased a lot and this problem has affected the farmers."

Meanwhile, officials of Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Kandahar province say fish farmers have been provided with necessary assistance.

Toryalai Agha, Director of the Livestock Promotion Department of the Department of Agriculture and Livestock of Kandahar province, says: "Some NGOs have helped them and have provided them with equipment and fish farming training programs."

Based on information from officials of the Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Kandahar province, about 152 large and 700 small fish farming farms are operating in the province, producing 700 kilograms of fish daily.

Taliban flog over 580, including 42 women, in 2024

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban publicly flogged more than 580 people, including 42 women, in 23 provinces of the country in 2024, according to statistics released by the Taliban-controlled Supreme Court.

In the final two months of the year alone, 93 individuals, including 12 women, were flogged in 10 provinces. The charges against those punished included "adultery, running away from home, sodomy, theft, and acts deemed contrary to Sharia law," according to Taliban officials.

The public punishments,

which have drawn sharp criticism from human rights advocates, underscore the group's rigid interpretation of Islamic law and its escalating use of corporal punishment since returning to power in 2021.

In November 2024, the Taliban carried out a public execution in the eastern province of Paktia. Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban's interior minister and a prominent figure within the Taliban, was reportedly in attendance. The execution marked the first of its kind since the Taliban's resurgence, further solidifying

ing their embrace of harsh public penalties.

Provinces where floggings have been most frequently recorded include Faryab, Paktia, Khost, Helmand, Jawzjan, Uruzgan, Farah, Ghazni, Kabul, Parwan, Kandahar, Paktika, and Ghor. Sports fields and other public venues have been routinely converted into sites for these punishments, sparking outrage among residents and international observers.

Human rights activists and local residents have condemned the Taliban's actions, describing them as

oppressive and a stark violation of basic freedoms.

"We are exhausted by the Taliban's cruelty," a Kabul resident said. "They flog men and women in public, turning sports fields into arenas for punishment. We urge the world not to remain silent about their oppression."

Another resident criticized the group's tightening grip on daily life. "The Taliban's brutality increases every day. They flog people under various pretexts, and their oppressive policies are mounting," the resident said.

IEA leader's decree to be implemented promptly: Retirees

KABUL (TOLONews): A number of retirees have once again expressed grievances over their hardships, especially during the cold season, and have called on the Islamic Emirate to expedite the process of paying their pensions.

Ghulam Zubair, who once served as a teacher at Kabul's Esteghal High School, told TOLONews that all members of his family lost their lives in the Kabul airport explosion.

Ghulam Zubair told TOLONews: "I swear to the Quran and God that we spent days hungry, and I had to ask others to buy bread for me, which they did."

Retirees are demanding clarity regarding their situation after several weeks have passed since the leader of the Islamic Emirate issued a decree to establish a special court for processing the payment of pensions.

Wahdat, one of the retirees, said: "When a decree is issued, the Directorate of Retirement should contact the Minister of Finance, summon them, and request where the com-



mission will be established."

Habibullah, another retiree, stated: "If a court is to be established, it should be done quickly. When the leader of a country issues a decree, it should be implemented within a day or two. It has been ten or fifteen days, and the decree has not been implemented."

Meanwhile, Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for

the Islamic Emirate, stated that efforts to pay pensions are underway. According to Mujahid, time is needed to complete the work of the courts and the Ministry of Finance.

The spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate said: "The technical matters related to the court, the Ministry of Finance, or other institutions are under review. God willing, facilities will be

provided in this regard, and pensions will be paid to the retirees."

This comes as on the first day of Jadi (December 21), the leader of the Islamic Emirate ordered the Supreme Court to convene a special court to find a solution for pension payments based on Sharia and the law. However, no news has yet emerged about the court's convening.

Families in Khost reconcile after 18-year dispute

KHOST (BNA): A long-standing feud between two families in the Ismail Khel and Mandozai districts of Khost province has been resolved after 18 years.

The conflict between the families of Haji Qamar Shah and Bismillah Shah was settled through mediation by local scholars, tribal elders, security officials, and provincial authorities.

