

CTD arrests two terrorists F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) has apprehended two suspected terrorists near Al-Manzar area in Hyderabad. The suspects were planning to target vehicles of the Rangers in the area. During the operation, two hand grenades and other explosive materials were recovered from the possession of the suspects.



@thefrontierpost

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

Court summons ex-CM F.P. Report

LAHORE: After granting exemption for one day from appearance before Accountability Court in adjudication of alleged corruption case on Saturday former chief minister Parvez Elahi has been summoned for indictment in the matter during the next date of hearing. An accountability court has summoned PTI leader Elahi for indictment in a case related to alleged corruption in development projects.

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 343

Regd. No. 241

RAJAB 05 1446 -- SUNDAY, JANUARY 05 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30



LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on promotion of small and medium enterprises in Pakistan.

Kurram DC, officials injured in firing incident

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kurram, Javed Mehsud, sustained injuries in a firing incident while en route to Bagan to reopen the Kurram Highway, which had been closed for a prolonged period. The incident occurred when unidentified armed individuals opened fire on the official convoy. Security personnel accompanying the DC also sustained injuries.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry expressed deep regret over the attack, terming it "highly unfortunate." The convoy was on the route implementing the peace agreement between Shia and Sunni communities in Kurram, aimed at maintaining peace and fostering mutual understanding.

Chief Secretary emphasized that the government remains committed to upholding the Kohat Peace Agreement and ensuring peace in the region. "Strict legal action will be taken against those attempting to disrupt peace in Kurram," he said.

Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, strongly condemned the attack and called for a detailed report from senior officials. He expressed good wishes for the swift recovery of DC Kurram and other injured personnel, highlighting the incident as a "deliberate and malicious attempt to sabotage the government's peace efforts in Kurram."

He further stated, "This incident reflects the intentions of elements who do not want peace in Kurram. Their efforts will not succeed, as the provincial government is steadfast in its commitment to restoring peace and addressing public grievances." The Chief Minister called on the local community to cooperate with the authorities to identify and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Following the incident,

KP CM seeks report

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, while strongly condemning the firing incident targeting a government vehicle in the Bagan area of Kurram by unidentified assailants, sought a detailed report from senior officials. He directed strict legal action against those involved in the incident.

He expressed his well wishes for the speedy recovery of Deputy Commissioner Kurram, Javedullah Mehsud, and others injured in the incident. In a statement issued here, the Chief Minister described the firing incident as deeply regrettable and condemnable, especially in light of the recent Kurram peace agreement.

He termed the attack a deliberate and malicious but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to undermine the government's peace efforts in the region. He attributed the incident to elements opposed to the restoration of peace in Kurram, reiterating the provincial government's commitment to ensuring stability and addressing the difficulties faced by the people of Kurram. Ali Amin Gandapur emphasized that the peace agreement between the parties involved demonstrates the desire of Kurram's residents for a harmonious environment. However, certain disruptive elements are attempting to sabotage peace efforts. He assured that their attempts would not succeed and called on the local community to identify such elements and assist the government so that they could be dealt with as per the law.

Provincial Minister for Information, Barrister Saif, along with Kohat Commissioner and Kohat RPO, visited the area to assess the situation. DC Kurram and injured personnel were airlifted to CMH Peshawar for medical treatment. Senior officials, including the Chief Secretary and IG Police, visited the hospital to inquire about the DC's health and met with his family.

The provincial government assured the public that efforts to restore peace and stability in Kurram will continue in collaboration with local elders. The Chief Minister added, "This unfortunate incident will not deter the government and community elders from their mission of maintaining peace in the region."

The attack underscores the challenges faced by the government in ensuring peace and harmony in a region with a history of sectarian tensions. However, the reaffirmation of the community's commitment to the peace agreement

reflects hope for a more stable future in Kurram.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have strongly condemned the recent firing on a convoy of government vehicles in Lower Kurram, which resulted in the injury of Deputy Commissioner Javedullah Mehsud and several other officials.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed deep concern over the incident and called it an intentional effort to sabotage the peace agreement. "This act of violence is a direct attempt to damage the peace agreement and disrupt the ongoing peace efforts in Kurram," the Prime Minister stated. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring peace and security in the region, vowing that the perpetrators of such violence would not succeed.

"We will not allow those who disrupt peace and order and enemies of humanity to succeed in their nefarious designs," Sharif emphasized.

40 PTI workers granted bail in Nov 26 protest cases

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Islamabad on Saturday granted bail to 40 more accused nominated in cases related to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protest on November 26.

ATC Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain approved the bail pleas of 40 suspects against surety bonds of Rs 5000 each. The judge ruled that the suspects should be released, if not arrested in other cases. Earlier on Friday, the ATC decided the bail applications for 400 accused nominated in similar cases. Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain approved the bail for 250 accused across 13 cases, while rejecting the applications of 150 others.

In the case registered at the Bani Gala Police Station, 18 accused were granted bail. For Kohsar police station Case No. 1033, bail applications were denied, but in Case No. 1032, bail was approved for 43 accused, with one application rejected. At the Shehzad Town Police Station, nine accused were granted bail. In the Noon Police Station case, bail was approved for 17 accused, while one application was rejected. In the Abpara Police Station Case No. 1022, 70 bail applications were accepted, and 25 were rejected.

The court rejected bail for 30 accused in a case registered at the I-9 Police Station. In the Margalla Police Station case, 13 accused were granted bail, while two applications were rejected. In two cases at the Secretariat Police Station, 120 bail applications were denied, and 10 were approved. Additionally, 25 accused in the Sihala Police Station case and 30 in the Shams Colony Police Station case were granted bail. These cases were filed across 10 police stations.

PTI's delay in written demands threatens negotiation process

Irfan Siddiqui says Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf raised several demands, including release of party chief

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan Siddiqui, PML-N leader and spokesperson for the government negotiation committee, warned on Saturday that ongoing talks with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) could face significant challenges due to PTI's failure to submit its demands in writing as initially agreed.

He highlighted that there has been minimal progress over the past 12 days. Siddiqui explained that the PTI negotiating team had facilitated a meeting with their party chairman to build trust, but uncertainty remains over whether the 'Charter of Demands' will be provided in written form, despite prior commitments from both sides.

During the first meeting on December 23, PTI had promised to submit its demands in writing, a promise reiterated in a joint state-

ment. However, these demands were not submitted by January 2, Siddiqui stated. The government negotiation team was informed that PTI required another opportunity to consult with their chairman to finalize the written demands. Although the government agreed, the written 'Charter of Demands' was still not presented during the third meeting, potentially complicating the negotiation process.

On the issue of political prisoners, Senator Siddiqui emphasized that being a political prisoner is defined by the nature of the crime, not the identity of the individual. He explained, "If I, as a member of the Senate, commit murder and end up in jail for it, I would never be considered a political prisoner."

Siddiqui also pointed out that even the president does not have immunity in such matters. He further mentioned that PTI has raised several demands,

including the release of their party chief and other prisoners, the formation of judicial commissions, and the tracing of 45 missing persons. However, when asked for the names, addresses, and identities of these missing persons, PTI responded that no such list exists.

Questioning how the government could trace individuals without any information, Siddiqui also stated that the government negotiation team has not made any demands of PTI, nor have they asked the party to withdraw its call for civil disobedience.

In response to another query, Siddiqui clarified that there has been no offer from the government or any other institution to transfer the PTI chief from Adiala Jail to Bani Gala or elsewhere. He also confirmed that there are no parallel or behind-the-scenes negotiations, adding that PTI will set the date for the third negotiation meeting.

Govt taking measures to facilitate small businesses: PM

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that small and medium scale businesses are backbone of the country's economy. He said this while presiding over a meeting for promoting the small and medium scale businesses and related to the Small Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) here on Saturday.

He said the incumbent government was taking all possible measures to provide facilities to small and big scale businesses. Shehbaz Sharif said that all-out efforts were required to make industries of Pakistan a part of global supply chain. He said the center and all provinces

should work together for development of small and medium enterprises.

The meeting gave briefing about the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority's performance. The meeting told that the SMEDA board had been formed as per the direction of the prime minister and meeting of its board of directors were being held regularly. A process had been started to get services of international experts for development of the SMEs sector.

The chief secretaries of Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir had been included in the SMEs sector steering committee. The State Bank of Pakistan had issued directions to banks to make forms easy and

simple for giving loans to SMEs. The meeting told that the Ministry of Industries and Production had improved liaison with provincial governments for development of SMEs. Sindh and Balochistan governments had prepared a comprehensive strategy for SMEs while governments of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir were making strategies in this regard. The meeting further told that as per the direction of the prime minister the data of SMEs in the country was being collected. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain and other officers.

Four killed, 32 injured as blast rocks Turbat

F.P. Report

TURBAT: At least four people were killed while 32 others sustained injuries after a blast rocked Balochistan's city of Turbat on Saturday, police said.

According to the law enforcers, five injured in the blast are in critical condition. However, the nature of the blast has not been ascertained yet. A CCTV footage showed that several vehicles moving on the road and suddenly a huge flame covered a moving passenger bus following the explosion.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Serious Crime Wing Zohaib Mohsin was also injured in the blast, police said. Six members of his family also sustained injuries in the explosion. According to police, Mohsin and his family were passing through the area when the blast occurred. Last month, two people were killed and four others were injured in a blast in Dasht area in Turbat. The police had said the improvised explosive device (IED) blast also damaged a vehicle.

According to the Center for Research and Security Studies' Annual Security Report, Balochistan saw 782 deaths out of Pakistan's total of 2,546 fatalities in the year 2024. It is pertinent to know that the increase in terrorist attacks coincides with the return of the Taliban government in neighbouring Afghanistan.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with ANP leader, Senator Aimal Wali Khan.



آغا خان یونیورسٹی
THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

2025 Admissions Open

Apply now for:

Medical College

- Doctor of Philosophy in Health Sciences (PhD)
- Master of Health Policy & Management (MHPM)
- Master of Philosophy in Biological & Biomedical Sciences (MPhil)
- Master of Science in Epidemiology & Biostatistics (MSc)
- Master of Health Professions Education (MHPE)
- Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH)
- Master of Bioethics (MBE)
- Master of Science in Healthcare Management (MSHM)

Institute for Educational Development

- Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD)
- Master of Philosophy in Education (MPhil)
- Bachelor of Education (BEd)

School of Nursing and Midwifery

- Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing (PhD)

Apply by March 6, 2025

www.aku.edu/AdmissionsPK



admissions.query@aku.edu
+92 21 3486 6462



Scholarships and financial assistance available.

#AKUAdmissions

Facebook Instagram Twitter LinkedIn /AKUGlobal



LAHORE: Federal Minister & President IPP Abdul Aleem Khan visits dialysis center of AAKF in Services Hospital Lahore. —APP Photo

KP govt has lost its writ in Kurram, claims Azma

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Information Minister, Azma Zahid Bukhari has strongly criticized the governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, claiming that the provincial government has lost its writ in Kurram. According to reports, she condemned the recent attack on the Deputy Commissioner in Kurram district, despite a peace agreement being in place.

The minister remarked that certain elements are unwilling to see peace restored in Kurram. She also alleged that the provincial government is more focused on political prisoners in Adiala Jail than addressing the pressing issues of the province.

Highlighting the lack of action, she noted that Ali Amin Gandapur has not visited Kurram even once in the last two months. She added that while Maryam Nawaz, based in Punjab, is concerned about the plight of the people in Parachinar, the KP government appears indifferent. She emphasised that key issues like law and order, terrorism, and unemployment remain unresolved in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, according to her, has done little to address the grievances of the province's citizens.

PML-N believes in economic agenda: Ahsan

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has said that the PML-N government believes in economic agenda and did not want any sort of political disruption in the country.

He said this while addressing a degree show, Master of Visual Art, at National College of Arts here. He said that the government was taking all possible measures within the limit of Constitution and law to keep the things moving in the right direction.

Ahsan Iqbal said that the government was making sincere efforts, adding that reasonable dialogue from both sides always yields positive results.

He said that the country was facing new war of terrorism and added that in the apex committee's meeting the political, military leadership and chief ministers of all provinces expressed resolve that there would be zero tolerance against terrorism and terrorists.

He said that with the grace of Allah Almighty, terrorism would be eliminated from the country the same way it was rooted out in the past. To a question he said that the government of Pakistan had always conveyed it to the government

of Afghanistan through dialogue that it should stop Afghan land to be used for terrorism in Pakistan.

He said that the Pakistani people had made numerous sacrifices for the people of Afghanistan and were facing consequences till today. He hoped that Afghanistan would take notice and not allow any group to use Afghan land for carrying out terrorism in Pakistan.

To another question, he said that the government was focusing on expanding skill training programmes, adding that a hefty amount of Rs 20 billion had been given to the ministry of education and national vocational and technical training commission, so that development programmes could be expanded besides ensuring international certification.

He said without international certification it was difficult to place human resources in other countries. He said that the 'Uraan Pakistan' programme would yield positive results. Ahsan Iqbal said, "It is a high time to move with unity and diversity for achieving desired results."

He said that young generation was the future of the country and now entire focus should be on

celebrating the country's 100 years in a most befitting manner. He further said that a successful country's had always established peace, ensured political stability, continuity of policies and adopted reforms.

In 77 years, Pakistan tried multiple times to take off but unfortunately did not achieve desired results, he added.

He said that the country's economic indicators were moving in the right direction and collective efforts were necessary to make it a \$3 trillion economy by 2047. It is very unfortunate that wrong impression of Pakistanis is being highlighted, he said and added that the world considers Pakistanis as hard working and intelligent people.

He further said that there was a need to respect other opinions and not to misguide people. He said, "Democracy is not about making people fight with each other."

It is high time to channelize positive energies of youngsters and now entire focus should be on economic 'long march.' He appreciated the National College of Arts for providing talented human resource in the country's creative industry.

CM Murad launches Rescue 1122's new highway operations

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah today inaugurated Rescue 1122's new Highway Operations, a significant expansion of the province's emergency response capabilities.

The launch, part of the World Bank-supported Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project (SFERP), establishes 15 strategically located satellite stations along major highways and motorways, providing rapid emergency assistance to travellers and nearby communities.

The new Highway Rescue Stations, exemplified by the newly opened facility in Gulshan-e-Maymar, are equipped with advanced ambulances, fire trucks, disaster management machinery, and recovery vehicles. This represents a substantial upgrade to Sindh's emergency infrastructure, addressing a previously significant gap in government-provided services.

"Rescue 1122, launched in 2022, is transforming emergency response in Sindh," the CM said and added that this expansion reflected his government's commitment to building a safer and more resilient province. "The highway operations will not only serve travellers but also provide crucial backup support to nearby districts," he said.

The CM announced plans to further expand Rescue 1122's reach to the district and tehsil levels, ensuring province-wide accessibility to emergency services. "The service, modelled on international best practices and staffed by professionals trained at recognised rescue academies, offers

free services via a single, unified helpline: 1122. Services include medical emergencies, firefighting, water rescue, urban search and rescue, and lifesaving training programs," he said.

Shah expressed gratitude to Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and the World Bank for their support, praising the dedication of Rescue 1122 personnel. He concluded by stating that this initiative represents a major step towards a safer Sindh, highlighting the government's ongoing commitment to public safety and infrastructure development. The event concluded with a media briefing further emphasising these commitments.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Rehabilitation Minister Makhdoom Mahboob Zaman said that Since its inception, Rescue 1122 has responded to over 700,000 medical emergencies, 1,000 fire incidents, 60 building collapses, and 180 drowning rescues. He emphasised the life-saving impact of the service and the enhanced efficiency the highway operations will bring.

Minister for Planning and Development Nasir Shah announced that an initiative would also focus on modernizing 10 government hospital emergency wards, rehabilitating 836 kilometers of roads, and restoring 375 water supply schemes in flood-affected areas. Mayor of Karachi Murtaza Wahab commented that despite the provincial government launching mega projects, particularly in Karachi, the critics of the government were in denial. He urged the Chief Minister to

announce a drainage system for the area. In response, the Chief Minister stated that he had instructions from the Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to provide the people of the province with a water supply and drainage system. "I am ready to provide you with a drainage scheme for the area, but it must be comprehensive to meet the needs of the community," he emphasised.

Media Talk: During a media briefing, when asked about the Executive Director of Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC), the Chief Minister remarked that the matter had been in court for the past two months, expressing regret that patients were suffering as a result. In response to another question, Shah explained that barren land would be utilised for the Green Initiative, which aims to launch corporate farming. "We are also rolling out a scheme to bring uncultivated or barren land under cultivation," he added.

Addressing concerns about the illegal occupation of government land in Sohrab Goth, Murad Shah stated that he would order an inquiry. "We have already instructed government agencies to prevent any illegal occupation of government land," he asserted. Regarding the Intermediate Board in Karachi, the Chief Minister promised to prioritise resolving its issues. "We are working to improve the performance of educational boards by introducing modern examination models and appointing highly qualified professionals," he concluded.

Mahfil, Naz theater sealed

LAHORE (APP): In response to violations of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), the district administration of Lahore has sealed two theaters in Lahore: Mahfil Theater and Naz Theater.

Acting on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Syed Musa Raza, the operation was carried out by Assistant Commissioner HR & Coordination Adnan Bashir Waraich who took swift action against the establishments for failing to comply with the regulations.

Both Mahfil Theater and Naz Theater had previously been issued multiple notices and warnings for their failure to adhere to the required SOPs.

Minister calls for enhanced university programs

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Minister for Education and Mines & Mineral Development, Syed Sardar Ali Shah, highlighted the critical role of universities in producing high-quality educators, emphasizing that public sector institutions must prioritize their education faculties to address the country's need for skilled teachers.

Speaking as the Guest of Honor at the second Convocation Ceremony of the Government Elementary College of Education (GECE) Hussainabad, organized by Durbeen, he stressed that an excellent teacher is

the foundation of a prosperous future, according to a statement issued from the Sindh information department today.

The event celebrated the achievements of 28 graduates who completed GECE Hussainabad's rigorous four-year education program. Attendees included prominent figures such as Vice Chancellor of the University of Karachi Khalid Iraqi, Zindagi Trust President Shehzad Roy, Khalid Mahmood, Nazim Haji, Muhammad Ali Tabba, alongside faculty, students, and their families.

In his address, Shah acknowledged the collab-

oration between GECE Hussainabad and Durbeen as a model of excellence, united by the mission of producing outstanding educators. "Our collective goal is to provide society with teachers who can shape a brighter tomorrow," he said, announcing the Sindh government's launch of its first-ever Teacher Licensing Policy and several innovative teacher training programs. He also called for public universities to reevaluate their education programs, underscoring the need to deliver graduates equipped to meet modern educational demands.

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto: Architect of Modern Pakistan

Sharjeel Inam Memon

There are such persons and leaders who cross the boundaries of time and circumstance to take their places among icons of change and vision. Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was one such leader. His name alone echoes across the annals of Pakistani political history. Bhutto was born into the riches of Sindh in 1928. In his early years, he experienced all luxuries possible in that society, but it was through education and exposure to the world that he eventually found a pathway for his future to become one of Pakistan's most important political figures. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was the point of turning for the nation's history, not because of his brains or his birth, but because of his steadfast perseverance to change the socio-political landscape of Pakistan.

Bhutto came into politics by education at the University of California, Berkeley, followed by his studies at Oxford University. This education exposed Bhutto to new concepts about governance, economics, and social justice. Upon his return to Pakistan, he entered politics very quickly; by 1967, he had founded the Pakistan Peoples Party. His charismatic leadership coupled with his grasp of the intricate complexities of Pakistan helped him strike a chord with the Pakistani masses, the rural and lower-class population being the most excluded by the elites in Pakistani politics.

Pakistan's vision from Bhutto is bold and visionary. He intended to make it a modern society, progressive in nature, with equity for its citizens. This was manifested in his now-famous slogan, "Roti, Kapra, Aur Makan" or

bread, clothing, and shelter. In his tenure, he encouraged the land reforms as well as the nationalization of strategic industries for the people. Being a politician, he also was a statesman who had faith in Pakistan as an emerging leader for the Muslim world as well as further afield. Bhutto played a very pivotal role in forming the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, an organization aimed at unifying the Muslim nations of the world, and he played a key role in realigning Pakistan's foreign policy at a crucial juncture of geopolitical readjustment of the world.

Bhutto's time remains one of the most transforming and debated periods in Pakistan's history. From 1971 to 1977, he was the prime minister who reshaped the country's political and economic structure as a leader. His pro people welfare schemes won over the hearts of the working class and marginalized people and branded him as the messiah of the poor.

Bhutto was undoubtedly a charismatic, dynamic leadership quality that inspired millions. He set out the prospect of self-reliant, progressive Pakistan on the principles and ideology against which the entrenched privileges of feudal landowners, military elite, and industrial magnates had survived, thus necessarily inciting opposition against those who his leadership intended to curb.