Khost Police Chief Hafiz Abdul Rashid Omari congratulated the families on ending the prolonged dispute. He emphasized the responsibility of influential figures and elders in the region to work alongside the government to foster peace and brotherhood among



people. Both families expressed gratitude to the media-

tors for their tireless efforts and fair resolution of the

conflict, bringing an end to their long-standing discord.



FAISALABAD: President of PML-N Nawaz Sharif arriving to condole with Hassan Khan son of late former party leader Israr Ahmed Khan, at his residence.

Efforts underway to make nuclear Pakistan an economic power: Dar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday said that the government was making all-out efforts to accomplish Pakistan's journey from nuclear to economic power and regain its lost stature in the world.

The deputy prime minister, addressing a news conference, gave a roundup of the government's efforts to bring economic stability and enhance Pakistan's diplomatic footprint through bilateral and multilateral engagements with the latest one being the beginning of country's two-year term as non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for years 2025-26.

Highlighting the high-level exchanges and Pakistan's participation in and hosting of international events, he said the incumbent government had strived to enhance Pakistan's diplomatic footprint during its first 10 months, which led to the burying of the impression of an "isolated Pakistan."

The deputy prime minister said that the PML-N-led coalition government inherited huge challenges of around 25 percent policy rate, slow GDP growth and skyrocketing inflation. However, the government's prudent economic policies downed the policy rate to 13 percent, inflation below 5 percent, and remittance, foreign exchange reserves and exports on the rise.

Ishaq Dar told the media that following Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visits and effective engagements with the leadership of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Azerbaijan, there were indications of around \$29 billion investment in coming to Pakistan.

He highlighted Pakistan's participation in the Nuclear Energy Summit, World Economic Forum in Saudi Arabia, OIC summit in Gambia, the visit of Saudi foreign minister, Iran's president late Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister, and that during all interactions Pakistan effectively raised the issue of Kashmir and ongoing Israel's genocide of Palestinian population. Pakistan's consistent efforts at the OIC summit in Gambia led to the appointment of OIC envoy on Islamophobia.

He said Pakistan was among the very few countries that strongly advocated the implementation of UN resolutions on Palestine and ICJ ruling on the issue, besides condemning Israel's barbarism against innocent people. He said that besides hosting Palestinian medical students, Pakistan also dispatched relief aid to Gaza, Syria and Lebanon.

The deputy prime minister's presser also encompassed Pakistan's participation in D-8 summit and appointment of Ambassador Sohail Ahmed as its secretary general, PM Shehbaz's visit to China and Kazakhstan, participation in UN General Assembly session, where he highlighted Kashmir and Gaza issues besides interacting with dozens of world leaders.

Regarding his multiple interactions with UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy, he said that a UK monitoring team was about to visit Pakistan in January which may follow the resumption of PIA flights to the UK, as the EU had already lifted the ban on the national flag carrier. He said Pakistan's hosting of SCO summit was "well-received and well-praised" and informed the media that the World Muslim League would soon hold an event on the girls education at Jinnah Convention Center to

be attended by 50 delegates from OIC states including 30 ministers.

The deputy prime minister also mentioned his upcoming visit to Malaysia and Bangladesh in February. He said as Pakistan had started its two-year term as a non-permanent UNSC member, the country would make efforts to enhance diplomatic outreach and work for dispute resolution and upholding the UN charter.

Responding to a question, Ishaq Dar told the media that Pakistan had eliminated terrorism in 2018 but it resurfaced due to the previous government's policy of opening the Afghan border and releasing the hardcore criminals. We want good trade ties with Afghanistan as it will pave the way to connectivity with other neighboring states like Uzbekistan. Regarding trade ties with India, he said "It takes two to tango" calling upon India to create an environment to help improve the relations.

Later, responding to a question about a Washington Post story on Indian involvement in killing foreign nationals, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan had already expressed concerns about the Indian involvement in extraterritorial killings, not only in Pakistan but also in other countries.