While he had to endure the harsh realities which include polarized politics and economic roadblocks, he has left behind a legacy of resilience, modernity and tireless quest for justice. Many consider him to be a person who was ready to stand up against all odds to give new dreams to Pakistan and its people. His was not a very smooth

tenure in the eyes of his critics; however, no one can deny his contribution to creating modern Pakistan.

In 1977, Bhutto's fate was sealed when, after the general elections his party had won, the military, under General Zia-ul-Haq, overthrew him in a coup d'état. Bhutto was tried in a process that many considered political, convicted of conspiracy to commit murder, and sentenced to death. He was hanged on 4 April, 1979 after the tremendous clemency calls that had swept from around the world. This judicial murder over an apparent power play is probably the most tragic and controversial episode of Pakistan's history. His murder was also treated as a calculated move in order to firmly establish stranglehold on the country.

However, though Bhutto martyred with a tragic end, his legacy was not carried to his grave. His dream for a just and democratic Pakistan came alive in the person of his daughter, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. Benazir had seen her father executed brutally but without in time became the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan. Leadership, like her father, was of strength, courage, and the devotion to democracy. Although her political life was marked by attempted assassination and years in exile, the return of Benazir in the 1990s was actually a revival of the political philosophy of her father. With her assassination in 2007, her husband Asif Ali Zardari became the president of the PPP and was elected as President of Pakistan. Leadership came with its problems, but his critics were not so certain if he could lead and do justice to the country's ever-increasing economic and security issues. Yet, over time, this too became a test

of endurance while still being a supporter of the Bhutto legacy.

The Bhutto legacy lives on in Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, one of the most important politicians of Pakistan. As the chairman of the PPP, Bilawal has done much to resuscitate the party and its role in the country's politics. Being himself a very young politician, Bilawal will take Pakistan forward into the future by continuing the ideals of his grandfather and mother and meeting the needs of modern Pakistan.

It has not merely to do with political victory but is rooted within far larger change he worked towards for Pakistan, so much broader that he aspired a progressive, democratic, and fair society; yet many Pakistanis will always take Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto as an icon and strive towards the ends for justice, human rights, and for a powerful underrepresented mass. In each failure and catastrophe, it was this stand for democracy which inspired not only his family but millions of Pakistanis.

Well, as a noted historian Stanley Wolpert aptly remarked, "Few figures in Pakistan's history have matched the Bhutto family's vision and ability to inspire." A bold statement itself, it places into words what the Bhutto family has come to mean and signify across the social and political world of Pakistan. Despite all kinds of trials and tribulations that they have faced in their lives, Bhuttos have continued to remain a symbol of hope, improvement, and the idea that democracy-fragile and frail though it may be is indeed worth fighting for. Based on the ideals of justice, equality, and freedom, the Bhutto legacy will shape Pakistan for generations to come.



Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre

A JCI Enterprise Accredited Organisation

Career Opportunities in SKMCH&RC, Peshawar

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (SKMCH&RC) is a specialist tertiary care cancer centre built and funded by charitable donations with a mission to provide the best possible cancer care to all patients. SKMCH&RC has a team of UK and US-trained physicians who provide state-of-the-art diagnostic, treatment and support services to patients. SKMCH&RC is pleased to invite applications for the following positions:

Medical Consultants:

- Consultant Anaesthetist
- Consultant Breast Surgeon
- Consultant Clinical & Radiation Oncologist
- Consultant Clinical Haematologist
- Consultant Emergency Medicine/Acute Physician
- Consultant Head and Neck Surgeon
- Consultant Medical Oncologist
- Consultant Nuclear Medicine
- Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
- Consultant Paediatric Oncologist
- Consultant Palliative Medicine
- Consultant Pathologist
- Consultant Physician, Critical Care & Pulmonary Medicine
- Consultant Physician, Internal Medicine & Pulmonology
- Consultant Physician, Internal Medicine & Gastroenterology
- Consultant Physician, Internal Medicine & Infectious Diseases
- Consultant Physician, Internal Medicine & Nephrology
- Consultant Radiologist
- Consultant Upper GI Surgeon
- Consultant Urologist

Locum Consultants :

- Locum Consultant Anaesthetist
- Locum Consultant Breast Surgeon
- Locum Consultant Pathologist

• Locum Consultant Radiologist

• Locum Consultant Urologist

Part-Time Consultant :

- Part-Time Consultant Anaesthetist

Senior Instructors:

- Senior Instructor Anaesthesia
- Senior Instructor Breast Surgery
- Senior Instructor Clinical Haematology
- Senior Instructor Clinical and Radiation Oncology
- Senior Instructor Head and Neck Surgery
- Senior Instructor Medical Oncology
- Senior Instructor Paediatric Oncology
- Senior Instructor Radiology

SKM Fellowships:

- Fellow in Anaesthesia
- Fellow in Clinical & Radiation Oncology

CPSP Approved Fellowship :

- Fellow in Medical Oncology
- Fellow in Surgical Oncology

Nursing & Paramedics:

- Senior Medical Physicist
- Medical Physicist
- Junior Echo Technologist

Note: All Senior Instructor positions for Peshawar involve working at Lahore for two years, followed by two years of training overseas. For further details regarding the position and eligibility criteria, please visit our website on www.shaukatkhanum.org.pk

Apply now at: bit.ly/SKMCHJobs

Only online applications will be entertained. Please share your CV at the email address given below and do mention the position applied for in the subject line. We regret that only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

We are an equal opportunity employer

Human Resources Department

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre

5-B, Sector A-2, Office Enclave, Phase V, Hayatabad, Peshawar, Pakistan.

Tel: +92 91 5885000 Ext. 3538, 3541

Email: careers.peshawar@shaukatkhanum.org.pk

Kundi: Attack on convoy to sabotage peace in Kurram

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday condemned attack on convoy of government vehicles in Lower Kurram District and termed it a conspiracy to sabotage peace in the province especially in Kurram.

The Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, strongly condemned the incident, describing it as an alarming act of violence.

“This attack on the convoy is highly concerning, especially on the main

highway in Lower Kurram. It is a heinous plot to sabotage the efforts of the peace jirga aimed at ensuring permanent peace in the region,” Kundi said.

Governor Kundi expressed his heartfelt wishes for the quick recovery of Deputy Commissioner Javed Mehsud and the other victims injured in the attack.

“I pray for the swift recovery of Deputy Commissioner Javed Mehsud and all other injured individuals,” Kundi added.

Kundi emphasized that

such incidents threaten the hard-earned peace in Kurram and called for the joint efforts of the local population and the government to ensure lasting stability in the area.

“For lasting peace in Kurram, it is crucial that both the government and the local population play a positive and cooperative role,” he said.

The authorities are investigating the incident, and security forces have been deployed to track down the attackers. The

region remains on high alert as efforts to maintain peace continue amidst these challenges.

Deputy Commissioner Kurram district, Javedullah Mehsud sustained injuries when vehicles’ convoy came under firing in Lower Kurram on Saturday morning. Police said that the convoy carrying relief goods from Thall to Parachinar came under firing near Bagan area.

The injured Deputy Commissioner was shifted to hospital.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health Engineering Pakhtunyar Khan inaugurating food street.

Internet throttling: PTI slams federal govt for economic catastrophic policy

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) slammed the unrepresentative government for throttling the internet in an attempt to target PTI under the false pretext of security concerns despite its significant economic implications, as Pakistan topped world in economic losses due to internet shutdowns last year, even leaving far behind countries like Sudan and Myanmar, which were ravaged by civil wars.

Reacting to the report, released by Top10VPN.com, an independent VPN reviewer, PTI Central Information Secretary (CIS) Sheikh Waqas Akram said that Pakistan topped the charts with a cumulative financial impact of \$1.62 billion, which was alarming, despite the fact the overall world-wide cost of internet shutdowns dropped by 15.8 per cent in 2024.

He lambasted the Minister of State for IT and the PTA chairman for concocting baseless and lame excuses to justify the gov-

ernment’s wrong, self-serving and anti-people policy of throttling internet speeds each time, as a 24-hour internet shutdown alone resulting in a staggering loss of Rs1.3 billion.

Waqas flayed the illegitimate government’s reckless and short-sighted move to prioritize their own interests at the expense of the nation and its people.

He emphasized that the government should refrain from scapegoating the internet for Pakistan’s deteriorating security situation. Instead, he argued that the root cause lied in their misguided priorities and flawed policies, adding that during Imran Khan’s tenure, the country experienced a period of exemplary peace.

However, Waqas lamented that the country witnessed a wave of terrorism after the ouster of PTI-led government through regime change conspiracy because self-centered and short-sighted people were fraudulently imposed on the country, who stashed all

their assets abroad and just came Pakistan to rule.

PTI CIS asserted that the power-hungry clique’s ill-advised policy would have far-reaching devastating economic consequences for the country including the loss of substantial foreign exchange earnings and potential business contracts.

However, he stated that the government was hell-bent on suppressing dissenting voices to conceal their own ineptitude and incompetence.

He emphasized that despite the government’s much-touted plans, such as the ‘Uraan Pakistan’ initiative and the upcoming 5G spectrum auction, the country’s economic flight would remain a dream until the duffers recognized the crucial role of investing in IT sectors, which was the main driving force to economic growth.

Waqas urged that the government should abandon its reliance on fairy tales and unrealistic plans, which have failed to deliver

tangible results. Instead, he pressed the government to focus on crafting a well-orchestrated strategy that leverages the vast potential of the IT sector to propel economic growth and drive meaningful progress.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Information Secretary (CIS) said that the government of political dwarfs, lacking the vision, obsessed with implementing flawed policies that throttle the internet, repeatedly shutting down services with flimsy excuses, leading to a mass exodus of IT professionals and leaving countless young people without jobs.

He sounded the alarm that this ill-conceived policy would further erode the confidence of foreign investors in Pakistan, pushing the country to the brink of a complete business meltdown. By prioritizing their own interests over the nation’s well-being, Waqas feared that the government risked undermining the very foundations of Pakistan’s economy.

Smuggler convicted for lifetime imprisonment Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Additional Session Judge Peshawar Attallah has convicted smuggler fir life imprisonment and a fine of Rs10 million for attempting to smuggle 110 kg of hashish worth millions of rupees in a flying coach. The Assistant Public Prosecutor pursued the case on behalf of the prosecution.

According to the prosecution, the convict, Nizakat resident of Abbottabad, was accused of attempting to smuggle 110 kg of charas, worth millions of rupees, in a flying coach along with his accomplices.

The Excise Police had registered a case against the accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act on November 26, 2023. After completing the investigation, the police submitted a challan to the court, which led to the start of the trial.

The trial of the convict began, and the prosecution presented its case. The court, after examining all the witnesses and evidence, found the accused guilty of the crime. The court sentenced the convict to life imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 10 million. In case of non-payment of the fine, the convict will have to undergo an additional five years of imprisonment.

The court has declared the absconding accomplices, Zahoor Khan, Bashir, and Umar, as proclaimed offenders and issued non-bailable warrants for their arrest. The court has also ordered the police to publish advertisements declaring the accused as proclaimed offenders.

Speaker condemns Kurram attack

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Babar Salim Swati has condemned attack on vehicles of district administration in Lower Kurram and said that elements involved in the incident want to disrupt peace.

In his statement, Speaker Swati expressed his deep concern over such incidents, stating, “Those opposing peace in Kurram are the forces behind such acts of violence.” He emphasized the need for collective efforts to identify and hold accountable the elements responsible for disrupting harmony in the region.

Addressing the people and public representatives, Swati urged everyone to collaborate with the provincial government to ensure peace and stability. He remarked, “It is incumbent upon all of us to work tirelessly for the restoration of peace and security in our province.”

The Speaker further stressed the importance of setting aside political differences in the current challenging circumstances, saying, “We must rise above opposition and government divides to prioritize the survival and well-being of our people.”

Reiterating the significance of unity, Swati assured that the government, along with local elders, remains steadfast in its efforts to maintain peace. He concluded by asserting, “We will ensure unity in our ranks and will not allow any element to undermine the ongoing peace initiatives by the government and community leaders.”

The Speaker reaffirmed the commitment of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and the provincial government to uphold peace and prosperity in the region.

Saad: PTI’s leadership isn’t serious with workers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman Central Executive Committee of Insaf Lawyers Forum (ILF) Saadullah Khan Marwat has termed the current leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as non-serious and has suggested that the central and provincial leaders should be replaced with loyal leaders.

In a statement, Saadullah Khan Marwat Advocate said that the ILF will take practical steps for the release of Imran Khan, and at the same time, appointments in the Advocate General’s office should be made on merit.

He also severely criticized the PTI leaders for being involved in the race for obtaining legal advisor positions in various provincial departments.

In a statement, Saadullah Khan Marwat Advocate said that it is extremely regrettable that in the current political crisis, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders are not showing the required wisdom and political foresight, rather they are doing the opposite.

Therefore, given the current situation, a change in leadership is necessary so that correct decisions can be made and the release of the party’s founder, Imran Khan, can be made possible.

He further stated that during the tenures of former Chief Ministers Pervez Khattak and Mahmood Khan, he had repeatedly pointed out the loyalty issues of the party leaders and had informed Imran Khan in writing and verbally as well that the leaders surrounding him are not loyal to him but are rather working to achieve their own interests.

On the other hand, the lawyers of the PTI’s subsidiary organization, Insaf Lawyers Forum, are more focused on obtaining positions for themselves rather than fighting a legal battle for Imran Khan.

5 killed, 6 hurt over old enmity

PESHAWAR (APP): At least five persons were killed and six other injured during shootout between two rival parties over old enmity here Saturday.

“Firing between two rival parties left five people dead and six injured in Peshawar’s Tehkal area,” Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Kashif Zulfikar told media.

He said that the incident occurred during an exchange of fire between two rival groups due to personal enmity at congested Tehkal area.

Police said people from one party were returning from a wedding ceremony when they faced the other party that was present near a bridge over personal enmity on property and previous murders.

Police cordoned off the area and started search operation for arrest of the accused.

Earlier, three persons were killed and two others injured as unknown assailants opened fire on them at



Charsadda motorway.

While confirming the casualties, the police said that the incident seemed to be of a personal enmity.

The police said that the deceased and their colleagues were attacked when they were crossing the Charsadda motorway.

According to police, the assailants managed to escape after the firing, while efforts were being made to arrest them.

The dead bodies and wounded persons were shifted to Lady Reading Hospital for legal formalities and treatment respectively.

Officials denied reports regarding MRI machine

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: There is highly negative and baseless propaganda being spread on social media regarding the MRI machine at ATH, which has no connection to reality, official denied the reports.

First and foremost, let me clarify that the MRI machine became out of order before COVID-19, so the claim that it malfunctioned during COVID is completely false. Secondly, the assertion that the MRI machine was stolen is entirely incorrect. The machine weighs approximately 5,500 kg (5.5 ton), making it impossible to steal, the official said.

Moreover, dismantling such a machine requires at least 15 days. How could an operation of that scale go on for 15 days without anyone noticing? This is utterly absurd and nothing more than a joke, official further said.

The MRI machine’s magnet was damaged, and the cost of replacing it was approximately \$1 million USD. On the other hand, if we opted @ 1.3 Million USD for the manufacturer’s upgrade policy, we could receive a brand-new machine with completely new software, hardware, and technology. Considering the KKPRa principle of “value for money,” the decision was made to go for the upgrade program, which was deemed more beneficial. The upgrade was ordered accordingly, and the new machine comes with a 3-

year warranty for the entire machine and a 5-year warranty for the magnet.

He said, the upgrade brought significant benefits to the institution. Firstly, the annual maintenance contract, which used to cost \$85,000/year, will not be required for three years because the machine is under warranty. Secondly, the old machine used approximately four dewars of helium each year, which currently costs around Rs. 22 Million per year.

The upgraded machine, built with new technology, does not require helium at all. As a result, the long-term running cost of the machine has effectively become zero. The institution acquired a completely brand-new machine through the upgrade program for just 230 million PKR. In contrast, the current market price for the same machine ranges from 700 to 800 million PKR. Therefore, it is kindly requested to stop this negative propaganda and clarify where exactly the institution has suffered a loss and how much that loss amounts to.

Additionally, we would like to highlight that if the forum where we need to present our case has already formed a negative mindset, how can we effectively present our case there? And will they even be willing to listen to us. The most important point is that these elements spreading this false propaganda are making a futile attempt to tarnish the hospital’s reputation, the official said.

First convoy of essential goods dispatched

PESHAWAR (APP): The first convoy comprising 75 large vehicles carrying essential goods and food items has been dispatched to District Kurram under tight security following the recent peace agreement.

On the special instructions of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif was present at the Kurram border area in Chapri, along with the Kohat Commissioner, DIG, district administration, and other police officials, to oversee the dispatch.

The convoy includes 22-wheelers, 10-wheelers, and 6-wheeler trucks transporting a range of supplies, such as medicines, food items, gas cylinders, and other essential goods.

The breakdown of the items includes 5 trucks of medicines, 10 trucks of vegetable, 9 trucks of cooking oil and ghee, 5 trucks of flour, 7 trucks of sugar, 2 trucks of gas cylinders, 26 trucks of other grocery items.

On the occasion, Barrister Dr. Saif said that special security measures have been implemented to ensure the safe passage of the convoy. Law enforcement agencies, including police and district administration, are actively involved in securing the route.

IWMI hosts workshop on water accounting, resource assessment

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) organized a hands-on training workshop on “Water Accounting and Resource Assessment” in Peshawar the other day to address the critical issues of water scarcity and governance in Pakistan.

This workshop was part of the Water Resource Accountability in Pakistan (wrap) Programme, funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

The workshop aimed to equip stakeholders with the advanced tools and knowledge to tackle urgent water management challenges in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province.

This workshop, part of the WRAP Programme’s Component 1: Climate Resilient Solutions for Improving Water Governance (CRS-IWaG), convened government officials, policymakers, water experts, and academic representatives to enhance their capacity in water accounting and promote evidence-based decision-making.

The participants were introduced to the innovative Water Accounting Plus (WA+) framework, a tool aimed at transforming water management by ensuring equitable water distribution and informed governance, in alignment with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Water Act 2020.

The workshop began with an overview of the training objectives and expectations presented by Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, Science Policy Advisor at IWMI Pakistan. During his session, Dr. Ashraf emphasized the importance of equipping participants with practical skills necessary for effective water governance.

Dr. Mohsin Hafeez, Director of Water, food, and Ecosystems at IWMI, and Team Leader of the WRAP Programme Component 1, emphasized the importance of proactive disaster mitigation. He stated, “If you invest one Dollar before a disaster strikes, you can save up to seven Dollars spent after the disaster.” He highlighted the role of water accounting in promoting sustainable and cost-effective water management solutions.

Drawing from global best practices, including Australia’s advanced water accounting standards, Dr. Hafeez presented practical strategies to enhance transparency and efficiency in Pakistan’s water governance.

Engr. Habib Ullah Bodla, Science Policy Advisor at IWMI Pakistan, shared practical examples from Punjab province illustrating how water accounting can improve decision-making for sustainable water management and emphasized the transformative potential of water accounting tools. Dr. Umar

Waqas Liaqat, Senior Regional Researcher at IWMI, led sessions on the WA+ Framework’s software and tools, providing a foundational understanding of its application in addressing water scarcity challenges.

Dr. Waleed Khan, a researcher in Remote Sensing and GIS, Ms. Mehwish Khan, a Senior Research Officer in GIS, and Mr. Naqash Abbasi, a Senior Research Officer in geoinformatics, conducted interactive sessions and hands-on exercises during the workshop. These activities equipped participants with essential skills, such as extracting key indicators from open-access data and analyzing water components like evapotranspiration. The goal was to provide practical expertise and inspire innovative approaches to water resource management, tackling challenges faced by various sectors.



PESHAWAR: Malik Muhammad Naveed addressing a gathering of United Municipal Workers Union WSSP Elections 2025-26.



In brief

Motorcycle stolen in Risalpur F.P. Report

RISALPUR: In the limits of Risalpur Police Station, Nowshera, motorcycle thieves stole a brand-new, locked motorcycle from a young man who had come from Mardan to visit the weekly market in Rashkai. The police expressed ignorance of the incident. It is worth noting that the police often dismiss cases of theft and motorcycle snatching, and instead of registering a case, they file a daily diary report and dismiss the victims. In this regard, Abdullah bin Qasim, son of Muhammad Qasim Ali Khan, resident of House No. 57, Sham Ganj, Mardan, stated that he had come to the weekly market (bazaar) in Rashkai. He had parked his brand-new, locked motorcycle (number FL6134) in a corner of the market, but when he returned after a minute, some unknown thief or thieves had stolen his motorcycle. The local police have registered a case against unknown motorcycle thieves and started an investigation.