She said Pakistan desired good ties with Afghanistan but at the same time, Pakistan's people and the security forces were capable enough to thwart any internal and external threat. To another query, she clarified that Pakistan's ports including Gwadar Port were purely meant for trade and development and the country had no design to offer any military bases to any foreign government.

Syria FM in Saudi Arabia on maiden trip

RIYADH: Syria's top diplomat says he hopes to open a "new, bright page" with Saudi Arabia upon arriving in the kingdom, the first foreign visit for Syria's new rulers. The visit, which began, came less than a month after former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was ousted by rebel forces on December 8.

"I have just arrived in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, accompanied by the Minister of Defence Murhaf Abu Qasra and the Head of the General Intelligence Service Anas Khattab," Asaad al-Shaibani posted on X. "Through this first visit in the history of Free Syria, we aspire to open a new, bright page in Syrian-Saudi relations that befits the long shared history between the two countries," he added.

Al-Shaibani was appointed foreign minister on December 21 by Syria's interim government, becoming the country's first top diplomat since al-Assad's overthrow. Syrian state media said the delegation was visiting the kingdom "at the invitation of the Saudi foreign minister".

A statement shared by Syria's Foreign Ministry said Saudi Arabia's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Waleed bin Abdulkarim El Khereiji received the delegation at the international airport in Riyadh. The Syrian delegation includes Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra and General Intelligence Chief Anas Khattab, underscoring the visit's diplomatic and strategic significance.

In an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera aired on Tuesday, al-Shaibani called for the lifting of all Western sanctions on Syria as he detailed the new administration's plans for the country's future. Adam Clements, a former US diplomat and Pentagon official, said Saudi Arabia is working to establish strong ties with Syria as Iran loses its influence over the country.

"I think this is very significant," he told Al Jazeera on Thursday. He said that from a "diplomatic standpoint", Riyadh wants to forge stronger ties with the new Syrian administration. "Saudi Arabia would have a big role as well ... at the

outset of construction and reconstruction. Syria is very dependent on Iran for oil and fuel, and so I think Gulf States could also support that as well," he said.

In an interview with Saudi-owned Al Arabiya television on Sunday, Syria's de facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, also referred to as Abu Mohammed al-Julani said Riyadh "will certainly have a large role in Syria's future", pointing to "a big investment opportunity for all neighbouring countries". Al-Sharaa heads the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group that led the rebel offensive that ousted al-Assad.

Syria's economy and infrastructure have been devastated by more than 13 years of civil war that began with a crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 2011. Saudi Arabia severed ties with al-Assad's government in 2012 and backed Syrian rebels seeking to overthrow him early in the country's civil war. In 2023, the Arab League readmitted Syria after more than a decade of suspension. — Agencies

Pak Navy ships visited Port Bandar Abbas, Iran

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: During an overseas deployment to the Arabian Gulf, Pakistan Navy ships Rasadgar and Azmat, along with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency ship Dasht, visited Port Bandar Abbas, Iran.

The flotilla was led by Commander 14th Destroyer Squadron, Commodore Muhammad Umair, said a news release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy) here Thursday.

Upon arrival at the port, Pakistan Navy ships were warmly received by representatives of Pakistan Embassy and officials from the host Navy. The Mission Commander, along with the Commanding Officers, held meetings with naval leadership of Iran. During these interactions, matters of mutual interest, Navy-to-Navy engagements, and cooperation in maritime security were discussed.

The Mission Commander also conveyed well-wishes from Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, for the people of Iran. Following the port call, both PN and PMSA ships conducted a Passage Exercise with an Iranian Navy ship. The exercise at sea aimed to enhance interoperability between the two navies and promote shared learning through coordinated activities. The visit of the PN flotilla to Iran is expected to further strengthen existing diplomatic ties and cordial relations between the two nations.

2025 to see four eclipses

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said that there will be four Eclipses including two Lunar (Moon) and two Solar (Sun) during the year 2025. But Pakistan will see only one eclipse during the year.