Minor girl abducted F.P. Report

LARKANA: Local armed men kidnapped a 11-year-old girl Bisma chandio, under the limits of Rahamatpur police station in Larkana city, while the mother of the kidnapped girl protested. On this occasion, the widowed woman said in front of the media that some time ago I had agreed to give cuckold to my brother Qadir Bux Chandio's son Imran. But my nephew Imran turned out to be a real man and was mentally torturing my daughter in various ways even before the marriage. Fed up with this, I refused to give my brother a marriage license as my brother Qadir Bakhsh is angry with me for not giving me a marriage license and has kidnapped my other 11-year-old daughter, Bisma, along with his son Imran Chandio and some unknown people, whom I fear he may forcefully marry to his son Khan. The affected woman appealed to all those in power, including the IG Sindh, DIG Larkana, SSP Larkana, and her Nawab Sardar Khan Chandio and Burhan Khan Chandio, to return my little daughter and save her life from her cruel brother. On the other hand, SSP Larkana Mir Rohal Khoso has taken strict notice of such a matter and filed an FIR and has assured that the kidnapped Bisma will be recovered soon. Meanwhile, the accused influential accused Qadir Bakhsh Chandio has appealed to the Union of Journalists Organizations Sindh.

Yeast laboratory inaugurated F.P. Report

MARDAN: Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and Hebai University China will establish the world's most modern yeast research laboratory at a cost of 30 crores in Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. This research project will be completed with the cooperation of Dr. Zia Islam, a world-renowned researcher of the Department of Biotechnology of Abdul Wali Khan University and Prof. Fanali Zing of Hebai Agriculture University of China. Its aim is to meet the shortage of protein in animal feed in Pakistan and China. The establishment of the modern lab will significantly reduce the import of protein in Pakistan and save the country valuable foreign exchange. The duration of the project is 3 years, and under this project 50 students and faculty members will be trained in China.



FAISALABAD: Participants posing for group photo during workshop on importance and practicality of digital photography.

AJK marks Kashmiri Children's Day

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Kashmiri Children's Day is being observed today in Azad Jammu and Kashmir to draw the attention of the international community to the plight of children who have suffered due to Indian state terrorism in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Children across all cities and towns of Azad Jammu and Kashmir will hold rallies and organize various programs in solidarity with the children of the occupied territory. Kashmiri Children's Day is being observed under the special direction of the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq, to raise awareness about the dire situation of children in IIOJK. In this regard, a formal circular was issued by the Services and General Administration Department of the AJK government on Thursday.

It is worth noting that over the past 36 years, Indian forces' personnel have martyred more than 900 children during their acts of state terrorism in the occupied territory. Additionally, over 100,000 children have been orphaned, and many more

have lost their eyesight due to the lethal pellet guns used by the occupation troops.

Meanwhile, a delegation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter met the District President of Muslim Conference, Advocate Yasir Naqvi, in Muzaaffarabad. The delegation, led by Convener Ghulam Muhammad Safi, apprised the District President of the Muslim Conference of the deteriorating situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and invited him to participate in the "Right to Self-Determination Rally" to be held in Muzaaffarabad tomorrow.

On the occasion, Yasir Naqvi strongly condemned the atrocities being carried out by the Indian forces in the occupied territory and said the immense sacrifices of the Kashmiris will definitely bear fruit and Jammu and Kashmir will be free from the illegal occupation of India. He assured the delegation that he and his party workers would fully participate in the January 5 rally.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Hurriyat Conference visited Thotha refugee camp

in Muzaaffarabad and met the president of the refugee camp, Omar Jan. The delegation invited Omar Jan to participate in the rally tomorrow. The president of the refugee camp assured the delegation of full participation.

Kashmir Policy Research Institute, in collaboration with the Forest Department of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, launched a tree plantation campaign at Jalalabad Park in Muzaaffarabad on the occasion of "Kashmiri Children's Day" being observed in Azad Jammu and Kashmir today. On this occasion, Director of Kashmir Policy Research Institute Dr. Raja Muhammad Sajjad Khan, APHC-AJK chapter Convener Ghulam Muhammad Safi, General Secretary Pervaz Ahmed Advocate and Information Secretary Mushtaq Ahmed Butt participated in the tree plantation campaign.

DFO Muqarrab Khan, Assistant Director of Kashmir Policy Research Institute Syed Usman Bukhari, Assistant Director of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell Khawaja Haroon-ul-Rashid, civil society and media persons also participated in the ceremony.

Action committee announces demos

HYDERABAD (PPI): The Anti-Canal Action Committee under the banner of the Save Indus River Movement has decided to hold a series of protests in major cities of Sindh against the decision to construct six canals on the Indus River.

The protest demonstrations will be held in Sukkur on January 23 and in Larkana on February 13 while awareness marches will be organized on January 11, from Hyderabad to Mirpurkhas, and on January 12, from Mirpurkhas to Umerkot.

The decision was taken during a meeting held at the residence of Sindh Abadgar Itehad President Zubair Talpur. The meeting was attended by Save Indus River Movement

Convenor Syed Zain Shah, Sindh Abadgar Board President Mahmood Nawaz Shah, Bashir Shah and others.

Participants expressed concerns that the construction of additional canals to irrigate specific areas in Punjab would render vast tracts of Sindh's land barren, posing a significant threat to the country's economy. They emphasized that Sindh is already grappling with severe water shortages, which have devastated the Indus Delta and exacerbated the region's agricultural challenges.

The meeting highlighted growing fears among farmers, warning that the canal project endangers the river's water resources and the livelihoods of Sindh's

agricultural community. The committee vowed to resist any illegal decisions. The committee reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding Sindh's water rights and vowed to continue its struggle until the controversial project is shelved.

Elderly man killed

MUZAFARGARH (INP): An elderly man was killed during dacoity in the Gannu Wala area, in limits of Karamdad Qureshi police station on Saturday. Muhammad Bakhsh Sehriani (70) had set up a cattle pen near Mann Salwa hotel, where he used to sleep at night.

SHOs shuffled across Nowshera Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: The Station House Officers (SHOs) of various police stations in Nowshera have been transferred. According to a notification issued by the office of the District Police Officer (DPO) Nowshera, Muhammad Azhar Khan, the transfers have been made. SHO Rasalpur Ashfaq Khan has been transferred from Rasalpur Police Station to Badrashi Police Station.

According to details, SHO Badrashi Muhammad Ali has been transferred to Police Line Rasalpur, SHO Police Line Rasalpur Waqas Khan has been transferred to Rasalpur Police Station, SHO Nizampur Shahid Khan has been transferred to Iza Khel Police Station, Aza Khel Bismaullah Jan has been transferred to Police Line Nowshera, Riayazullah Khan has been transferred to Nizampur Police Station.

Meanwhile, SHO Hifizullah Khan has been transferred to Musri Banda Police Station. SHO Musri Banda Sartaj Khan has been transferred to Police Line Nowshera. All the transferred SHOs have been directed to report to their new postings and take charge immediately. The notification has been issued by the office of the DPO Nowshera.

Rescue official dies

NAROWAL (INP): A Rescue 1122 van hit a rescue worker at Zafarwal Road in Narowal after which he died on the spot. The incident occurred due to thick fog which engulfed the entire city on Saturday morning.

Rescue 1122 sources said that Naeem was also part of the team which was going to rescue some patients. He was riding a motorcycle to reach the office when a Rescue 1122 van suddenly hit his motorcycle from the front amid dense fog. The deceased rescue worker left behind two sons and one daughter to mourn his death. District Officer (DO) Rescue 1122 said that the rescue worker was died in official uniform. He also declared him as an "asset" of the Rescue 1122 department.

Transport union fleece drivers at Pak-Afghan highway

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Volunteers of transport union has started fleecing drivers at Pak-Afghan road with their both hands, truckers said. They said that besides having legal documents, they were forced to pay one thousand rupees as transport union fee, collected by its workers, deployed at various points at Pak-Afghan highway, Landi Kotal.

Abdullah, an Afghan national driver said on Saturday that the union persons were made them to wait in long queues for days that posed threat to their vehicles and loaded trading commodities. We transport transit goods and exempt of strict examination at Torkham border but wait at long lines for hours and sometimes days to cross the border to Afghanistan.

Despite of space, available in parking lots in the under-construction terminal in Torkham, the transport union compelled them to park their vehicles in the open ground of Hamza Baba without access to basic facilities, he added.



Another driver, Asad Khan said that establishing of parking at the deserted area, oblige them on starvation and no access to facilities beside they were paying one thousand rupees per vehicle to the union.

They demanded of the authorities concern to take forthwith action against those, collecting illegal money from them and deploy highway traffic police at Pak-Afghan road to regularize traffic on the road. The transport union persons said that five transport unions in Khyber and Peshawar had made a consortium to facilitate the truckers.

They had hired services of volunteers to regularize the trucks movement at the Pak-Afghan highway. They

also blamed that 20 % money of the collection distributed among the transport union officer bearers and to meet their expenses and to pay the workers and the rest of 80 % money were given away to the various officials.

On the viral of corruption news at social media, the district administration took notice of it and arrested the union persons however, they were released after few hours that put question mark at the role of the administration, locals said. The Deputy Commissioner and other concern officials were repeatedly contacted on his WhatsApp number for his version on the matter but failed to receive his respond.

Youth beheaded over domestic dispute

F.P. Report

MARDAN: In Rustam, a young man was slaughtered with a sharp instrument due to domestic violence. The police of Rustam have registered a murder case against the accused.

According to the incidents, Muhammad Ismail son of Sani Gul, a resident of Mohalla Islamabad Rustam while filing a report, told the Rustam police that I had gone to China with my brother Shah Zaman to bring molasses to Gurgani during this time, my brother talked to someone on his mobile phone and told me that you go, I will meet someone and come home. My brother Shah Zaman did not return home till morning, we were calling him repeatedly on his

mobile but he was not attending, so we filed a missing report in Rustam police station in the morning, we were in our house, at the same time, I got the news of my brother's murder.

According to the information, I came to Rustam Hospital with my mother and saw that my brother had been slaughtered. The deceased Shah Zaman was married two years ago to Mst. (H) daughter of Bakht Zamin who had also taken with her two tola gold ornaments and Malaysian currency 3200 ringgit, over which we had a dispute.

The father of Mst. (H) was insisting about the fact that the deceased had divorced her, in which there was a regional Jirga yesterday after the Friday prayer.

Danish son of Bakht Zamin, Bakht Zamin son of Taj Main residents of Dagai Kumargai Rustam and Masmi Yahya Yousuf son of Yousuf resident of Lahore Sadar Cantt have been slaughtered with a sharp knife, police station Rustam alleged a case of murder was registered against the accused and started investigation.

Woman killed: A collision between a motorcycle and a motor car took place on Takhtbhai area Salem Khan Road. As a result of the accident, (b), a woman riding a motorcycle, was seriously injured, while the other woman companion (p) and the motorcyclist, Juma Khan, resident of Rauf Khan village, Saroshah, were seriously injured.



MULTAN: Labourers busy in loading heavy scrap bags on delivery truck near Rajapur.

Neglected half: Women's health and equality

Marya Haleema

In our country, there is a lot of discussion about women's freedom and rights, and it is indeed essential that women have access to both. However, even more critical than these is women's health, which is often overlooked—not only by society but also by women themselves, as they tend to neglect their own well-being and sacrifice their needs. This is where the struggle for rights truly begins.

If we observe closely, we tend to give more importance to our boys—their food, clothing, education, and dignity are prioritized, while the same necessities are not always considered essential for daughters. This unequal treatment develops into a strong habit over time, eventually becoming a tradition and a deeply ingrained value in society, turning into a societal plague.

This leads to a specific attitude and behavior toward women in society, which later transforms into complete deprivation. As a result, illegal actions and injustice against women become widespread in society.

The scenario in Pakistan reflects a complex web of societal norms, traditions, and atti-

tudes that often perpetuate gender inequality. Women, despite constituting nearly half of the population, face systemic barriers in accessing healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. Cultural norms, especially in rural areas, dictate that women's primary role is within the household, often limiting their autonomy and decision-making power. This mindset not only undermines their individual potential but also stunts the growth of society as a whole.

One of the critical issues is the lack of awareness and prioritization of women's health. Maternal mortality rates remain alarmingly high due to inadequate healthcare facilities, lack of prenatal and postnatal care, and limited access to professional medical services, particularly in remote areas. Additionally, societal pressures often discourage women from seeking medical attention for themselves, as their health is not seen as a priority compared to other family needs. This neglect can lead to long-term health issues, reducing their quality of life and their ability to contribute productively to their communities.

Education is another area where gender disparity is stark. While urban centers have made progress, in rural Pakistan, girls are still denied basic education

due to poverty, cultural restrictions, and inadequate school infrastructure. Families often prioritize boys' education, viewing it as an investment, while girls' education is considered unnecessary or secondary. This lack of education not only limits women's opportunities but also perpetuates the cycle of poverty and dependence.

The economic participation of women in Pakistan is also dismally low. Despite their potential, women face numerous hurdles in entering the workforce, including societal stigma, lack of childcare support, and unequal pay. Many women are confined to informal sectors or unpaid domestic work, which goes unrecognized and undervalued. This economic marginalization further solidifies their secondary status in society, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

To address these issues, a shift in societal attitudes is imperative. Awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of gender equality, combined with practical measures such as improving healthcare access, investing in girls' education, and creating safe and inclusive work environments, can bring about meaningful change. Moreover, involving men and boys in these conversations is

crucial to breaking down the deep-rooted patriarchy and fostering a culture of respect and equality for women in Pakistan.

Another critical aspect of the issue in Pakistan is the prevalence of harmful cultural practices that further entrench gender inequality. Practices like early marriages, dowry systems, and restrictions on women's mobility severely impact their rights and development. Early marriages, for instance, deprive girls of their childhood, education, and opportunities for self-development. They are thrust into roles they are unprepared for, often leading to health complications and a lack of independence. These practices are not only detrimental to women but also hinder the progress of the nation as a whole, as an educated and empowered female population is essential for sustainable development.

Additionally, the legal and institutional framework, though improving, still has significant gaps in ensuring women's rights. Laws protecting women against domestic violence, harassment, and discrimination often lack proper implementation. In many cases, women are unaware of their legal rights, or they face societal backlash for pursuing justice. This is particularly true

in rural areas, where tribal and feudal systems still dominate, often undermining state laws. The lack of accessible legal support and protection further discourages women from standing up against injustices.

The media in Pakistan also plays a dual role in shaping societal perceptions of women. While it has the power to amplify women's voices and raise awareness about their rights, it often reinforces stereotypes through its portrayal of women as submissive and confined to traditional roles. Women in leadership positions, whether in politics, business, or other sectors, are frequently subjected to criticism and undue scrutiny, which discourages others from aspiring to such roles. A positive and empowering representation of women in the media is crucial to shifting public attitudes and inspiring change.

Moreover, the intersectionality of gender with factors like poverty, disability, and minority status further exacerbates the challenges faced by women. Women from marginalized communities experience multiple layers of discrimination, making it even harder for them to access basic rights and opportunities. These issues are often overlooked in broader discussions about gender equality, leaving

some of the most vulnerable women behind.

To address these deeply rooted issues, a multi-pronged approach is needed. This includes robust policy reforms, grassroots activism, and public-private partnerships aimed at empowering women. Educational programs should focus not only on educating women but also on sensitizing men about the importance of gender equality. Community-based initiatives can play a vital role in challenging harmful traditions and empowering women at the local level. Furthermore, international organizations and donor agencies should collaborate with local stakeholders to support sustainable projects that address women's health, education, and economic empowerment.

Lastly, empowering women is not just a matter of justice—it is a necessity for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. When women are given the tools to thrive, they contribute to stronger families, healthier communities, and a more resilient nation. The journey toward gender equality in Pakistan is long and challenging, but with collective efforts and a commitment to change, it is a goal that can and must be achieved.



GAZA: A destroyed part of city as seen from southern Israel.

S Korea police search Jeju Air, airport operator

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korean police said they had raided Jeju Air and the operator of Muan International Airport as part of their investigation into crash that killed 179 people in the worst aviation disaster on the country's soil.

Jeju Air 7C2216, which departed the Thai capital of Bangkok for Muan in southwestern South Korea, belly-landed and overshot the regional airport's runway, exploding into flames after hitting an embankment. Two crew members, who were sitting in the tail end of the Boeing 737-800, were pulled out alive by rescuers. One of them was still in a critical condition and the other was being treated for injuries, a transport ministry official said.

The conversion of data from the cockpit voice recorder to audio files, which could provide critical information on the final minutes of the flight, was completed, Joo Jong-wan, the deputy transport minister for civil aviation, told a media briefing. Police investigators were searching the offices of the airport operator and the transportation ministry aviation authority in the southwestern county of Muan, as well as the office of Jeju Air in Seoul, the South Jeolla provincial police said in a media statement.

Investigators planned to seize documents and materials related to the operation and maintenance of the aircraft as well as the operation of airport facilities, a police official told Reuters.

The official also said police had banned Jeju Air chief executive Kim E-bae and another unidentified

official from leaving the country, calling them key witnesses potentially facing charges of causing deaths by negligence, which is punishable by up to five years in prison or a fine of up to 20 million won (\$13,600). Jeju Air was cooperating with the police, a director at the airline, Song Kyeong-hoon, told a media briefing.

Questions by air safety experts on what led to the deadly explosion have focused on the embankment, designed to prop up the "localizer" antenna used to guide landings, which they said is too rigid and too close to the end of the runway.

"This rigid structure proved catastrophic when the skidding aircraft made impact," said Najmedin Meshkati, an engineering professor at the University of Southern California, adding it was concerning that the navigation antenna was mounted on "such a formidable concrete structure, rather than the standard metal tower/pylon installation". Joo said the ministry was still unable to provide clear details on Muan airport's upgrade plans that had led to the addition of the structure to support the navigation system. The ministry is conducting a check on localizer equipment at airports throughout the country, Joo said.

A probe into the doomed Jeju Air flight is also under way involving South Korean officials and the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the aircraft's maker,

Boeing. It remains unanswered why the aircraft did not deploy its landing gear and what led the pilot to apparently rush into a second attempt at landing after telling air traffic control the plane had suffered a bird strike and declaring an emergency.

The aircraft's flight data recorder, which sustained some damage, is being taken to the United States for analysis in cooperation with the NTSB. Joo said it may be difficult to release the audio files from the cockpit voice recorder to the public as they will be critical to the ongoing investigation. Investigators from the NTSB, FAA and Boeing are in South Korea to help the probe. South Korea's acting President Choi Sang-mok said in a disaster management meeting that immediate action must be taken if a special inspection of all Boeing 737-800 aircraft operated in the country finds any issues.

"As there's great public concern about the same aircraft model involved in the accident, the transport ministry and relevant organisations must conduct a thorough inspection of operation, maintenance, education, and training," Choi said. His comments at the start of the meeting were provided by his office.

Choi asked that no effort be spared in helping the families of the victims as the remains of those killed are handed over to them. He also asked the police to take action against anyone posting "malicious" messages and fake news on social media related to the disaster.

Chinese hackers got into US Treasury's sanctions office

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Chinese government hackers breached the US Treasury office that administers economic sanctions, the Washington Post reported, identifying targets of a cyberattack Treasury disclosed earlier this week.

Citing unnamed US officials, the Washington Post said hackers compromised the Office of Foreign Assets Control and the Office of Financial Research and also targeted the office of US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. The department earlier this week disclosed in a letter to lawmakers that hackers stole unclassified documents in a "major incident." It did not specify which users or departments were affected.

Asked about the paper's report, Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said the "irrational" US claim was "without any factual basis" and represented "smear attacks" against Beijing. The statement said China "combats all forms of cyberattacks" and did not directly address the Washington Post's reporting on specific targets. The Treasury Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the newspaper report. The Washington Post quoted its sources as saying that a top area of interest for the Chinese government would be Chinese entities that the US government may be considering designating for financial sanctions.

The Treasury letter earlier this week said hackers compromised third-party cybersecurity service provider BeyondTrust. Chinese firms, individuals and entities have been a frequent target for US sanctions, which Washington has used as a key tool in its foreign policy towards Beijing. The United States considers China's its biggest foreign policy challenge, and last month Yellen told Reuters that Washington would not rule out sanctions on Chinese banks as it seeks to reduce Russia's oil revenue and access to foreign supplies to fuel its war in Ukraine.

Argentina files complaint against Venezuela

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters): Argentina's government said it had filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court against Venezuela for detaining a member of its gendarmerie, a branch of Argentina's security forces, calling it a "forced disappearance."

Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yvan Gil rejected the complaint to the ICC, calling it a "pitiful spectacle," in a post on Telegram. Tensions between the two South American countries have risen since Javier Milei, a far-right libertarian, assumed Argentina's presidency in late 2023. Relations worsened after Venezuela's contested presidential election in July, in which incumbent socialist President Nicolas Maduro claimed victory.