The first total Lunar Eclipse which is also called "Blood Moon" will occur on March 14, 2025, at 08:57 am Pakistan Standard Time (PST). This will be the first total lunar eclipse since November 2022 but it will not be visible in Pakistan. This eclipse will be visible in Europe, Australia, Africa, North America, South America, Pacific, Atlantic, Arctic and Antarctica.

The first partial Solar Eclipse is scheduled on March 29, 2025 which will be visible from Europe, North in Asia, North/West Africa, much of North America, North in South America, Atlantic and Arctic. This eclipse will also not be visible in Pakistan. The second total Lunar Eclipse will provide Asia with an opportunity to witness a "Blood Moon". It will start at 08:28 pm on September 7 and will complete at 01:55 am on Sep 8. This is the only eclipse which will be visible in Pakistan.

The last eclipse of the year is a partial Solar Eclipse on September 21. It will be visible from South in Australia, Pacific, Atlantic, Antarctica. When the earth is between the sun and the moon, it causes Lunar Eclipses by casting a shadow on the moon's surface. They are an interesting sight to watch because they can only occur during a full moon.

The partial eclipse ends when the moon moves out of the umbra, passing back into the penumbra. According to NASA, it is never safe to look directly at the sun during an annular eclipse without specialized eye protection as you could permanently damage your eyes.

Bangladesh court again rejects bail for Hindu leader

DHAKA: A court in Bangladesh has again denied bail to an outspoken Hindu leader advocating for the protection of minority groups in the country. Krishna Das Prabhu did not appear at the hearing at the court in the southeastern city of Chattogram, where Metropolitan Sessions Judge Saiful Islam rejected his bail plea, according to Public Prosecutor Mofizul Haque Bhuiyan.

Security was tight at the hearing, with police and soldiers guarding the court. Violence had erupted following a previous bail hearing in November, with Prabhu's followers accused of killing a Muslim public prosecutor. Prabhu, 39, was arrested for allegedly disrespecting the Bangladeshi flag during a rally in Chattogram and faces sedition charges.

Hindu groups allege there have been hundreds of attacks on Hindus since August when the nearly 16-year government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was overthrown. "He faces serious charges like sedition and others involving the security and sovereignty of our country," Bhuiyan

told The Associated Press news agency by telephone.

"We argued in the court that if he gets bail it could create anarchy as we saw in the past that he triggered violence on the court premises by calling thousands of his supporters to protest. So, we moved against his bail plea as we believed that he could misuse his bail," Prabhu is a spokesman for the Bangladesh Sammilito Sanatan Jagaran Jote group. He is also associated with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), widely known as the Hare Krishna movement.

Apurba Kumar Bhattacharjee, a lawyer representing Prabhu, said they would appeal the decision. Radharam Das, vice president and spokesman of ISKCON in Kolkata, the capital of India's West Bengal state, told India Today network that Prabhu's health was deteriorating. He said the jailed Hindu leader "has become a face of minorities in Bangladesh". "The minorities see him as a ray of hope. He represents their voice," Das said.

Meanwhile, the family

of the lawyer hacked to death in November, Saiful Islam Alif, has filed two separate cases against those they say are linked to his death. That includes 58 Hindu lawyers accused of vandalism and carrying explosives. Bangladesh saw religious tensions after a mainly student-led revolution toppled "autocratic" Hasina. India's Hindu nationalist government backed Hasina, who has been in exile in India since protesters stormed her palace on August 5.

Bangladesh in December requested India send Hasina back to face charges of "massacres, killings, and crimes against humanity". India confirmed it had received the request but declined to comment further. Hindu groups and other minority groups in Bangladesh and abroad have criticised the interim government led by Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus for undermining their security after Hasina's fall. Yunus and his supporters say reports of attacks on Hindus and other minority groups since August have been exaggerated. — Ajazeera

US warplane shot down in Red Sea

WASHINGTON (BBC): An American fighter jet has been shot down over the Red Sea in an apparent "friendly fire" incident, the US military has said. Both crew from the US Navy F/A-18 Hornet ejected safely, with one suffering minor injuries, according to Central Command.