Last month, Argentina accused Caracas of detaining Nahuel Gallo, a member of its gendarmerie, after he tried to enter Venezuela from a crossing in Colombia to visit family. They demanded his immediate release.

Italy-Iran diplomatic tangle escalates over detained citizens

ROME (AP): Italy summoned Iran's ambassador to demand the release of an Italian journalist while Tehran demanded Italy free an Iranian citizen arrested on a US warrant over a drone attack in Jordan that killed three Americans a year ago. The developments reflected an escalation in a sensitive, three-nation diplomatic tangle marked by a series of public barbs.

The complicated saga began on Dec. 16, when the US Justice Department announced charges against two Iranian citizens accused of supplying the drone technology to Iran that was used in a January 2024 attack on a US outpost in Jordan that killed three American troops. One of the suspects, Mohammad Abedini, was detained that day at Milan's Malpensa airport on a US warrant seeking his extradition. Three days later, an Italian reporter for the Il Foglio daily, Cecilia Sala, was detained in Tehran. She had arrived in the country on Dec. 13 on a journalist visa and was arrested on charges of violating the laws of the Islamic Republic, the state-run IRNA news agency said.

The Italian and Iranian governments referred to both cases in their public statements after the Iranian ambassador was summoned to the Italian foreign ministry. That suggested the cases were very much intertwined as each country seeks the release of its citizen. Both say their detained national is being unjustly accused. The Iranian Embassy to Italy described the meeting between Ambassador Mohammadreza Sabouri and the Italian foreign ministry's secretary general, Riccardo Guariglia, as friendly.

But in a statement on X, the embassy said Abedini was being held on "false charges" and demanded his

release, in what was believed to be Tehran's first public response to the US case against him. It insisted that Sala was being treated humanely, especially in light of Christmas and New Year's holidays, and demanded similar treatment for Abedini. "It is reciprocally expected from the Italian government that, in addition to expediting the release of the detained Iranian citizen, he will be provided with the things he needs," the statement said. US federal prosecutors have charged Abedini and a co-defendant with export control violations after FBI specialists analyzed the drone navigation system used in the Jordan attack and traced it to them. US prosecutors said Abedini's Tehran-based company manufactures navigation systems for the military drone program of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. Ever since the 1979 US Embassy crisis in Iran, in which dozens of US hostages spent 444 days in captivity in Tehran, Iran has frequently used prisoners with Western ties as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Italian commentators have speculated that that is indeed the case as Tehran seeks Abedini's release by holding Sala, whose fate has dominated Italian headlines for days and even featured in President Sergio Mattarella's end-of-year speech to the nation. The Italian foreign ministry said it summoned Sabouri, the Iranian ambassador, to demand Sala's release and ensure "dignified detention conditions in full respect of human rights," including consular access and visitation.

Later in the day, Premier Giorgia Meloni convened a high-level meeting with the Italian justice and foreign ministers to discuss the Sala and Abedini cases, and met separately with Sala's mother. In a statement,

Meloni's office said the government renewed its call for Sala's immediate release and "treatment that respects human dignity" in the meantime. Concerning Abedini, the government reaffirmed that "all are guaranteed equal treatment in compliance with Italian laws and international conventions."

Abedini's Italian lawyer, Alfredo De Francesco, had asked the Milan court this week to grant him house arrest. Milan's general prosecutor Francesca Nanni argued against the request, saying Abedini was a flight risk - especially since the Iranian government owned the residence in Italy that was proposed to house him.

"The circumstances represented in the request, particularly the provision of an apartment and financial support from Iran's consulate ... do not constitute an adequate guarantee against the danger of flight of the Iranian national whose extradition the US has requested," the adnkronos news agency reported, citing a statement from Nanni that was confirmed by her office.

The US Justice Department has declined to comment on the case. Sala's mother, for her part, said she just wants her daughter to come home and be treated humanely by Iran in the meantime. Speaking to reporters outside of Meloni's office after the meeting, Elisabetta Vernoni said her daughter had reported to her - their second phone call - that she was sleeping on the floor in a cell usually used to punish prisoners. "I am a bit like Cecilia, I am a bit of a soldier. I wait and respect the work they are doing," Vernoni said. "But prison conditions for a 29-year-old girl who has done nothing must be such that they cannot scar her for life," she added.

Second Homeland Security agent in Utah charged

SALT LAKE CITY (AP): A second Department of Homeland Security agent has been charged in federal court with using a confidential informant to sell illicit drugs that were seized as evidence. Nicholas Kindle, a special agent in Utah tasked with investigating illegal narcotics trafficking, was arrested three weeks after his alleged co-conspirator, special agent David Cole. Both face a felony drug distribution conspiracy charge, and Kindle faces an additional charge of conspiracy to convert property of the US government for profit.

A magistrate judge set Kindle's initial court appearance for Jan. 21 in Salt Lake City. If convicted he faces a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison. An attorney has not yet been listed for Kindle in court records. Unlike Cole, who was indicted last month by a grand jury, Kindle was formally charged in an information document from the US Attorney's Office, which does not require grand jury approval to initiate criminal proceedings. Federal prosecutors say Kindle and Cole abused their positions to acquire illegal drugs known as "bath salts" from Homeland Security evidence and from

other law enforcement personnel, including US Customs and Border Protection officers, under the false pretense that they would use them for legitimate investigations.

Prosecutors say Kindle and Cole began stealing drugs from evidence and lying to fellow agents about their purpose in 2021. They are also alleged to have stolen thousands of dollars in cash, a diamond ring and a Peruvian antiquity from evidence.

From 2022 to 2024, the agents allegedly sold the drugs to a person identified in court documents only as a "source of information" for the department, prosecutors. They let that person resell the drugs and did not arrest the customers, according to charging documents.

The FBI says the scheme brought in between \$195,000 and \$300,000. The agents later are said to have compelled a confidential informant recruited to conduct controlled buys from suspected dealers after his release from prison to become the new middleman. Kindle and Cole used an encrypted messaging app to give the informant meeting locations, which ranged from a Panera Bread restaurant to a Nike store, according to an FBI affidavit.

The FBI began investigating in October 2024 after the informant's lawyer contacted the US Attorney in Utah to report that Kindle and Cole had required him to engage in potentially unlawful acts, according to the affidavit. Investigators began tracking them and recorded eight transactions in which drugs were illegally sold to the informant.

On one occasion, authorities say, the informant handed over to the FBI a plastic foam cup containing a granular substance that tested positive for drugs. He said the agents left it for him in a parking lot trash can. Ingestion of synthetic bath salts, also known as Alpha-PVP or cathinone, can lead to bizarre behavior such as paranoia and extreme strength, according to authorities.

The drug is said to be similar to methamphetamine, cocaine or ecstasy, and is unrelated to actual bath products. Kindle and Cole had their Homeland Security credentials suspended but have not been fired, according to court documents. Cole has pleaded not guilty to his drug distribution conspiracy charge and will stand trial the week of Feb. 24. He faces a maximum of 20 years if convicted.

Smugglers to face severe curbs under new UK laws

LONDON (Reuters): Suspected people smugglers will face severe curbs under new laws in Britain, the government said, as it steps up efforts to fight illegal migration and strengthen border security. Those suspected will be hit with travel bans, social media blackouts and restrictions on phone usage to help "dismantle organised immigration crime networks", the government said.

"We will give law enforcement stronger powers they need to pursue and stop more of these vile gang networks," interior minister Yvette Cooper said, describing border security as one of the foundations of the government's recently laid out "plan for change". Prime Minister Keir Starmer, elected in July, has prioritised tackling illegal migration by cracking down on the gangs who smuggle people across the English Channel, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, into Britain from France. Over 36,800 people made the dangerous crossing in 2024, a 25% year-on-year surge, according to government data. Several dozen have died attempting to do so, with the Refugee Council charity terming it the deadliest year on record for crossings.

Rosita Missoni dies aged 93

ROME (BBC): Rosita Missoni, co-founder of the eponymous Italian knitwear label Missoni, has died aged 93. The news was confirmed by the president of Italy's Lombardy region, Attilio Fontana, who praised the brand's iconic "multicoloured textures".

He described her death as "a great loss for Italy, Lombardy and for the province of Varese where she was born and lived". Rosita founded the luxury brand - which became known for its zig-zag motif - in the northern Italian region with her husband Ottavio in 1953. Rosita, whose parents were shawlmakers, was born in 1931 in the town of Golasecca, Lombardy. While on a study trip to learn English in London, she met Ottavio - known as Tai - while he was competing in the 400m hurdles at the 1948 Olympic Games. At the time, Tai was producing his own knit trackuits, including bottoms with a zip so they could be put on over trainers. "When I got married, four sewing machines arrived with my husband," Rosita told the AFP news agency in a 2016 interview.

Jill Biden gets priciest gift from a foreign leader

WASHINGTON (AP): President Joe Biden and his family were given tens of thousands of dollars in gifts from foreign leaders in 2023, according to an annual accounting published by the State Department, with first lady Jill Biden receiving the single most expensive present: a \$20,000 diamond from India's leader.

The 7.5-carat diamond from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was easily the most costly gift presented to any member of the first family in 2023, although she also received a brooch valued at \$14,063 from the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States and a bracelet, brooch and photograph album worth \$4,510 from the president and first lady of Egypt. The US president himself received a number of expensive presents, including a commemorative photo album valued at \$7,100 from South Korea's recently impeached President Suk Yeol Yoon, a \$3,495 statue of Mongolian warriors from the Mongolian prime minister, a \$3,300 silver bowl from the sultan of Brunei, a \$3,160 sterling silver tray from the president of Israel, and a collage worth \$2,400 from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Federal law requires executive branch officials to declare gifts they receive from foreign leaders and counterparts that have an estimated value of more than \$480. Many of the gifts that meet that threshold are relatively modest,

and the more expensive ones are typically - but not always - transferred to the National Archives or put on official displays. The \$20,000 diamond was retained for official use in the White House East Wing, according to a State Department document, while the other gifts to the president and first lady were sent to the archives.

Vanessa Valdivia, a spokesperson for Jill Biden, said the diamond will be turned over to the archives after they leave office. She did not say what it was being used for. Recipients also have the option to purchase the gift from the US government at its market value, although that is rare, particularly with high-end items.

According to the State Department's Office of Protocol, which compiles the list that will be published in edition of the Federal Register, several employees of the CIA reported receiving lavish gifts of watches, perfume and jewelry, nearly all of which were destroyed. Of the gifts destroyed, they were worth more than \$132,000 combined. CIA Director William Burns received a \$18,000 astrograph, which is a telescope and astrological camera, from an foreign source whose identity is classified. That is being transferred to the General Services Administration. But Burns reported receiving and destroying an \$11,000 Omega watch, while numerous others did the

Congo sentences 13 soldiers to death

LUBERO (Reuters): A Congolese military tribunal has sentenced 13 soldiers to death on charges including murder, looting, and cowardice in what military authorities said was a drive to improve army discipline after territorial losses due to soldiers fleeing.

The soldiers were sentenced in the town of Lubero in Democratic Republic of Congo's eastern North Kivu province, where Congolese forces have been fighting the Rwanda-backed M23 insurgency for nearly three years, as well as facing other militia violence. Fighting has flared in Lubero territory and cases of soldiers abandoning their positions have helped the enemy advance, said local army spokesperson Mak Hazukay. "Some of the soldiers who are supposed to be fighting the enemy at the front have shown a kind of indiscipline," he said.

Zambian cop freed 13 suspects

HARARE (BBC): A drunken police officer in Zambia freed 13 suspects from custody so that they could go and celebrate the new year, officials say. Detective inspector Titus Phiri was arrested after releasing the suspects from Leonard Cheelo police station in the capital, Lusaka, before running away himself.

The 13 detainees were accused of crimes such as assault, robbery and burglary. They are all currently on the run and a manhunt has been launched to find them. Police spokesperson Rae Hamoonga said that Mr Phiri, "in a state of intoxication, forcibly seized cell keys" from constable Serah Banda on New Year's Eve.

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

China forcing out foreign car companies

ON Dec. 23, Japan's Honda and Nissan announced they would work toward a merger. If the effort is successful, the pair will form the world's third-largest car company by sales. The two companies also announced that Nissan's alliance partner, Mitsubishi Motors, will join the consolidation talks. China was one of the important factors pushing the three firms to contemplate a merger. This year has been troubling for almost all foreign carmakers in that country, which boasts the world's largest car market. Honda and Nissan believe that together they can cut costs and pool resources to catch up to companies such as BYD of China and America's Tesla, with its gigafactory in Shanghai, as they "devour market share."

Japanese companies are not the only ones concerned about being devoured. For a quarter century, General Motors competed with Volkswagen for the No. 1 spot in China. Now, that iconic American brand is in 16th place. "GM's sales in China have entered a death spiral, falling 42.5 percent in the first 11 months of this year," the New York Times reported. The company took a \$5 billion charge against profits last month due to what the paper termed a "dizzying collapse of its China business." GM lost \$347 million in China over the first three quarters of this year.

Volkswagen is not in much better shape. "Chinese consumers see VW as the king of yesteryear, an era when global brands reigned supreme," Michael Dunne, an automotive consultant in China since the 1990s, told Autoblog, which in November suggested the German giant might not survive in the Chinese market. Other foreign carmakers also have problems. Most notably, the joint venture that made Jeeps with Europe's Stellantis filed for bankruptcy in 2022. As Jeff Schuster of auto researcher GlobalData told CNN, "Every international brand is suffering in China." In five years, Chinese brands went from 38 percent of the Chinese car market to about 70 percent now.

There is no mystery about how foreign brands lost their way. "Vice President Al Gore traveled to Beijing in March 1997 to witness the inking of a joint venture agreement for General Motors to build 100,000 Buicks a year," Washington, D.C.-based trade analyst Alan Tonelson told me. "Then, everyone thought the Chinese would be content to merely buy American parts and assemble them. That view proved to be disastrously wrong." Moreover, Chinese rules forced technology transfers from foreign companies to joint ventures. Then, Chinese joint venture partners took the tech and started building vehicles of their own. That is exactly what Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp., GM's partner to make Buicks in 1997, did. SAIC, as GM's Chinese partner is known, transferred engineers working for its joint venture with GM to its own operations to build SAIC-branded vehicles.

Chinese carmakers also got help from the government when it became clear that, despite everything, they could not compete with foreign brands in building gasoline-powered vehicles. Beijing simply changed the rules, effectively mandating a switch to EVs and plug-in hybrids. The foreigners were slow to make the change — their fault — but China's officials made sure they fell behind. "Beijing limited or blocked government subsidies for cars built by foreign companies," the New York Times reports.

Furthermore, China's state-owned banks and local governments heavily subsidized domestic makers, further tilting the scales. Local help to local companies has been substantial. According to Autoblog, Chinese firms like BYD can sell their cars at prices 50 percent below production costs. Dunne believes that most Western brands "will be forced to exit the market in the next five years if not sooner." "Losing China would be catastrophic for any automotive enterprise," Bill Russo of the Shanghai-based advisory Automobility told CNN. That assessment at first glance looks correct. After all, which company could afford not to be in a market that had 30.1 million unit sales in 2023? Nonetheless, being forced out of the China market will probably not be as bad as everyone believes. For one thing, competition will be gruesome for quite some time. The most recent EV price war has lasted almost two years, and there is no end in sight. Xi Jinping does not believe deflation is a bad thing — "Don't people like it when things are cheaper?" he asked advisors according to the Wall Street Journal — so he will continue to support policies resulting in price reductions.

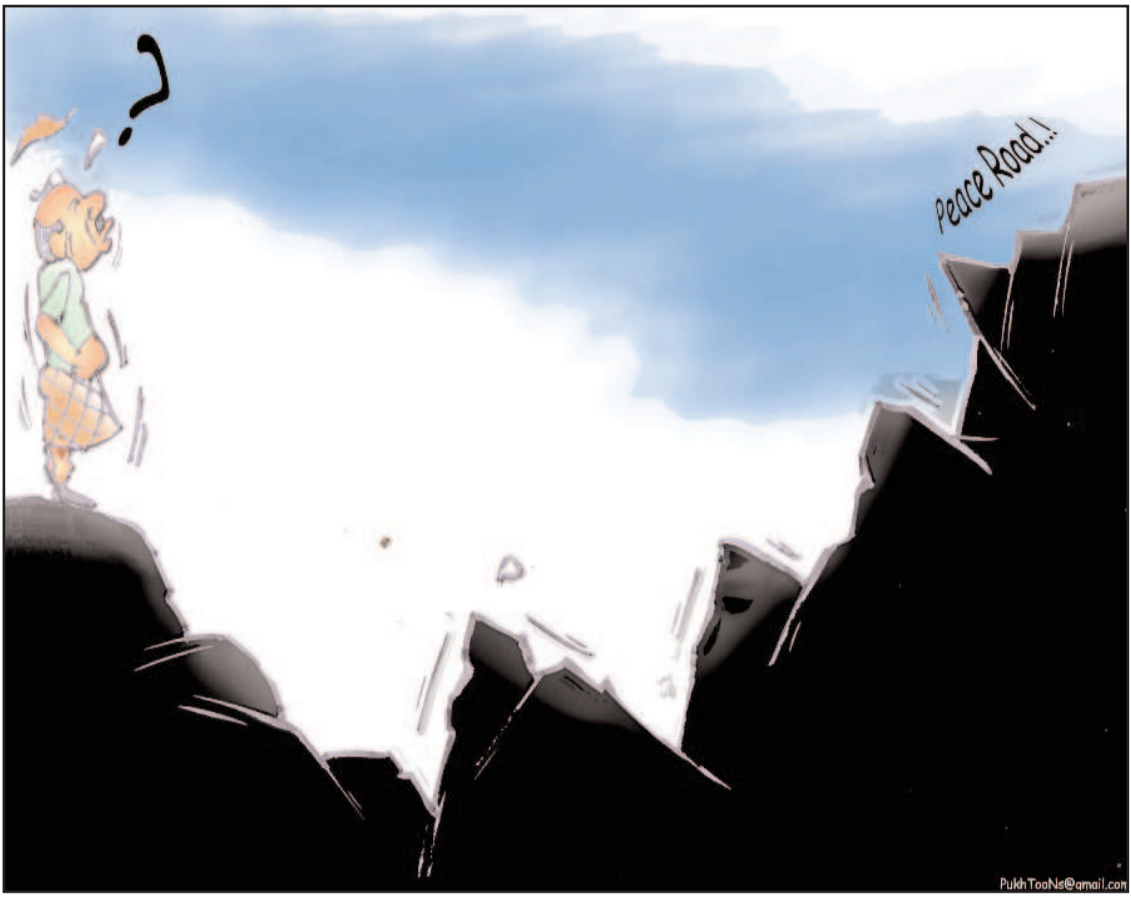
BYD, by far and away the largest seller of EVs and plug-in hybrids in China, is profitable, but the price war has taken its toll. Consultancy AlixPartners predicts only 19 of the current 137 Chinese EV brands will be in the black by the end of this decade. So the profit outlook for most foreign companies — Tesla may be an exception — is not good. Moreover, no car company in China, domestic or foreign, should count on using China as a manufacturing base for other markets. "For all China's EV success in its own market, its strategy of stoking overcapacity and profiting from exports is running into deep trouble, as major economies from the United States to the European Union, to India, and to Canada are either raising trade barriers to these Chinese vehicles or mulling such measures," said Tonelson, who blogs on trade and geopolitical matters at RealityCheck.

Countries are fast putting up barriers. The Biden administration, for instance, has effectively blocked Chinese EVs with its 100 percent Section 301 tariffs imposed in May and its proposed Commerce Department rule, announced in September, banning key Chinese hardware and software in connected vehicles. The European Union in October imposed tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on Chinese EVs. Even Global South countries are moving to keep out Chinese EVs. In June, Turkey placed an additional 40 percent tariff on vehicles from China, and in September it imposed restrictions on Chinese plug-in hybrids.

As a result of these actions, the value of China's EV exports fell 42 percent in November. Countries are not going to allow China, with its predatory and criminal practices, to decimate local industries. Chinese companies, to get around trade barriers, are now building factories in countries that are parties to trade agreements with the US and Europe. Yet going abroad is not a sure-fire strategy. Authorities in Brazil's northeastern state of Bahia just stopped construction on a BYD plant due to worker conditions comparable to "slavery." Honda and Nissan hope to complete their merger and list on the Tokyo Stock Exchange by August 2026. Perhaps by then no foreign car company will want to remain in China.

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 teshil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Why Trump has so much riding on the House speaker vote

Stephen Collinson

HOUSE speaker elections on Friday are less about Mike Johnson and more about Donald Trump. Johnson's frantic fight to hold onto his job was still a cliffhanger heading into a fateful day for Republicans. But the president-elect has even more on the line - nothing less than his push for a fast start to his second presidency and promise to deliver massive change. If Trump fails to lift Johnson over the line, he will sow new doubts about his capacity to effectively lead the GOP trifecta of power in the House, Senate and White House.