The incident came after the US carried out a series of air strikes against a missile storage site and command facilities in the Yemeni capital Sanaa operated by Iran-backed Houthi militants. US Central Command added it also hit multiple Houthi drones and an anti-aircraft missile over the Red Sea.

In a statement, US Central Command confirmed a "friendly fire" incident over the Red Sea. "The guided missile cruiser USS Gettysburg, which is part of the USS Harry S Truman Carrier Strike Group, mistakenly fired on and hit the F/A-18, which was flying off the USS Harry S Truman," the

statement said. It is not clear whether the downed aircraft had been involved in the Yemen operation.

Earlier Central Command said the strikes against targets in Sanaa aimed to "disrupt and degrade Houthi operations, such as attacks against US Navy warships and merchant vessels in the Southern Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb, and Gulf of Aden". The US military also said it struck "multiple Houthi one-way attack uncrewed aerial vehicles, or drones, and an anti-ship cruise missile over the Red Sea" using "US Air Force and US Navy assets, including F/A-18s".

Since November 2023, Houthi missile attacks have sunk two vessels in the Red Sea and damaged others. They have claimed, often falsely, that they are targeting ships only linked to Israel, the US or the UK. Last December, the US, UK and 12 other nations launched Operation Prosperity Guar-

dian to protect Red Sea shipping lanes against the attacks.

On Saturday, Israel's military said its attempts to shoot down a projectile launched from Yemen were unsuccessful and the missile struck a park in Tel Aviv. Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency medical service, said it treated 16 people who were "mildly injured" by glass shards from shattered windows in nearby buildings.

Another 14 people suffered minor injuries on their way to protected areas were also treated, it said. A Houthi spokesman said the group hit a military target using a hypersonic ballistic missile. Earlier this week, Israel conducted a series of strikes against what it said were Houthi military targets, hitting ports as well as energy infrastructure in the Yemeni capital Sanaa. Houthi-run Al Masirah TV reported that nine people were killed in the port of Salif and the Ras Issa oil terminal.

New Orleans attack prompts intense scrutiny, stepped-up security

NEW ORLEANS (Reuters): The investigation into what motivated a US Army veteran carrying an Islamic State flag on his truck to plow into a crowd of New Year's revelers intensified on Thursday as authorities beefed up security ahead the Sugar Bowl football game to be played less a mile from the scene of Wednesday's mayhem.

The probe was focused on whether the suspect, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, 42, a US citizen from Texas who once served in Afghanistan, had helped in planning the deadly attack on the city, which will also host the NFL Super Bowl next month. At least 15 people were killed in the attack. FBI officials said they were also looking for any links between the deadly attack and a separate incident on Wednesday in which a Tesla Cybertruck packed with gasoline canisters and large firework mortars exploded in flames outside the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas, just weeks before President-elect Donald Trump returns to the White House on Jan. 20.

The injured victims in the New

Orleans attack included two police officers wounded by gunfire from the suspect, taking place a mere three hours into the new year in the historic French Quarter. Among the victims were the mother of a 4-year-old who had just moved into a new apartment after getting a promotion at work, a New York financial employee and accomplished student-athlete who was visiting home for the holidays, and an 18-year-old aspiring nurse from Mississippi. Witnesses described a horrifying scene.

"There were people everywhere," Kimberly Strickland of Mobile, Alabama, said in an interview. "You just heard this squeal and the rev of the engine and this huge loud impact and then the people screaming and debris - just metal - the sound of crunching metal and bodies." Meanwhile authorities vowed to continue to search for any evidence that Jabbar had accomplices. The FBI Wednesday said they did not believe he was solely responsible and that they were looking at "a range of suspects" linked to the attack.

Police found weapons and a potential explosive device in the vehicle, while two potential explosive devices were found in the French Quarter and rendered safe, the FBI added. The FBI along with Louisiana and other US officials will hold a news briefing at 11 a.m. (1600 GMT), according to NBC News. President Biden will also convene his homeland security team in the Situation Room for an update on the investigation at 12:15 p.m. (1715 GMT), the White House said.