The convening of the 119th Congress, therefore, represents the first day of Washington's new Trump era with Republicans aiming to produce tangible results as soon as he steps back into the Oval Office on January 20. The nation's new leaders plan sweeping overhauls of immigration policy and big tax cuts using complex maneuvers required to overcome Democratic filibusters in the Senate. Such moves will demand unity and political dexterity for which the House GOP is hardly renowned.

But before they can do anything, House Republicans must elect a speaker, an often routine task that is deeply perilous for Johnson because of the tiny majority that means he can lose only one vote in his fractious party if every lawmaker turns up. The Louisiana Republican is leaning hard into the idea that the GOP could be about to squander a golden opportunity. "I genuinely believe ... we could be the most consequential Congress of the modern era, because I believe President Trump will be the most consequential president," he told Fox Business on Thursday. "We have to fix everything, and that has to begin on day one, so we don't have any time to waste."

New York Rep. Mike Lawler, likely one of the most vulnerable GOP members in the 2026 midterms, warned of the risks of a drawn-out vote. "From my vantage point, that would be the height of stupidity to get into a protracted speaker battle," he told CNN's Kaitlan Collins last week. Even the

endorsement from Trump, who has crushed most Republican resistance to his MAGA movement, cannot guarantee that Johnson will triumph as unified conservative rule takes hold. The president-elect has an extra incentive to secure Johnson's speakership after experiencing the limits of his power before Christmas when Republican defections in the House scuppered his demands to raise the debt ceiling. Any repeat of the farce of two years ago, when Speaker Kevin McCarthy won after 15 rounds of voting, would be a debacle for Trump and show how his ambitions could plunge through a legislative trap door at any moment. It would also augur poorly for the tortuous process of uniting the governing party behind a budget, for the tough compromises needed in any tax reform bill, and for the president-elect's hopes of quickly getting a massive boost in funding for his promised mass deportation plans and securing the southern border.

In a sign of the importance of the speaker vote, Trump has agreed to call potential holdouts, CNN's Kristen Holmes and Alayna Treene reported. If Republicans can't select a speaker by Monday, they won't even be able to initiate the congressional process to certify Trump's election victory - a spectacle that would be sure to infuriate and embarrass the president-elect.

The certification comes on the fourth anniversary of his mob smashing its way into the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, and trying to overturn President Joe Biden's legitimate election win. Republicans believe Trump has a mandate after sweeping all seven swing states and a plurality of the popular vote in November to gut a Washington establishment many voters believe ignored their problems. But before they can tear government down and slash its budget, Republicans have to prove they can govern with sufficient skill to enact their transformation.

This is no small task given the splits in the House GOP conference and the fact that a majority of one is hardly a functioning majority. And time is

short. New presidents have limited time to enact their program with midterm elections always looming. The GOP's shaky unity and tough fights to come make Trump's window even smaller.

Johnson, however, may not have the votes despite his bullish predictions on Thursday that he'd surge to victory in a single round of voting. Some members fault the Louisiana Republican for passing bills, including a multi-billion-dollar aid package for Ukraine, last year with Democratic help - although his options were severely limited considering Republicans did not control the Senate or the White House.

Others doubt his acumen as speaker and wonder, after a year-end kerfuffle over a stop-gap spending bill that was torpedoed by Trump and Elon Musk, whether he has the skill to pilot the president-elect's agenda. Already, one lawmaker is pledged not to vote for Johnson, who emerged as a late compromise candidate when he won the speakership in October 2023 after a bruising search for a leader after McCarthy's ouster.

Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie told CNN's Manu Raju last month that nothing could sway him since "there's nothing I want in exchange for my vote." Another frequent Johnson critic, Rep. Tim Burchett, said Thursday that he'd think and pray on his decision overnight. The Tennessee Republican did allow that Trump's endorsement of Johnson was a factor. He also acknowledged that Johnson had engaged him on his call for a commitment to a return to single-issue spending bills. "That's new to me," Burchett told CNN's Lauren Fox in a phone call. Massie and Burchett are examples of lawmakers who, either because of their own stands on principles or conservative records that resonate in their districts, may be immune from primary threats prompted by Trump or Musk.

In a normal governing situation - in a party with a workable majority - such lawmakers would probably be given a pass to oppose

Johnson. But the minuscule House majority means that such fixes are beyond the reach of party leaders.

Johnson spent Thursday shuttling between meetings with lawmakers and the studios of conservative media outlets as he tried to shore up his position. He held talks with a group of GOP holdouts including Reps. Chip Roy, Ralph Norman, Andy Harris, Andy Ogles, Michael Cloud and Eli Crane. Norman emerged from the meeting saying, "Mike is listening, he is a good listener, or he wouldn't be there for the last hour." The South Carolina Republican added that "people trust Mike Johnson" - a nod to the bitter tensions that boiled between McCarthy and some of his enemies in the party, including his chief antagonist, former Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz. Johnson told reporters after the meetings that "people are talking through process changes." But therein lies a possible trap. One reason why McCarthy was such a weak speaker was that he made so many concessions to hard-liners that he curtailed his own power and long-term prospects.

Still, several factors play in Johnson's favor and may help him squeeze through. News of Trump's willingness to cajole holdouts could be significant. It would be a brave lawmaker who defies a powerful new president who commands the base as Trump does. The prospect of obstructing a new era of conservative governance and risking the exposure to a right-wing media onslaught might also change some minds. Political dynamics have changed dramatically. When Republicans dueled over the speakership in bitter infighting in the last session of Congress, Democrats controlled the Senate and the White House so there was little prospect of them advancing significant legislation in any case. Now there is much more to lose. And the paucity of obvious alternatives who could unite the House Republican conference may mean that Johnson, who rose to power from obscurity on the backbenches, may prevail by default. After all, if not Johnson, then who?

CNN

Do not fall for simplistic portrayals of New Orleans attacker

Soraya Salam

IN the Louisiana city of New Orleans, the new year began with a horrible tragedy after a man ploughed his truck into a crowd of revellers in the early hours of January 1, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens of others.

The attacker was soon formally identified as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old United States citizen from the neighbouring state of Texas. As the story unfolded, news outlets zeroed in on two key details mentioned in the FBI's preliminary statement on the incident: an ISIL (ISIS) flag was found in Jabbar's vehicle, and his social media accounts contained posts that suggest he may have been "inspired" by the group. For many, this was enough to frame Jabbar, who was killed at the scene by police gunfire, as a terrorist "linked" to ISIL.

While the FBI says it is investigating the attack as an act of "terrorism", at the time of this writing, there is no evidence to suggest Jabbar was ordered by ISIL to carry out an attack on US soil. The FBI has not specified what evidence it has used to make that legal determination, or released detailed information on a possible motive. What we do know is that Jabbar was a US Army veteran who served in the US military for 13 years, including a deployment to Afghanistan. He was reportedly going through a divorce and had expressed a desire to kill his entire family. All this complicates the narrative significantly and calls into question the assumptions being made about what drove him to kill so many people.

The claim by FBI officials and even US President Joe Biden that the attacker was "inspired" by ISIL raises important questions about journalistic responsibility. How do we, as journalists, extrapolate our reporting from official statements versus the broader context of facts? Context is key. Our reporting on what government officials say should immediately be followed with the other facts we know about the attacker's background, statements and personal life. This is especially true when covering developing stories like this one, where authorities release conflicting information in the heat of the moment, only to quietly walk it back later.

Jabbar was not an impressionable youth but a middle-aged military veteran with significant life experience and a lot of baggage. For all we know he may have been "radicalised" by what he experienced during his time in the US military. What about the trauma of his divorce and the anger he reportedly had for his own family? The point is, we just don't know enough yet. What we do know is that we should be asking more questions. So far, the Western media seems to be choosing the easy path, and following a well-tested formula when covering this tragic story: "Bad Brown Muslim committed terrorism in the name of

ISIL." This narrative conveniently ignores the complexity of Jabbar's circumstances and sidesteps deeper questions about his mental state, his time serving in Afghanistan and the personal crises he faced. Contrast this with how stories involving white male shooters are often treated. Reporters pedal hard to humanise the perpetrators and illuminate their mental health issues, isolated lives and personal struggles.

This double standard not only prevents the public from learning the whole truth about an incident that affects their lives in a timely manner, but also reinforces harmful stereotypes and further alienates marginalised communities. The Muslim communities in New Orleans, and the attacker's hometown of Houston, many of whom likely never knew Jabbar, for example, could now face collective blame for his actions due to the irresponsible actions of media organisations. As journalists, we know that the process of reporting developing stories is a journey. First, we break the story with the few facts we know, often relying on official lines because that's all we have at the time. This is an understandable and necessary first step. But as more information comes to light, it is our responsibility to avoid oversimplifying what is often a complex and multi-layered story.

There have been other cases where attacks were credited to ISIL but later revealed to be the acts of just one person. In 2016, initial reports about Pulse nightclub shooter Omar Mateen emphasised his declared allegiance to ISIL, but further investigation revealed a deeply disturbed individual with no operational ties to the group. This matters because of the consequences such narratives have on real lives. When media coverage fixates on tenuous connections to ISIL, it fuels anti-Muslim sentiment and policy. After the 2015 San Bernardino shooting, misinformation linking the attackers to a broader ISIL network contributed to public support for then-candidate Donald Trump's proposed "Muslim ban". Following 9/11, vague and unsubstantiated claims about Saddam Hussein's ties to al-Qaeda were instrumental in justifying the invasion of Iraq, which led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians and the political instability that birthed ISIL.

We also owe it to the families of the victims to uncover and report the whole truth of what happened that day. They deserve to know the real motives of the attacker and whether anything could have been done to prevent the tragedy. None of this is to say we should ignore potential evidence of something bigger at play here. But discernment is key. As we continue to report on this tragedy, let us centre the facts, and the context necessary to paint the most accurate and responsible picture.

Putin cannot survive another year like 2024

Richard Kemp

AS 2025 begins, pessimism about Ukraine's fate hangs in the air and the stench of appeasement on the wind. I find myself confused as to why, for it should be clear that the conflict has so far been an ignominious failure for President Vladimir Putin.

Unable to achieve the objective of subjugating his far smaller neighbour, he has instead inflicted enormous suffering on his own country and devastated its economy while undermining Russian prestige and strategic influence around the world. Let us forget that what was planned as a three-day "special operation" has turned into a three-year nightmare. Russia has made only limited territorial gains and has been incapable of capturing even the whole of Donetsk Oblast in the east. Last year's grand offensive to establish a buffer zone at Kharkiv to protect Russian territory only seized a few kilometres along the

border. Missile attacks aimed at plunging Ukraine into near-constant cold and darkness have clearly failed.

Meanwhile Putin has lost control of parts of Kursk Oblast to Ukrainian forces in the first invasion of Russian territory since the Second World War, failing to retake it despite enlisting North Korea as an ally in the conflict. Putin's much-vaunted air defences have proven unable to halt Ukrainian strikes on airfields, oil depots and ammunition warehouses inside Russia. Even the capital, Moscow, has been penetrated by locally-produced Ukrainian explosive drones. The Russian navy has been humiliated, losing control of the Black Sea and unable to strangle Ukraine's grain exports. Upwards of 15 of its ships have been sunk by sea drones with many more damaged and the remainder of the fleet forced to retreat from the Crimean peninsula and the shores of Ukraine. The human toll from Putin's sle-

rotic campaign has also been immense. Ukraine estimates that Russian forces sustained 427,000 casualties in 2024 alone. The Institute for the Study of War, a US think tank, assesses that during the same period Russia seized 4,168 square kilometres; that means each square kilometre captured has cost more than 100 casualties.

The financial outlay on those casualties, with 6 per cent of the entire federal budget promised to support the wounded and compensate the families of the dead, is just one contributor to Russia's increasingly precarious economy. Interest rates have hit 23 per cent with inflation at 9 per cent, driven by an unsustainable war economy badly damaged by global sanctions. The Russian financial system may not be on the verge of collapse, but no matter how much the Kremlin talks up its prospects, long-term eco-

nomic stagnation seems inevitable even if the conflict ends in 2025. Further afield, the war has severely damaged Russian credibility in the Middle East. Putin's intervention in the Syrian civil war in 2015 kept Assad in power. But the scaling back of his forces there to stoke the meat grinder in Ukraine together with the withdrawal in 2023 of the Wagner mercenary force - another casualty of the war - meant he was unable to save the dictator at the end of last year. Whether or not Moscow retains its bases in Syria, its reputation as a tough and dependable ally compared to the vacillating West will have been badly ruptured. Contrary to Putin's dream of resurrecting a Russian empire, he has risked turning the country into a dependency of the Chinese. Western sanctions have already made Russia more reliant on China for economic support and com-

merce than ever before. As Moscow's economic situation worsens, the trade inequity will only deepen. Russia also depends on the Chinese supply of dual-use technology that is essential for its war production and North Korea would not have sent 10,000 troops to help fight Putin's war without a green light from Xi Jinping. The conditions are being set for Moscow's subordination to Beijing. Despite Russia's woes, we should not make the mistake of believing that Ukraine and the West are near victory in this conflict. Unfortunately the opportunity for that was lost at least two years ago by a combination of lack of resolve in Europe and fear of escalation in the US, which denied Ukraine the weapons it needed to drive Russia back. Ukraine has been unable to halt the steady Russian advance and is not going to be able to do so without substantially increased support, which is unlikely to come.

Kyiv's allies have become increasingly war-weary since the failed counter-offensive in 2023 and many are resigned to a peace deal. Recent comments by President Zelensky suggest he too is now prepared for that, even if it means territorial concessions.

Putin is playing hardball, rejecting a reported proposal by the US president-elect, which involved a 20-year delay to Ukraine's Nato membership, Western security guarantees and a European-manned buffer zone. His stance may soften depending on how he sees the future of the Russian economy and how concerned he is over an unpredictable Donald Trump in the White House. For now, we must kill the idea that Putin is "winning" the war. It has been a colossal failure. The tragedy is the West may be about to reward Putin with enough territory for him to claim otherwise, turning defeat into victory.

Reform has an early lead in race to revive real British conservatism

David Frost

FEW of us, it seems, have welcomed 2025 with much enthusiasm. It's not surprising. We already know that this awful Labour government is taking us further towards a collectivist, ultimately socialist society. Taxation and spending are the highest they have ever been. And education reforms and Brexit, among the few achievements of the past 14 years of quasi-conservative government, are going to be damagingly watered down.

This fundamentally conservative country can already see and feel it all - that's why, according to YouGov, the Government's approval ratings have fallen from - 2 per cent at the end of July to -45 per cent now. So Labour must be opposed. But they have a huge majority in Parliament. The most potent constraints on them will more likely be a durable collapse in their opinion poll ratings and the existence of a viable and credible alternative advocated by an effective opposition.

As I have said so often in these pages, this requires a political movement ready to be honest with the British people about how bad things have got and what will be needed to turn the country around. For we, along with most of Europe, have been going in the wrong direction for a long time now.

The economic figures that came out just before Christmas made this abundantly clear. Feel like you haven't been getting any better off? You're right. National income per head, which in the long run is the only thing that matters, has been falling since the middle of 2022 and is now the same as at the beginning of 2019.

This is the culmination of a long-term trend. In the 1980s and 1990s, GDP per head grew by 2.2 per cent a year on average. In the 2000s and 2010s, it was 1.2 per cent. In the five years since then, it has hardly grown at all (0.1 per cent). These may sound like small

numbers, but over time they really count. If we had kept up the growth of the 1980s and 90s, every single one of us would be nearly £15,000 better off per year - or, removing under-18s from the calculation, about £35,000 per family. That's surely worth having. People are, in fact, beginning to notice this. It's not passed without comment that every American is roughly £27,000 better off on average than every Brit; or that if young people want to accumulate any wealth they need to go to the US, or, increasingly, to the UAE, a country that 60

Writing in The Spectator this week, the pollster James Kanagasooriam notes that the "public consensus appears to be: tax cuts yes; spending cuts no". But the truth is that spending is already excessive, we are already running a big deficit, and debt is far too high. Who will step up? The Opposition is currently divided between the Conservatives and Reform. Psephologically and electorally, that is a problem, and one which must be solved by 2028/9. But for now I am not so sure. If we had only one opposition party, that

It was Nigel Farage who this week pointed out that we need to fix the vast and growing liability of public sector pension spending. From the Conservatives and Kemi Badenoch, so far, we haven't had the articulation of any clear principles, and over Christmas only a silly and, it turns out, ill-founded attack on Reform over their membership numbers.

years ago was mainly sand. Growth rates matter.

We know the reasons. Spending, taxation and regulation are all too high. Jon Moynihan's recent book Return to Growth surveys the literature and shows that every 10 per cent of GDP on tax and spend takes 1 per cent off annual growth. In Tony Blair's first term, public spending was about 35 per cent of GDP. It's currently 45 per cent. That's one part of the problem. But Moynihan also shows that, if we could get our level of business regulation back to that of 1995 - hardly the Victorian era - we could expect at least another 1 per cent on growth. That's the other part.

Who on the Right is going to be honest about this? Post-liberals warn us against a return to divisive and disruptive Thatcherism.

party could avoid saying anything meaningful, sit back, and watch Labour's failures deliver it victory. That isn't possible at the moment. Instead the two parties must compete to deliver the most plausible analysis and the most effective prospectus, one that is based on reality.

After all, reality-deniers can already vote Labour or Lib Dem. I'm convinced instead that the conservative majority in Britain wants to be told what's going wrong and what needs to be done about it.

So far it has to be said that Reform has an early lead. It was Reform that put big questions like NHS reform on the agenda at the general election, without resulting in the electoral disaster that so many predicted. It was Nigel Farage who this week pointed out

that we need to fix the vast and growing liability of public sector pension spending. From the Conservatives and Kemi Badenoch, so far, we haven't had the articulation of any clear principles, and over Christmas only a silly and, it turns out, ill-founded attack on Reform over their membership numbers. Farage tells us in his New Year's message that we are a country in "societal decline and economic decline". Kemi Badenoch asks us to "watch this space".

Of course, it is fair enough to resist setting out a long list of detailed policies. But the principles the Conservatives are operating upon do need to be clear. Yes, Lady Thatcher took time to develop her policies in opposition. But if you read her early speeches, her underlying principles are very obvious: an end to post-war collectivist politics, a return to freedom, markets, enterprise, and standing up for ourselves in the world, and pride in the British nation. No one could doubt what she was trying to do. Can we yet say this about the Conservatives today? For the past three years, I have spent every other weekend talking to Conservative activists and potential voters. But I can't do so at the moment because I just don't know what to say. Do we support or oppose net zero? Do we back near-zero net migration? What do we think about the European Convention on Human Rights? Do we oppose the Brexit "reset"? Is the NHS broken? Do we plan to cut spending and taxes, and if so where? And, crucially, can we credibly disavow much of what recent Conservative governments have done, and say, as Sir Keith Joseph famously did in 1975, "I had thought that I was a Conservative, but now I see that I was not really one at all." Unless the Conservative Party can do this, it will increasingly find that real conservatives won't back it.

The Telegraph

Britain has a social care crisis

Wes Streeting

fall on the health service and our NHS will be overwhelmed. We can't keep paying a heavier and heavier price for failure. Our NHS can't afford to keep bearing a heavier burden. We can't afford not to act.

Labour took a lot of flak in the general election campaign for not spelling out in more detail our plans for a National Care Service. I was honest about the reason why - general election campaigns are where plans for social care go to die. In 2009, when Andy Burnham established cross-party talks on social care, David Cameron pulled out and leaked details of the talks to attack Labour in the election campaign. In 2017, it was Labour that torpedoed Theresa May's proposals. Then Rishi Sunak defunded Boris Johnson's cap on care costs. Over the past 15 years, there have been plenty of good ideas for how to address this crisis, but a lack of good politics. This government is committed to doing politics differently. Today, I am announcing an independent commission on building a National Care Service. The commission will publish its interim report next year and conclude towards the end of the parliament. Previous reviews on different aspects of social care, including Andrew Dilnot's work on care costs, will be fed into the commission. It's fair to say that it won't be starting from scratch.

I'm delighted that Louise Casey has agreed to chair the commission. She has served under Labour, Conservative and coalition governments. She is a trusted, independent figure, who will involve all political parties and the public in the process of building a national consensus around what our country wants from social care, and how a National Care Service can best meet our needs. She and I have already been working together on immediate action we can take today to improve social care. Alongside the commission, the government is

also announcing an in-year uplift to disabled facilities grant funding for 2024-25. This will provide about 7,800 extra home adaptations to help disabled people live safely and independently in their own homes.

We are publishing new national standards to help the people who use care, together with their families and care providers, to buy the latest, most effective assistive technology. We are better integrating NHS and social care, with the NHS and local government sharing funding and working together to keep people out of hospital, which is better for patients and less expensive for taxpayers. We are providing guidance and support to help care workers to carry out routine monitoring while they're looking after people, including blood pressure checks. We're also joining up care and medical records, so that NHS and care staff have the full picture they need to provide the best possible care to patients. For care workers, this will mean taking on new skills and more senior roles, as part of our steps to professionalise the workforce. As Keir Starmer said at the Labour party conference, his sister ought to command the same respect for her role as a care worker as he does for his role as prime minister.

Alongside this action plan, we have legislated for fair pay agreements to help fill the 131,000 vacancies in social care. We've also provided a £2,300 rise in carer's allowance for family carers, and have allocated extra funding to social care in the budget. We've done a lot in six months but there's a hell of a lot more to do, and the best is yet to come. It will take time, but Casey's work will finally grasp this nettle and set our country on the path to building a National Care Service that meets the urgent needs of our generation, guarantees quality care to all who need it, and lasts long into the future.

The Guardian

Donald Trump and great Panama Canal tantrum

Belén Fernández

AS he gears up to retake the presidency of the United States this month, Donald Trump has spontaneously begun threatening to retake the Panama Canal, as well. Per the incoming president's recent tantrums on social media, Panama is "ripping off" the US with "ridiculous" fees to use the interoceanic waterway and principal conduit for global commerce. As Trump sees it, the Central American country's behaviour is especially objectionable "knowing the extraordinary generosity that has been bestowed to Panama by the US".

Trump has also baselessly alleged that Chinese troops are currently operating the canal. In reality, of course, the Panama Canal was previously operated by none other than the United States, which built the canal at the beginning of the 20th century and only handed over control to Panama in 1999. As for the "extraordinary generosity" allegedly extended to the country by the friendly local superpower, just recall the US military's so-called "Operation Just Cause", launched in December 1989, thanks to which the impoverished neighbourhood of El Chorrillo in the Panamanian capital of Panama City earned the moniker "Little Hiroshima". Up to several thousand civilians were killed in the maniacal display of firepower, a practice run for the upcoming US war on Iraq. For his part, Panamanian leader and former US buddy Manuel Noriega surrendered to US forces on January 3, 1990, after his stay at the Vatican

embassy in Panama City had been soundly disrupted by a playlist of musical torture blasting from the US tanks parked outside. Selected tunes included Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA" and Bon Jovi's "Wanted Dead or Alive".

Noriega was carted off to Miami to face drug trafficking and other charges - never mind his lengthy history on the CIA payroll despite full US knowledge of said narco-activity. His removal meanwhile paved the way for far greater involvement in the international drug trade by Panama's ruling class. Just call it "extraordinary generosity". As for earlier bouts of generosity, the US from 1903 until 1979 presided over a de facto colony by the name of the Panama Canal Zone, which encompassed a significant portion of Panamanian territory and abided by a system of racial segregation that persisted even after such things were officially abolished in the US proper. The Canal Zone also played host to all manner of US military bases and other installations such as the notorious US Army School of the Americas, attended by many a Latin American dictator and death squad leader as well as by Noriega himself. The United States completed the construction of the Panama Canal in 1914 - an undertaking that claimed countless thousands of lives and relied heavily on dark-skinned labour and chain-gang servitude. An exercise in world dominance rather than "generosity", the building of the canal commenced during the reign of US

President Theodore Roosevelt, who was obsessed with the idea that the waterway was "the vital - the indispensable - path to a global destiny for the United States of America", as historian David McCullough notes in his tome The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914. When Roosevelt assumed the presidency in 1901, Panama still belonged to Colombia, but the negotiations between the Colombian government and the US over the proposed canal proved less than smooth. And voila: the new nation of Panama was thus born in 1903, midwived by Roosevelt and more than thrilled to cede a chunk of its territory as well as national sovereignty to the US.

As John Weeks and Phil Gunson put it in their book Panama: Made in the USA, the country was "carved out of the heart of Latin America to serve the objectives of a foreign power". And to this day, Panama bears the scars of the carving. One prominent Panama City thoroughfare is still named after Roosevelt, although Fourth of July Avenue has been renamed Martyrs' Avenue in honour of the victims of the January 1964 flag riots. On that particular occasion, US forces killed some 21 people after Panamanian students attempted to raise their flag next to the US one at a Canal Zone high school.

As it so happens, Trump has his own connection to the Panama City landscape in the form of a waterfront luxury condo that was

formerly branded the Trump Ocean Club International Hotel and Tower and is still referred to locally as "the Trump" despite the elimination of his surname from the sign. In 2017, NBC reported that the Trump Organization had licensed its name to the 70-storey building, which was "riddled with ties to drug money and international organized crime". That said, it's not like Panama is an issue that has ever kept Trump up at night. Rather, the sudden threats to recapture the Panama Canal are simply of piece with the president-elect's "America First" approach to riling his fan base into a delirium of pompous entitlement - all with the help of hallucinated affronts to US "generosity". As if America weren't already "first" in terms of wreaking havoc throughout the world. But, hey, when you're the world's number one imperial superpower, you get to have your cake and be the victim, too.

McCullough writes how, in the midst of failed canal negotiations in Washington in 1902, Colombian diplomat Dr José Vicente Concha made the following observation regarding his gringo counterparts: "The desire to make themselves appear, as a Nation, most respectful of the rights of others forces these gentlemen to toy a little with their prey before devouring it, although when all is said and done, they will do so in one way or other." And while Trump can hardly be bothered with feigning respect, the US certainly hasn't lost its appetite for toying with its prey.

Aljazeera

Native American news: 2024 in review

Cecily Hilleary

THE 2024 elections in the US highlighted the growing impact of Native American voters, especially in swing states such as Arizona. Home to 22 tribes, Native voters played a key role in that state's results. Unfounded claims of voter fraud and election irregularities four years ago triggered a surge of restrictive voting laws across the United States for this year's vote, raising concerns about potential harassment and intimidation of voters and poll workers. Exit polls showed a shift in Native American support toward Republican Donald Trump, driven by economic concerns and alignment with his party's traditional values.

During his October visit to the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona, President Joe Biden delivered a long-awaited official apology to Native Americans for the Indian boarding school system that severed the family, tribal and cultural ties of thousands of Indian children over multiple generations.

"I say this with all sincerity: This, to me, is one of the most consequential things I've ever had an opportunity to do in my whole career as president of the United States," Biden said, calling it his "solemn responsibility." In a related story, the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition in May launched the National Indian Boarding School Digital Archive, a public archive of information on boarding schools and

students that includes documents, photographs and other ephemera.

In a landmark June decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the Indian Health Service (IHS) must fully reimburse tribes for the administrative costs of running their own health care programs. Chief Justice John Roberts explained that if the federal government's position had prevailed - opposing payment of administrative costs - it would have created a "systemic funding shortfall" for tribes that chose to manage their own health care programs, thus imposing "a penalty for pursuing self-determination." In a dissenting opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh argued that the ruling could cost the government as much as \$2 billion.

The 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act allows federally recognized tribes to contract with the Indian Health Service to operate their own health care programs, which IHS would otherwise manage. When a tribe opts for this arrangement, IHS provides the funds it would have used to run those programs.

The Interior Department issued new regulations in 2024 to improve compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Passed in 1990, it calls on federally funded museums and other institutions to inventory and return to

tribal communities all ancestral remains and funerary objects. The new rules cut out a loophole that allowed institutions to hang onto "culturally unidentifiable" remains and give tribes a greater say in the process. Throughout the year, institutions have made some progress, but as ABC News reported in November, nearly 500 museums and federal agencies have so far failed to identify or make available for repatriation more than 90,000 remains and associated cultural objects. Since taking office in 2019, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem has had a tense relationship with the nine tribes in her state.

Tensions escalated in January when Noem accused Mexican drug cartels of operating on reservations and then later suggested that tribal leaders were "personally benefiting" from that drug trade. Oglala Lakota tribal president, Frank Star Comes Out, who had earlier declared a state of emergency over drug use and violence on the Pine Ridge Reservation, accused Noem of being politically motivated and in February became the first of nine tribes to ban her from the reservation.

The Land Back movement, a push for the return of lands lost to colonization, grew in momentum in 2024, and several tribes regained control of land or ancestral territories. Among the successes, the Yurok Tribe of coastal California

signed a memorandum of understanding to co-manage with the National Park Service 50 hectares (125 acres) of land they lost after the California gold rush in the mid-19th century.

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe reclaimed more than 4760 hectares (11,000 acres) of ancestral land that the federal government seized from them in the 1940s. And in the largest ever return of Indigenous land, the nonprofit Trust for Public Land returned 12,545 hectares (31,000 acres) to the Penobscot Tribe in Maine, with no easements or restrictions on its use. A rare white buffalo calf was born June 4 in Yellowstone National Park's Lamar Valley, an event of profound cultural and spiritual significance for many Native American tribes. According to Lakota tradition, White Buffalo Calf Woman appeared to the Lakota people during a time of great need, bringing them the sacred pipe and teachings of harmony, respect and gratitude for the Earth.

The pipe has been passed down for generations and is now held by Chief Arvol Looking Horse from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, who explains the tradition in the video below: Looking Horse presided over a ceremony in Yellowstone June 26, naming the calf Wakan Gli, ("Sacred Return") and warning that the calf's birth was both a fulfillment of prophecy and a warning for people to unite and protect the earth.

VOA

THREE sentences in Labour's 1945 manifesto contained a simple but historic promise: "The best health services should be available free for all. Money must no longer be the passport to the best treatment. In the new National Health Service there should be health centres where the people may get the best that modern science can offer, more and better hospitals, and proper conditions for our doctors and nurses."

In the three years following Labour's election victory, Nye Bevan fought opposition from the Conservatives, the British Medical Association and from some within his own cabinet to found the NHS. For 76 years, it has provided healthcare free at the point of need, surviving Labour and Conservative governments alike. The idea was inspired by the Beveridge report, which identified five giants of idleness, ignorance, disease, squalor and want. Were the report being written today, William Beveridge would surely add a sixth: care needs. The social care system in this country is failing. Despite an ageing population, access to publicly funded adult social care has fallen, and the number of older people receiving state-funded care in England has dropped by 10% since 2014-15.

This is piling enormous pressure on the NHS. In November, more than 12,400 hospital patients a day were well enough to leave but had to stay overnight. One in three of these delays were due to care not being available in the community. There is no solution to the crisis in the NHS that doesn't include a solution for social care. By 2050, there will be 4 million more people aged 65+ in England than today. If we do nothing, real social care costs are expected to nearly double by 2038, compared with 2018 numbers. Many more people will be left without the care they need, the burdens will

Ending Syria's Captagon trade should be a priority

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

THE Syrian conflict, marked by more than a decade of war and widespread displacement, not only devastated the lives of millions but also created an environment ripe for the proliferation of Captagon, an addictive amphetamine-like drug often called "poor man's cocaine." Captagon has emerged as a significant challenge in the Middle East, with Syria becoming its largest producer and exporter.

Captagon's surge in Syria is deeply tied to the instability wreaked by years of conflict. The drug became a lucrative source of income for the Bashar Assad regime. As a result, Captagon production, with its low manufacturing costs and high profit margins, became an attractive option. Factories sprung up in areas controlled by the regime and its allies, often shielded by complicit officials. The drug's production expanded from small-scale operations to industrial levels, turning Syria into a global hub for Captagon manufacturing.

The smuggling of Captagon from Syria has posed a significant challenge to neighboring countries and beyond. Smugglers exploit Syria's porous borders and weak enforcement to transport the drug across the region, particularly to the Gulf states.

The drug's proliferation has far-reaching consequences, particularly for the youth in the Middle East. Captagon's stimulant effects make it appealing to young people. However, its addictive nature ensnares users, leading to long-term health issues, psychological disorders and social instability. Families are often left to deal with the devastating consequences of addiction, including financial strain, broken relationships and lost futures.

Captagon addiction also tears at the fabric of society. Families are the first to feel the impact, as addiction often leads to a neglect of responsibilities, domestic violence and financial ruin. In communities, the prevalence of drug abuse contributes to higher crime

rates, a loss of productivity and a general decline in social cohesion. The youth, who should be the cornerstone of societal progress, are instead trapped in a cycle of addiction, making recovery and development even more challenging.

The new Syrian government, under the leadership of Ahmad Al-Sharaa, has inherited a nation grappling with the remnants of war and the scourge of Captagon. In his victory speech, Al-Sharaa acknowledged Syria's role as the world's leading producer of the drug and called for the country to be "purified." This acknowledgment is a crucial first step, but eradicating the Captagon trade requires a comprehensive and sustained effort. The new government must prioritize securing Syria's borders to prevent the smuggling of Captagon. This involves deploying well-trained border patrols, utilizing advanced surveillance technologies and establishing cooperation with neighboring countries. Joint operations and intelligence sharing can significantly enhance the effectiveness of anti-smuggling efforts.

Identifying and dismantling the Captagon production facilities within Syria is essential. This requires coordinated efforts between law enforcement agencies, the military and international partners. Targeting the financial networks that fund these operations can also weaken their ability to produce and distribute the drug.

Public awareness campaigns are crucial in combating Captagon addiction. The government should invest in educational programs that highlight the dangers of drug use, targeting schools, universities and community centers. Collaborating with religious leaders, nongovernmental organizations and media outlets can amplify these efforts and foster a culture of prevention. Addressing addiction requires more than just punitive measures. The government must establish rehabilitation centers to provide medical and psy-

chological support for those struggling with addiction. These centers should be accessible and adequately funded to ensure they meet the needs of the population.

Tackling Captagon production and trafficking is not a challenge Syria can face alone. The international community has a vested interest in supporting Syria's efforts to combat this issue. Assistance can come in the form of technical expertise and capacity building for law enforcement agencies. Regional cooperation is particularly important, as neighboring countries are directly affected by the Captagon trade.

Addressing the Captagon crisis is not just about combating a drug; it is about rebuilding a nation and safeguarding its future. Allowing the drug trade to persist undermines the rule of law, fuels corruption and perpetuates the cycles of poverty and instability that have plagued Syria for years. By making drug trafficking a top priority, the new government can send a strong message that it is committed to restoring order and protecting its citizens.

Effective measures against Captagon will also have a ripple effect on the region. Reducing the supply of the drug will alleviate the burden on neighboring countries, fostering better relations and cooperation. Moreover, tackling the root causes of drug production and addiction can contribute to long-term stability and development. In summary, the Captagon crisis is a reminder of the challenges that Syria faces in its path to recovery. Years of war and instability have turned the country into a hub for drug production and trafficking, with devastating consequences for its people and the region.

By prioritizing the eradication of Captagon, the new Syrian government can take a significant step. Strengthening border security, dismantling production facilities, raising public awareness, providing rehabilitation services and fostering international cooperation are all essential components of this effort.

ICCI-media collaboration vital to unlock country’s economic potential: Nasir

ISLAMABAD (APP): The role of media in shaping society by informing the public, analyzing events, and holding authorities accountable was underscored by Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Acting Senior Vice President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), during an interactive session with media personnel at the Chamber House in Islamabad.

He highlighted that through investigative reporting, journalists have the ability to uncover hidden truths, ignite public debate, and drive legal and social reforms that benefit society at large.

Chaudhry stressed that the business community currently faces numerous challenges, including bureaucratic hurdles, regulatory inefficiencies, and economic barriers that hinder

the ease of doing business. These challenges are not only stifling business growth but are also adversely affecting the national economy. He urged the media to consistently spotlight these issues, ensuring that policy-makers are aware of the difficulties and can take swift action to resolve them.

He stressed the need for improved coordination between the media and the ICCI to move more effectively address these issues.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President of ICCI and Secretary General of the United Business Group, expressed optimism regarding the government’s ongoing economic initiatives. He emphasized that these efforts will enhance the nation’s economic stability. Bakhtawari also advocated for the need to highlight the success stories of business

leaders, inspiring the youth to consider entrepreneurship and become job providers rather than job seekers.

Chaudhry Nadeem Ahmed, acting Vice President of ICCI, also spoke on the critical role of the media in ensuring accountability. He pointed out the importance of media in addressing instances of power misuse, especially within government institutions, which can have a far-reaching impact on both public trust and the economy.

He further discussed the obstacles faced by local industries that impede business growth, urging the media to bring attention to these issues for the greater economic good.

Naeem Siddiqui, Special Advisor to the ICCI President, raised concerns about the inefficiencies within the Federal Board of

Revenue (FBR) and its tendency to make decisions without engaging with business leaders. He criticized this approach, claiming that it harms businesses and creates barriers to their development.

In his welcome address, Ghulam Murtaza Siddiqui, Secretary General of the ICCI, praised the media for its vital role as a pillar of the state. He acknowledged the global recognition of the media’s contribution to uncovering real issues and fostering nation-building.

The session concluded with a renewed commitment to strengthen the collaboration between the media and the ICCI.

Both sides recognized the importance of working together to address the barriers to business expansion and contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of the country.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying fish to attract customers at his roadside setup.

Gold prices dip by Rs1,200/tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs1,200 and was sold at Rs 275,700 on Saturday against its sale at Rs276,900 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs1,029 to Rs236,368 from Rs237,397 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went down to Rs216,671 from Rs217,614.

The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,350 and Rs2,872.08 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$18 to \$2,639 from \$2657, the Association reported.

PMI rises to nine-month high

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US manufacturing moved closer to recovery in December, with production rebounding and new orders rising further, but the outlook remains uncertain amid the threat of higher tariffs that could raise prices of imported raw materials.

Despite the increase in the Institute for Supply Management’s (ISM) Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) to a nine-month high last month, the tone of the survey was less upbeat, with phrases such as “volume decreases” and “significant slowdown” appearing in some of the comments from respondents. None of the six largest manufacturing industries grew last month.

“Manufacturers ended the year with a hint of optimism, but they could face some pretty stiff challenges in the new year,” said Sal Guatieri, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets.

The ISM said on Friday that its manufacturing PMI increased to 49.3 last month, the highest reading since March, from 48.4 in November. A PMI reading below 50 indicates contraction in the manufacturing sector, which accounts for 10.3% of the economy.

Unemployment rate witnesses steep climb over past decade

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan’s unemployment rate has risen from 1.5 per cent to 7 per cent over the past decade.

The growth rate of the GDP is insufficient to meet the requirements of health and education sectors in the country. Currently, the unemployment rate in Pakistan is higher than in India and Bangladesh.

Pakistani women face greater challenges in accessing job opportunities compared to their neighbouring countries.

Additionally, the data highlights that the increase

in population has rendered it difficult to address issues related to health, education, and other necessary needs.

Every year, the population grows by 5 million which caused to the contribution to poverty.

Moreover, Pakistan needs 1.5 million jobs every year to meet employment demands.

The Planning Commission has also recommended that a reduction of at least 6 percent is necessary to lower the youth unemployment rate, while a 17 percent reduction is required to address unem-

ployment among women.

On the other hand, the weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), increased by 3.97 percent on year-on-year (YoY) basis during the week ended on January 2 as compared to corresponding week of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

On Week-on-Week basis, the inflation however witnessed a nominal decrease of 0.07 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week under review as compared to the last week.

FDA seals 24 illegal colonies, demolishes their structures

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) launched a massive crackdown against illegal housing schemes and foiled attempts to establish 24 unauthorized housing colonies during a couple of days on Satiana Road and its surrounding areas.

An FDA spokesman said here on Saturday that on the direction of FDA Director General Muhammad Asif Chaudhry, specific goals were set for the grand operation against illicit housing schemes in addition to submitting daily progress reports to Divisional Commissioner Madam Silwat Saeed and Deputy Commissioner Faisalabad Captain (Retired) Nadeem Nasir.

He said that FDA DG Asif Chaudhry and Director Town Planning Asma Mohsin supervised the operations whereas State Officer Mian Shehzad Qamar along with his team including inspectors Aslam Ansari, Sanaullah and Aslam Gujar demolished structures of 24 illegal housing colonies and sealed their sales offices on Satiana Road.

Among these colonies included Blossom City,

Canal Platinum, Grand Iconic, Khayaban-e-Green, Model City Tulip Block, Model City Executive Block, Palm City, Rehman Villas, Tech Town Phase IV, Blossom City Extension, Paramount City, Gulshan-e-Ali, Kareem Garden Phases I, II, and III, Kareem Villas, Modern Smart City Phases I and III, My Housing, Naseem Garden, Abdullah Valley, Prime Campus, Royal Garden, Shifa Villas, Shifa Valley, etc. which were developed in Chak No.235-RB, 236-RB, 238-RB, 239-RB, 215-RB, 225-RB, 226-RB, 71-RB and other localities without seeking prior permission and completing codal formalities, he added.

He said that the FDA team also confiscated the construction material from the spot during operation. Only two people produced resistance and created hurdles in official work of the FDA team. Hence, separate cases were got registered against them while further action was under progress, he added.