One New Year's Day tradition - the classic college football known as the Sugar Bowl - was rescheduled for Thursday afternoon at Caesars Superdome, less than a mile from Bourbon Street and Canal, where the truck attack unfolded. Kickoff for the game between Notre Dame and Georgia was put off for nearly 24 hours while police swept parts of the city looking for possible explosive devices and converged on neighborhoods in search of clues. The city will also host the NFL Super Bowl on Feb. 9, an event that will bring tens of thousands of fans to the area.



QUETTA: Speaker of Balochistan Assembly, Abdul Khaliq Khan Achakzai chairing session.

Yoon, facing unprecedented arrest over martial law

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol told supporters in a letter he will "fight until the end" as he faces an attempt by authorities to arrest him over his short-lived imposition of martial law last month, a lawyer said on Thursday.

It was unclear when and how police could make the arrest and whether the presidential security service, which has blocked access by investigators with a search warrant to Yoon's office and official residence, would try to stop it. On Thursday, police scuffled with Yoon supporters who laid down in the road to try to block access to his residence. Police issued dispersal orders and then forcibly removed some protesters, Reuters journalists said.

Yoon wrote in the letter late on Wednesday to the hundreds of supporters gathered near his official residence: "I am watching on YouTube live all the hard work you are doing."

"I will fight until the end to protect this country together with you," he said in the letter, an image of which was sent to Reuters by Seok Dong-hyeon, a lawyer advising Yoon.

The opposition Democratic Party, which has majority control of parliament and led the impeachment of Yoon on Dec. 14, said the letter proved Yoon was delusional and remains committed to complete his "insurrection". "As if trying to stage insurrection wasn't enough, he is now inciting his supporters to an extreme clash," party spokesman Jo Seoung-lae said in a statement.

Yoon shocked the country with a late-night announcement on Dec. 3 that he was imposing martial law to overcome political deadlock and root out "anti-state forces". Within hours, however, 190 lawmakers had defied the cordons of troops and police and voted against Yoon's

order. About six hours after his initial decree, Yoon rescinded it.

A court approved a warrant for Yoon's arrest, which potentially would make him the first sitting president to be detained as part of investigations over allegations he masterminded insurrection by trying to impose martial law. Insurrection is one of the few criminal charges from which a South Korean president does not have immunity.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO), which is leading a joint team of investigators that include the police and prosecutors, has until Jan. 6 to execute the arrest warrant. Yoon Kab-keun, a lawyer for the impeached president, has said the arrest warrant was illegal and invalid because the CIO did not have the authority under South Korean law to request a warrant.

27 die after two boats capsize off Tunisia

TUNIS (AFP): At least 27 migrants, including women and children, died after two boats capsized off central Tunisia, with 83 people rescued, a civil defence official told AFP on Thursday.

The rescued and dead passengers, who were found off the Kerkennah Islands off central Tunisia, were aiming to reach Europe and were all from sub-Saharan African countries, said head of Civil Defence in the city of Sfax Zied Sdiri. Searches were still underway for other possible missing passengers, according to the Tunisian National Guard, which oversees the coast-guard.

Tunisia is a key departure point for irregular migrants seeking to reach Europe with Italy, whose island of Lampedusa is only 150 kilometres (90 miles) from Tunisia, often their first port of call. Each year, tens of thousands of people attempt the perilous Mediterranean crossing, which has seen a spate of recent shipwrecks, with the dangers exacerbated by bad weather.

On December 18, at least 20 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa died in a shipwreck off the city of Sfax, with five others missing. Earlier on December 12, the coastguard rescued 27 African migrants near Jebeniana, north of Sfax, but 15 were reported dead or missing. Since the beginning of the year, the Tunisian human rights group FTDES has counted "between 600 and 700" migrants killed or missing in shipwrecks off Tunisia. More than 1,300 migrants died or disappeared in 2023.