Meanwhile, FDA Director General Asif Chaudhry issued a strict warning that all legal and depart-

Apple to pay \$95m to settle Siri ‘listening’ lawsuit

LONDON (BBC News): Apple has agreed to pay \$95m (£77m) to settle a court case alleging some of its devices were listening to people without their permission.

The tech giant was accused of eavesdropping on its customers through its virtual assistant Siri. The claimants also allege voice recordings were shared with advertisers. Apple, which has not admitted any wrongdoing, has been approached for comment.

In the preliminary settlement, the tech firm denies any wrongdoing, as well as claims that it “recorded, disclosed to third parties, or failed to delete, conversations recorded as the result of a Siri activation” without consent.

Wall Street stocks bounce higher, Europe retreats

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street stocks bounced higher on Friday, but European stock markets retreated as traders booked profits from a positive start to 2025.

Asia’s main equity indices closed mostly higher, with Seoul jumping nearly two percent despite deepening political uncertainty in Asia’s fourth-largest economy.

There were also gains for Hong Kong, Sydney and Taipei, although Shanghai slumped for a second session running.

Wall Street ended lower Thursday on the first US trading day of 2025, but bounced back to close the week.

“People who wanted to take profits last year decided to wait until January to take profits so that they delay paying taxes on it by one year,” LBBW’s Karl Haeling told AFP.

“The big question now

is: is there too much bullishness in the market?” he added, referring to optimism that President-elect Donald Trump’s election victory would be good for the stock markets given his promises of tax cuts and deregulation.

“Investors are anticipating a business friendly administration from Trump and his staff,” said Jack Ablin of Cresset Capital.

Instead of enjoying a so-called Santa Claus rally of rising prices during the year-end holiday period, Wall Street limped into 2025 as investors barked their healthy 2024 gains and worried about the future.

Departing President Joe Biden blocked early Friday the proposed \$14.9 billion purchase of US Steel by Japan’s Nippon Steel, saying it would “create risk for our national security and our critical supply chains.”

The companies disputed

the deal presented national security risks and called Biden’s rejection a political decision that failed to properly review the transaction.

Nippon Steel has previously described the transaction as a lifeline to Pennsylvania’s much-diminished steel industry.

US Steel’s shares slumped 6.5 percent. Nippon Steel shares had closed higher in Asian trading ahead of Biden’s announcement.

The dollar dipped Friday against the euro, pound and yen.

The US currency had Thursday reached multi-year highs against some of its main rivals, reflecting expectations that the world’s biggest economy would outpace others in 2025.

The yuan on Friday hit the lowest dollar level since late 2023.

“The very negative per-

formance of China equities provides a better indication of the weakening sentiment around China assets at the start of 2025, and ahead of Trump’s return to the White House,” said Alvin Tan, head of Asia FX strategy at RBC Capital Markets.

Investors are gearing up for Trump’s inauguration on January 20, set to be followed by the formal announcement of deep tariffs, especially on Chinese goods, that could rattle international trade.

A monthslong US manufacturing slump lessened last month, according to better-than-expected survey data published Friday, as demand showed signs of improving.

The Institute for Supply Management’s (ISM) manufacturing index was 49.3 percent last month, up 0.9 percentage points from November, it said in a statement.

Court Notice

In the Court of Muhammad Asghar Senior Civil Judge (Admin) Bannu. Suit No.131/I. Institution 2024 Next Date of Hearing 09-01-2025 Case Title: Balqees bibi Vs NADRA etc. Notice to No.(2) Muhammad Iqbal (3) Yousaf Sultam Mehmod R/o Akhwandan Sero Bada Khel Bannu. (4) Mst. Akhtara wife of Sultam Mehmod R/o Akhwandan Sero Bada Khel Bannu (5) Mehtab D/o Sultam Mehmod wife of Shuib R/o Ismail Khani Bannu. (6) Khadija D/o Sultam Mehmod wife of Ahmad Gul (7) Khatima D/o Sultam Mehmod wife of Amir (8) Zubaida (9) Javeria Daughters of Sultam Mehmod R/o Akhwandan Sero Bada Khel Bannu. In the above titled suit the service of above mentioned person is not possible through ordinary means, therefore, you defendants is/are informed through this publication that on 09-01-2025 at 08:00 AM. You have / has to appear before this court either personally or through attorney or through counsel to pursue the suit noted above, otherwise ex parte proceedings will be initiated against you.

Saudi banks’ money supply hits \$786 billion

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi banks money supply reached SR2.95 trillion (\$785.51 billion) in November, marking a 10.3 percent rise compared to

the same month last year, according to official data.

Figures released by the Saudi Central Bank, also known as SAMA, revealed that time and savings deposits have reached their highest percentage share of the money supply in over 15 years, accounting for 33.61 percent or SR989.99 billion.

These deposits also recorded the fastest growth rate among all components of the money supply, increasing by 18.10 percent.

Demand deposits accounted for the largest share at 48.76 percent, a slight decline from their 50 percent share a year earlier, though they grew by 7.69 percent during this period. The remaining components collectively made up 17.63 percent of the total money supply.

Edmond Christou, senior industry analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence told Arab News, “Local lenders’ role in financing projects requires more cash, underpinning the likes of Saudi Fransi, ANB, Rajhi and SNB issuing euro-denominated medium-term notes.”

He added: “Saudi central bank putting state funds on

time deposits helped bank cash flow, along with open market operations and \$31 billion of debt sales since 2022 or \$25 billion excluding SNB’s CDS.”

According to the analyst, this surge in term deposits is a development driven by tighter liquidity conditions and elevated interest rates. The rise reflects strategic measures by local banks to navigate strong loan demand while attracting funds to stabilize their balance sheets.

Recent data from SAMA revealed that deposit growth is slightly behind loan issuance, putting some pressure on liquidity. Loans grew 13.33 percent year-on-year in November, outpacing the 10.52 percent increase in deposits. This imbalance has pushed banks to compete for depositors by offering attractive returns on term deposits.

Saudi Arabia has been driving substantial government projects to support its Vision 2030 ambitions, with a heavy emphasis on construction activity to transform its infrastructure, tourism, and overall economic landscape.

These projects, ranging

from mega cities like NEOM to significant infrastructure developments, require vast amounts of funding, and banks have played a crucial role in financing them. To support these large-scale endeavors, the demand for credit has surged.

Interest rates in Saudi Arabia also reached elevated levels, partly due to the rial’s peg to the US dollar, which has been influenced by the Federal Reserve’s tightening monetary policy aimed at combating inflation.

This led to a peak in interest rates, which climbed to as high as 6 percent. However, as inflation levels have moderated, there has been a shift in the monetary policy since September, with SAMA implementing three rate cuts — one of 50 basis points, followed by two additional 25 basis point reductions.

This shift signals a more accommodating policy stance, likely to ease some of the pressure on borrowing costs while maintaining financial stability.

The rise in term deposits underscores a shift in the

Saudi banking sector’s approach to funding. Banks are incentivizing savers with higher returns to ensure stability, particularly as demand for credit grows due to Saudi Arabia’s ambitious Vision 2030 projects.

Term deposits provide a more predictable funding source compared to demand accounts, which can fluctuate significantly. The strategic shift helps banks align their funding structure with long-term lending requirements, particularly for infrastructure and construction projects.

Higher Sabor spread to boost funding

The elevated 115-basis point spread between the Saudi Interbank Offered Rate, known as Sabor, and the US Secured Overnight Financing Rate illustrates the tight liquidity landscape, according to Christou.

A higher Sabor compared to SOFR means that borrowing and funding costs in Saudi Arabia are relatively higher than those in the US. Historically, this spread hovered around 70 basis points, but sustained demand for credit has kept it significantly higher.

“The 115-bp Sabor spread over the secured overnight financing rate versus the normalized 70-bp historical range – nevertheless an improvement against the 2022 liquidity crisis – shows liquidity remains tight,” the analyst said.

In an environment where deposit inflows remain moderate, banks have also turned to external borrowing, including issuing euro-denominated bonds, to bridge funding gaps.

Local lenders like Al Rajhi Bank, Saudi National Bank, and Banque Saudi Fransi have leveraged such instruments to support their liquidity needs, according to the analyst.

While liquidity remains constrained, the current environment is an improvement over 2022 according to the analyst, when Saudi banks faced acute pressures due to surging credit demand.

SAMA’s debt issuance of over \$31 billion since 2022, combined with other supportive measures, has alleviated some of the strain. However, the banking sector must continue to address systemic challenges to sustain long-term growth, Christou said.

Apple’s lawyers also say they will confirm they have “permanently deleted individual Siri audio recordings collected by Apple prior to October 2019”.

But the claimants say the tech firm recorded people who activated the virtual assistant unintentionally – without using the phrase “Hey, Siri” to wake it.

They say advertisers who received the recordings could then look for keywords in them to better target ads. The lead plaintiff Fumiko Lopez claims she and her daughter were both recorded without their consent.

They allege they were served targeted ads after talking about products including Air Jordans.

Apple has proposed a decision date of 14 February in the court in Northern California.

Class action lawsuits work by a small number of people going to court on behalf of a larger group.

If they are successful, the money won is paid out across all claimants.



In brief

Shoaib, Muzammil to lock horns in final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mohammad Shoaib and Muzammil advanced to the final of Men's Singles after trouncing their respective opponents at the 10th Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Ranking Tennis Championships at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, Islamabad on Saturday. Shoaib defeated Yousaf Khalil 6-4, 6-4 in a well fought contest, while Muzammil Murtaza overcame Aqeel Khan, who retired at 4-1 in the second set after losing the first 6-4. The Ladies' Singles semifinals saw Soha Ali edge past Noor Malik 7-6(5), 6-3, while Amna Ali Qayum secured her spot in the final by beating Meheq Khokhar 6-2, 6-4. In the Men's Doubles final, Muhammad Shoaib teamed up with Muzammil Murtaza to dominate Barkatullah and Yousaf Khalil, winning convincingly with a score of 6-2, 6-1, to claim the title. The Boys' 18 & Under final featured an upset as Abubakar Talha stunned top seed Bilal Asim 6-4, 6-4, to clinch the championship in this category. In the younger categories, the semifinals delivered exciting results: Boys' 14 & Under Semifinals: Hassan Usmani bt. Shayan Afridi 6-2, 7-5; Ruhab Faisal bt. Junaid Khan 6-1, 6-1 Boys' 12 & Under Semifinals: Shayan Afridi bt. Muhammad Aayan 4-1, 4-1; Rashid Ali bt. Ibraheem Gill 4-1, 5-3 The tournament will conclude on Sunday with two key finals: Ladies' Singles Final: Amna Ali Qayum vs. Soha Ali at 10:30 AM Men's Singles Final: M Shoaib vs. Muzammil Murtaza at 1:30 PM.

Nabi Gul banned for three matches

KARACHI (INP): Peshawar Region's Nabi Gul has been handed a three-match ban after he was found guilty of a Level three breach of the PCB Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel during the ongoing final of the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy 2024-25 at the UBL Sports Complex, Karachi. Nabi was found to have violated the Article 2.15 (a) of the Code of Conduct, which reads as, "Attempting to gain an unfair advantage during a Match." It further includes, without limitation: (a) Deliberate attempts to deceive an Umpire (for example by claiming a catch when the Player concerned knew that he/she had not caught the ball cleanly) (b) Any attempts by a Player on the field of play to seek assistance from any person off the field of play in order to decide whether to request a referral to the TV Umpire; (c) Taking a foreign object onto the field whose most likely reason for being there is to change the condition of the ball. The incident occurred on Friday, the second day of the five-day final, when Nabi claimed a catch despite clearly dropping the ball in the 73rd over of Sialkot Region's first innings. On-field umpires, Faisal Khan Aazfreedi and Rashid Riaz levelled the charge with the help of TV Umpire Imran Jawed. Match Referee Iqbal Sheikh imposed the sanction. Nabi pleaded guilty to the charge hence no further hearing was required.

Nishikori reaches first final in six years

HONG KONG (AFP): Injury-ravaged Japanese veteran Kei Nishikori reached his first final in six years when China's Shang Juncheng retired ill at the Hong Kong Open on Saturday. The 35-year-old Nishikori, who reached a career-high four in the world a decade ago and was a US Open finalist in 2014, was 4-3 up when Shang called it quits in their semifinal.



CAPE TOWN: Kagiso Rabada got two early wickets with the new ball.

Gauff, Swiatek to clash for United Cup as Czech player makes abrupt exit

SYDNEY (AFP): Coco Gauff and Iga Swiatek will battle for United Cup glory after the USA and Poland won their respective semifinals on Saturday in Sydney amid bizarre circumstances. Swiatek beat Elena Rybakina to help last year's runners-up Poland see off Kazakhstan and they were joined in Sunday's final of the mixed-teams tournament by the Gauff-led United States. The Americans defeated the Czech Republic, with Gauff beating Karolina Muchova and then an increasingly irate Tomas Machac retiring from his match against Taylor Fritz in an abrupt and bewildering ending. "I woke up so late today," said Gauff, 20, after she dismissed Muchova 6-1, 6-4 to underline what a threat she will be at the Australian Open starting next week.

Gauff, the world number three, added: "The whole match I was intense and focused, that made the difference today."

Big-serving Fritz, ranked fourth in the world, lost the first set on a tie break but fought back in the second and looked poised to level up their men's singles match when a hot and bothered Machac shook hands, sending the Americans through. "Not the way I want to win in the end, but I think we're all happy to be through to the final," said Fritz. He said that his opponent, who had ranted at the Czech bench and squandered chances to seal the match, told him afterwards he had cramp. "I didn't expect it to end so abruptly. I did not notice at the time that he was cramping," said Fritz. "Perfect" Five-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek played a starring role for Poland in their semi-final against Kazakhstan as she beat Rybakina 7-6 (7/5), 6-4.

"This win makes me really proud," Swiatek said after giving Poland an unsailable 2-0 lead in the tie. "It is perfect preparation for

the Australian Open," said the world number two. Swiatek again played with strapping on her right thigh, having been troubled in her tough three-set win over Britain's Katie Boulter in the quarter-finals. That clash lasted nearly three hours and Swiatek was slow out of the blocks against Rybakina, who is ranked sixth in the world. They went to a first-set tie break after Rybakina saved two set points, before the 23-year-old Pole pulled away to take her country into the final. "I for sure did not start well and had the hand-brake on a bit. I knew I had to do something and change the momentum," said Swiatek, who made light of any injury concerns. She is relishing the prospect of a meeting with Gauff. "I think at this stage she's developing every month and it's going to be also a nice challenge," she said. Hubert Hurkacz put

Poland on the way when he beat Alexander Shevchenko 6-3, 6-2 in the men's singles. The 16th-ranked Hurkacz lost both his singles matches in group play but defeated Britain's Billy Harris in the quarter-finals and took that momentum into the meeting with Shevchenko.

Concrete steps being taken for hockey revival: PHF president

KHANEWAL (APP): Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) President Mir Tariq Hussain Bugti said that the government was making significant efforts for the promotion of the national game. Talking to media persons at the prize distribution ceremony of the Army Chief District Hockey Championship at the Sports Stadium in Khanewal, he highlighted the positive impact of recent measures on the sport's revival. Mir Tariq Hussain Bugti, who assumed office as PHF President in 2024, expressed his commitment to reversing the decline in Pakistan hockey. "We have achieved remarkable progress by reaching finals and semifinals in several international competitions. Our junior team participated in the Junior World Cup and showcased exceptional talent," he said. The PHF President declared 2025 as the "Year of Hockey," with numerous national and international tournaments planned. He announced that the national hockey team would tour Europe, playing matches against European nations to prepare for the Hockey World Cup. "We aim to deliver outstanding performance and bring joy to the nation, positioning Pakistan as one of the world's top hockey teams once again," he added. Bugti emphasized his commitment to grassroots development by visiting districts to evaluate hockey activities and address areas lacking infrastructure. "Our players are competing on AstroTurf against international teams despite limited resources and playing on clay grounds. He vowed to take concrete steps to ensure the sport thrives at the grassroots level. The event was attended by notable figures, including District Sports Officer Muhammad Hafeez, General Secretary Punjab Table Tennis Association Haji Anbar Bashir Ahmed, Muhammad Arshad, Ishtiaq Ahmed Paracha, and Multan Hockey Association President Kamran Ashraf.

Pakistan in trouble after Rickelton leads South African run feast

CAPE TOWN (AFP): Pakistan were reeling in response to a relentless South African batting performance on the second day of the second Test against Pakistan at Newlands on Saturday. Pakistan were 64-3 at the close after double centurion Ryan Rickelton led South Africa to a first innings total of 615. Kagiso Rabada struck twice and Marco Jansen once when Pakistan started their innings. The tourists were effectively four down because opening batsman Saim Ayub was ruled out of the match with a broken right ankle. Babar Azam, forced to open the batting in Ayub's absence, was 31 not out at the close with his side still 551 runs behind. Left-handed opening batsman Rickelton made a chanceless 259, South Africa's joint seventh highest Test score, before he was seventh man out with the total on 557. South African captain Temba Bavuma opted to

keep Pakistan in the field until the last man, 18-year-old debutant Kwen Maphaka, was out 40 minutes after tea. By then, South Africa had added 299 runs to their overnight 316-4, scoring at almost five runs an over. Resuming on 176, Rickelton was content to play the anchor role while Kyle Verreynne hit 100 off 147 balls in a sixth-wicket partnership of 148 off 222 deliveries. Verreynne holed out to deep midwicket after an innings which included five sixes as well as nine fours, but Rickelton continued to bat flawlessly while Jansen thrashed a 42-ball half-century. A rapid seventh-wicket stand of 86 was ended when Rickelton was caught at mid-on going for a big hit after batting for 607 minutes. He faced 343 balls and hit 29 fours and three sixes. Jansen was out for 62 off 54 balls, but Keshav Maharaj hit 40 off 35 deliveries as the bowlers

continued to take a pounding. South Africa's innings ended when Maphaka was bowled second ball for ought to become the 100th Test wicket for Mohammad Abbas. At 18 years 270 days, Maphaka became South Africa's youngest Test player when the match started on Friday. Abbas took three for 94, while wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan held six catches in the South African innings. Pakistan captain Shan Masood was caught at first slip off Rabada for two in the first over of his team's reply. Kamran Ghulam was bowled by Jansen for 12 and Saud Shakeel was out for nought, providing a second catch for David Bedingham at first slip off Rabada. Pakistan were floundering at 20-3, before Babar and Rizwan put on an unbeaten 44 for the fourth wicket as the day's play ended.



LONDON: Newcastle United's Alexander Isak competing with Tottenham Hotspur's goalkeeper Brandon Austin during the Premier League match.

Isak fires Newcastle to victory at struggling Spurs

LONDON (AFP): Newcastle inflicted more misery on injury-ravaged Tottenham as Alexander Isak extended his Premier League scoring streak in a 2-1 win on Saturday. Both sides struck inside the first six minutes as Anthony Gordon cancelled out Dominic Solanke's opener for Spurs. Isak then scored for the seventh consecutive league game to claim a sixth straight win in all competitions for Newcastle. The Magpies remain in fifth but move level on points with fourth-placed Chelsea in the battle for a place in next season's Champions League. Spurs' ambition of a top-four finish already looks over after a run of one win in eight league games since a stunning 4-0 victory at Premier League champions Manchester City. Tottenham sit 11th in the table but could sink as low as 14th by the end of the weekend if results go against them to increase the pressure on Ange Postecoglou. However, a spirited performance from Postecoglou's stretched squad deserved more as Newcastle were left clinging on in the closing stages. Spurs were without first-

choice goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario along with defenders Micky van de Ven, Cristian Romero, Destiny Udogie and Ben Davies through injury plus the suspended Rodrigo Bentancur. The loss of stand-in 'keeper Fraser Forster to illness meant Postecoglou was forced to throw in Brandon Austin for his Spurs debut. Slow starts, particularly at home, have been a major part of Spurs' struggles under Postecoglou but they got off to a flyer. In front of the watching new England manager Thomas Tuchel, Solanke did his case for international recognition no harm with a fine downward header from Pedro Porro's cross on four minutes. The lead lasted barely over two minutes, albeit the equaliser arrived in controversial circumstances. Joelinton blocked Lucas Bergvall's pass with his arm to hand Bruno Guimaraes possession and the Brazilian fed in Gordon to fire home. However, a VAR review deemed Joelinton's handball was not deliberate and the goal stood. Isak needs no help to find the net on current form but got it from an under-manned Spurs

defence seven minutes before half-time. Radu Dragusin deflected Jacob Murphy's low cross onto the foot of the Swedish striker, who took his tally for the season to 14 goals in all competitions. Spurs were dealt a further blow as Dragusin, who had been a doubt due to illness, was forced off in the break, leaving Postecoglou without a single natural centre-back to choose from. Midfielder Archie Gray and full-back Djed Spence deputised manfully as Tottenham did all the pressing in the second half. Brennan Johnson blasted off the post after Pape Sarr's effort had been parried by Martin Dubravka. Despite Spurs' lack of bodies at the back, they did have the luxury of introducing Son Heung-min and James Maddison off the bench in the hunt for an equaliser. Maddison flashed a curling shot inches wide from a short corner before Johnson and Sergio Reguilon both drilled low efforts across the face of goal. But Newcastle held out to cap a brilliant festive period for Eddie Howe's men that has propelled them into the running for a return to the Champions League.

Pant's stunning 61 leaves final Test finely poised

SYDNEY (Agencies): Rishabh Pant's stunning 61 helped give India a lead of 145 runs in the final Test against Australia after an enthralling second day that saw 15 wickets fall. The wicketkeeper-batter produced the explosive innings off just 33 deliveries after Scott Boland had put the home side in the driving seat at the start of India's second innings. The Australia fast bowler took three quick wickets in an inspired spell after his side had posted a

first innings of 181. Debutant Beau Webster top scored for the hosts with 57 as India took a first-innings lead of just four runs. India captain Jasprit Bumrah walked off the field early in the afternoon session and left the ground to have an injury assessed, although he was seen returning before the close of play. One of Boland's victims was Virat Kohli as the India great's final Test innings on Australian soil ended for six as the tourists finished the day on 141-6. No holding back from

Pant Pant's arrival at the crease came moments after Kohli had been smartly caught by Steve Smith at slip and that significant moment was quickly followed by the explosive left-hander hitting Boland over the long-on boundary for six. He missed an attempted ramp shot completely two deliveries later but was not to be deterred and at one stage Australia captain Cummins had six fielders on the rope. Mitchell Starc, taken for 16 by Yashasvi

Jaiswal in the first over of the innings, was hit for two consecutive sixes as Pant reached a frantic 50 off only 29 deliveries, one slower than the record he set against Sri Lanka in 2022. A swipe off Cummins through to Alex Carey brought the mayhem to an end, and Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar piloted India to stumps after Nitish Kumar Reddy had holed out to Cummins at mid-off. Smith dropped Jadeja to deny the impressive Webster a second wicket just before the

close. While it remains to be seen whether Bumrah will bat on day three, it feels more certain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy - which Australia lead 2-1 - will be decided by plenty of time to spare. Webster makes mark as Boland shines Australia's decision to replace the out-of-form Mitchell Marsh with Webster looks an inspired one after the 31-year-old Tasmanian made an important contribution on his second day of Test cricket. With Australia in trouble

at 39-4 after Mohammed Siraj had dismissed Sam Konstas and Travis Head in the same over, Webster knuckled down with a determined innings that included six fours. He then claimed his first Test wicket when a swipe from Shubman Gill was pouched by Carey, and should have had Jadeja as his second - but Smith could not hold on to a one-handed effort in front of Usman Khawaja at first slip. The bowling honours for Australia went to Boland, who was an immediate

threat after Starc had proved expensive. The delivery that moved off the seam to clip Jaiswal's off stump was a highlight for the popular 35-year-old Victorian. If Boland and the rest of the attack can finish India off quickly on the third morning then Australia will have a good chance of winning the match and making sure of the series victory. That said, the dramatic second day suggested making predictions is folly, and the availability of Bumrah will surely prove to be crucial.



In brief

PHA completes renovation work of Liaquat Bagh Road

RAWALPINDI (APP): Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) on the directives of Director General, PHA, Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, has completed the renovation work of Liaquat Bagh and other roads, intersections and green belts in Rawalpindi city. According to a PHA spokesperson, on the special instructions of the DG the renovation work of Liaquat Bagh Road has been completed which enhances the beauty of Murree road and Liaquat Bagh chowk. The beautification work of various roads, intersections and green belts of the city organized by PHA Rawalpindi has been completed; she said adding, under the project, various underpasses, green belts and intersections of Rawalpindi city have been decorated beautifully with attractive sculptures, flowers and landscapes. Under the special initiative of PHA, the green belts on the main roads of Rawalpindi city have been decorated with beautiful flowers and plants. For the winter season, the city's parks and green belts have been decorated and adorned with beautiful ornamental plants, while many bridges and underpasses in the city have also been decorated with beautiful landscapes. The parks, main roads, and intersections have been made attractive and decorated with beautiful lights, she added.

IRSA releases 28,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 28,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 40,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1474.03 feet and was 76.03 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 1133.00 feet, which was 83.00 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 8,300, 19,600, 9,000 and 1,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 12,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police nab two members of dacoit gang

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory Police's Anti-Robbery and Burglary Unit (ARBU) successfully arrested two members of an inter-provincial gang involved in multiple household robbery incidents on Saturday. A public relation officer told APP that the suspects, identified as Muhammad Khan and Nayer Abbas, were arrested during a targeted operation. He said the police recovered stolen cash, valuable mobile phones, laptops, and other items from the suspects' possession. According to officials, several cases were already registered against the accused at Shalimar Police Station. DIG Syed Ali Raza, commended the police team for their efforts, stating, "We are ensuring that all legal procedures are followed to secure strict punishment for the culprits." DIG Raza emphasized that extensive operations are underway against organized and active criminal gangs in the capital. DIG reaffirmed the commitment of Islamabad Police to curbing crime and ensuring the safety of citizens.



ISLAMABAD: An eye-catching scene of golden-colored leaves on trees lining the roadside in the G-9 area of the federal capital, during the fall season. —APP Photo

Raisani urges realization of Bhutto's vision for progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani, a PPP leader and MNA from Balochistan, on Saturday advocated for the fulfillment of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's vision by promoting equality, justice, and providing equal opportunities for progress in Pakistan.

In his message on the birth anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, observed on January 5, he highlighted Bhutto's legacy as a symbol of ideology, revolution, and historical movement.

He stated that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a voice advocating for the rights

of the oppressed, a vision focused on guiding Pakistan toward sovereignty and development, and a movement that remains alive in the hearts of the people today.

Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani said that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto taught us that power lies with the people, and leadership is only achievable through service and sacrifice.

Bhutto gave Pakistan its first unanimous constitution, laid the foundation for the country's nuclear program, secured the rights of workers and farmers, and gave the

nation a new identity. His struggle not only changed history but also lit a flame that will never extinguish.

Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani further emphasized that today serves as a reminder for all to pledge to turn Bhutto's vision into reality. He called for the creation of a Pakistan where every citizen is assured of equality, justice, and equal opportunities for progress.

"Let us make his dream our destination and move forward with the resolve to build a great and sovereign nation in accordance with Bhutto's ideals," he added.

CTP introduce modern driving simulator to train learners

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have introduced modern driving simulator for the first time in CTP Headquarters to train the learners.

According to a CTP spokesman, a modern driving simulator with necessary components such as gear, clutch, accelerator, steering wheel and brake was introduced for the first time in the driving training school of CTP Rawalpindi.

The simulator allows the learners to immerse themselves in a complete road-driving experience.

This initiative is the result of the special interest of City Traffic Officer, Rawalpindi Beemish Fatima, he said and informed that the CTO was trying to ensure the use of modern technology to provide the best driving training to the citizens.

Through, the driving simulator, those learning to drive will be able to practice driving in different situations without any danger, he said adding, this modern simulator will not only provide awareness of traffic rules but will also provide training on correct response in difficult and emergency situations.

The CTO during a visit to the driving training school inspected the performance of the simulator. On this occasion, she directed the staff to provide all possible facilities to the citizens so that they could become safe and expert drivers.

The spokesman said that this initiative will not only be helpful in preventing traffic accidents but will also help in providing a safe travel environment to the public and through modern training, the citizens will be able to drive according to international standards.

This initiative of CTP Rawalpindi will prove to be an important milestone in promoting obedience to traffic rules and awareness of safe driving among the public.

This use of modern technology will help transform the citizens into safe and confident drivers, he added.

Zero progress in talks with PTI as party fails to present demands: Rana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister of Commerce and Industries Rana Ihsan Afzal stated on Saturday that no progress had been made in the ongoing talks with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as the party has yet to present its charter of demands.

Talking to a private news channel, he said the government initiated the dialogue process to promote democracy and agreed on two key points of them during initial discussions with PTI. The first was for PTI to submit its demands, and the second was for their negotiating team to consult with the party's founder for further guidance, he added.

"Despite holding consultations with their

founder, the PTI team has failed to finalize or present its demands," Rana Ihsan said. He accused the PTI of attempting to derail the country while crediting the government for pulling Pakistan out of economic and political instability.

Highlighting the government's achievements, he stated that inflation had dropped to single digits, while remittances and exports had been increased.

"The economic indicators reflect the government's commitment to turning the economy around," he added.

Rana Ihsan assured that the government remains focused on stability and development and vowed that no attempts to derail progress would succeed.

Criminal gang busted; valuables recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Kirpa Police Station team on Saturday arrested two members of a criminal gang involved in various theft activities and recovered valuables from their possessions.

A public relation officer told APP that the Kirpa police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of the criminal gang. He said the gang was involved in numerous theft activities in various areas of Kirpa.

The police team also recovered valuables from their possessions. The accused were identified as Khawar Hussain and Khalid Hussain, he added.

Cases were registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. DIG Syed Ali Raza also directed officers for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and to take all possible measures to protect the life and property of the citizens.

IG prioritizes resolving public issues on merit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi emphasized the importance of resolving citizens' concerns on merit during a Khuli Katchery (open court) held at the Central Police Office on Saturday.

During the khuli katchery, IG Rizvi listened to the issues of citizens and police officers and issued directives to senior police officers on the spot for timely resolution of their concerns, a public relation officer told APP.

IG Rizvi said that resolving citizens' issues on merit is our top priority. Negligence and carelessness in duties will not be tolerated. Citizens facing any issue related to the police can come to the Khuli Katchery. My office is always open for my citizens, IG said.

IG further directed the officers to resolve the citizen grievances on merit within the stipulated time frame and report back to the Central Police Office.

Rizvi directed all SDPOs and SHOs to

adhere to the designated office hours and prioritize resolving citizens' issues.

On this occasion, the IG Rizvi said that the Islamabad Police are taking various measures for the facilitation of citizens. The daily holding of Khuli Katchery helps in resolving issues on a priority basis, he added.

Moreover, all zonal officers and SHOs are directed to meet citizens during the designated office hours and resolve their issues promptly and on merit.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi visiting Serena Chowk Interchange Project. —APP Photo

RDA demolishes illegally constructed house

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Enforcement Squad on the directives of Director General, Kinza Murtaza, in an operation demolished a house illegally constructed and boundary wall.

According to RDA spokesman, the Task Force had accelerated efforts against illegal constructions. The RDA Enforcement Squad in an operation near the Top City-1 housing scheme in Mouza Bajinial, Rawalpindi demolished illegal constructions, erected in the graveyard area in Top City-1 housing scheme.

The operation was con-

ducted on violations of the approved Layout Plan (LOP) and the squad demolished illegally constructed house and boundary wall which were built in violation of the approved development plan for the area.

He informed that RDA was taking strict action in accordance with the law against the rules violators.

The operation was part of RDA's broader strategy to ensure adherence to urban planning laws, maintain the integrity of the city's development, and curb unlawful construction activities that disrupt the planned development of the city, he added. He said that the authority is com-

mitted to ensuring that all the constructions within its jurisdiction are according to established plans and standards.

The DG has directed the authorities to continue operations to ensure that Rawalpindi's urban development follows lawful and sustainable guidelines.

RDA also urges the citizens and developers to adhere strictly to all approved plans and regulations to avoid legal actions. Incharge Enforcement Squad, Assistant Director, Building Control RDA, along with RDA Scheme/Building Inspectors and other team members took part in the operation.

AIOU hosts training workshop on Lexicography

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University's Center for English Language and Translation Studies organized a one-day training workshop on lexicography to preserve Pakistan's endangered languages.

On this occasion, resource person Ameer Haider highlighted the intricate process of compiling dictionaries. The workshop provided specialized training to scholars for preparing dictionaries for various languages,

with a particular focus on those at risk of extinction.

Participants, including Ph.D. scholars and other experts, were introduced to the modern FLEx software, designed to assist in linguistic documentation and dictionary compilation.

Dr. Ghulam Ali, Director, Center for Language and Translation Studies, welcomed the participants and emphasized the significance of this workshop in safeguarding linguistic heritage.

In his closing remarks,

Professor Dr. Qadir Khan Abbasi stressed the importance of collaboration and specifically praised Dr. Farah Abbas for the successful organization of the workshop.

This initiative reflects the university's commitment to academic excellence and cultural preservation, achieved through advanced training and research. The event marked a significant step toward preserving Pakistan's linguistic diversity for future generations.



ISLAMABAD: Daily wage laborers with their tools waiting for costumers near G-7 area in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Canada warns citizens

OTTAWA (Amu TV): The Canadian government has issued a stark warning to its citizens, urging them to avoid all travel to Afghanistan due to what it described as a “volatile security situation, terrorist attacks, ongoing armed conflict, the risk of kidnapping, arbitrary arrest and detention, the high crime rate, and widespread violations of human rights” by the Taliban authorities. Canadian officials underscored the dangers posed by the deteriorating security landscape in Afghanistan.

Iran executes two Afghans

TEHRAN (Amu TV): Iran executed nine individuals, including two Afghan nationals, at Qezel Hesar Prison in Karaj, an Iranian rights group reported. The executions were carried out for charges including “premeditated murder” and “drug-related offenses,” the group said. The two Afghan nationals were identified as Pacha, who was convicted on drug-related charges, and Amir, who was sentenced to death for premeditated murder during a confrontation in July 2022.

16 telecommunications sites to be established in Nimroz province

NIMROZ (TOLOnews): Najibullah Haqqani, the acting Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology, says that the ministry will establish 16 new telecommunication sites in Nimroz province.

According to Haqqani, these sites will be built in districts and remote areas where people currently lack access to telecommunication services.

“To provide services to the people, we will install 16 telecommunication sites in various districts in the near future. We also urge networks to come to

Nimroz province, invest, and provide services to the people,” the acting minister stated.

Some residents of Nimroz have complained about the low quality and high cost of telecommunication and internet services, stating they face serious challenges.

“We ask the government to activate a telecommunication network in this area. The network that exists does not work properly at all,” said Abdul Khaliq, a resident of Nimroz.

“Our demand is that the networks become more

efficient because when we make calls, most of the time they do not work properly or are out of service,” said Reza, another resident of Nimroz.

According to officials, since the return of the Islamic Emirate to power, 12 telecommunication sites have been activated in Nimroz so far.

Nevertheless, many residents of remote areas in the province express concerns about not having access to telecommunication services or the low quality and high costs of these services.

Women struggle with low wages, grueling work

BADGHIS (Amu TV): Women in Badghis are raising concerns about harsh working conditions and meager wages, saying they shoulder the burden of supporting their families despite mounting restrictions and economic hardships.

Gulafroz, a widow and the sole provider for her two children, has set up a small home-based workshop where she spins wool and sews garments to make ends meet. But the work, she said, has taken a toll on her health and offers only a modest income.

“I spend all year spinning wool. My hands are completely ruined,” she said. “I sell the yarn I make to buy tea, sweets, and clothes for my children, but life remains incredibly hard.” Even elderly women are being forced into physically demanding jobs due to the dire economic situation. Shah Bibi, an elderly woman estranged from her family, goes door-to-door seeking work.

“My children threw me out of the house,” she said tearfully. “I have to work, but I’m overwhelmed and don’t know what to do.”

The already challenging circumstances for women in Badghis have worsened since the Taliban took power. Many organizations that once provided education, healthcare, and vocational training for women have been shut down, leaving women with few options but to take on strenuous, low-paying jobs.

The closure of these institutions, combined with the country’s worsening economic crisis, has forced women to endure grueling work with little support, leading to widespread concerns about their physical and mental well-being.

Women in Badghis are calling on local and international organizations to create sustainable employment programs and initiatives aimed at improving their living conditions.

“After years of hardship, I still dream of change,” said Gulafroz. “I hope one day we can have jobs that pay fair wages instead of these backbreaking tasks.”

Afghan Ministry leads initiative to reactivate cold storage facilities



KABUL (BNA): A meeting of the Committee for Reactivating Incomplete Cold Storage Facilities was held under the chairmanship of Nooruddin Azizi, Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, with the participation of deputy ministers from the Ministries of Mines and Petroleum,

Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, as well as representatives from the Administrative Office’s Investment Facilitation Directorate and Emirati companies.

According to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the meeting focused on incomplete cold storage facilities, particularly 14

such facilities whose operations have been halted in 12 provinces across the country.

Additionally, discussions were held regarding available resources, capacities, and effective strategies for reactivating these facilities. A technical team was tasked with addressing the technical and legal aspects of the

cold storage facilities.

It is worth noting that the activation of all cold storage facilities in the country will significantly aid farmers in preserving their agricultural products, addressing their challenges, and enabling them to sell their produce promptly and at better prices.

Kabul urged to remove obstacles to water flow

KABUL (Ariana News): Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei called for Afghanistan’s cooperation in continuing the natural flow of water in border rivers and removing obstacles in this regard.

Referring to the cultural, racial, religious and civilization ties between Iran and Afghanistan, and the presence of millions of Afghans in Iran for nearly five decades, Baqaei said that maintaining and deepening relations between the two countries in various fields requires respect for mutual interests and avoiding “harmful unilateral actions.”

He also emphasized the importance of bilateral agreements and applicable principles of international treaties and customary law and the natural rights of people downstream of shared rivers, as well as the principle of good



neighborliness in the fair use of water resources by the two nations.

Regarding the construction of new dams or dam filling in Afghanistan, he said that Tehran has repeatedly told the Afghan authorities that water resources cannot be carried out without respecting Iran’s rights in accordance with the bilateral treaty.

The official stated that Tehran, in contact with the relevant Afghan authorities, has expressed its strong objection and concern

regarding the “disproportionate restriction” of water entering Iran or the diversion of the natural course of the rivers that have been the origin and source of development and shaping the natural environmental landscape of both sides of the shared borders.

The Islamic Emirate has repeatedly emphasized that it is committed to ensuring Iran’s rights in accordance with the 1973 treaty, but Iran must also consider the drought situation.

Unemployment rate rising in Herat province

HERAT (Ariana News): Despite hundreds of small and large factories operating in Herat, unemployment rate is rising in the western Afghan province.

Many laborers wait for work from morning till evening in every corner of the city, with some saying that they cannot find work even in a week.

Life has become difficult for the laborers during the cold winter. They cannot meet their basic living expenses.

Sayed Mahdi was deported from Iran a month ago. He is now looking for work every day. His family is in Iran and he himself spends difficult nights and days in Herat. Like Sayed Mahdi, dozens of other young people wait to find work every day.

“I came to live in my country. But what hope do I

have to live with? Should I go and sleep in a mosque? In this cold season, there is no work,” he said.

Mohammad Ali, a laborer, says: “I was deported and I have no proper place to live in. My family is there. My four children are there. They deported me. There are people here whose conditions are much worse than mine.”

Some laborers say that unemployment has increased compared to last year and now they are going through a difficult situation in this cold weather.

They say that they cannot afford to pay for their basic living expenses and this situation is bothering them.

“I have not been able to work for two or three weeks. There is unemployment. There are two or three thousand workers

here, but there is no work,” says Ahmad Shah, a laborer.

Ghulam Rasool, another laborer, says: “When we go home empty-handed, our child gets upset. But we have no choice. My child has expectations. My wife has expectations.”

Aziz Ahmad waits for work with his tools in another corner of Herat city. He says that job opportunities have decreased greatly, cost of living is high, and there is no work to meet his basic living expenses.

He says: “I stand here from morning to evening, but there’s no work.”

Local officials have repeatedly said that thousands of people work in the Herat Industrial Park and that efforts are being made to reduce unemployment by launching mining projects.

Routes in Bamiyan reopened after snowfall



BAMIYAN (Amu TV): All routes connecting Bamiyan province’s seven districts have been reopened after being blocked by heavy snowfalls, said Saboor Farzan Saighani, the Taliban provincial governor’s spokesman.

He said that key routes in areas including Qonaq, Shato, Aabqol Kerman,

Bekak, Hajigak, and Shiber are now accessible. However, he cautioned that some routes may close again due to ongoing snows.

The heavy snowfall had paralyzed transportation in Bamiyan, cutting off its districts from each other and from neighboring provinces.

Across Afghanistan, adverse weather conditions

have created widespread disruptions. Many routes remain impassable due to deteriorated conditions, compounded by inadequate snow removal infrastructure. Residents in affected regions have voiced concerns about mounting hardships, including restricted access to health care and other essential services.

Traditional clothes-making in Badakhshan declines, says artisans

KABUL (TOLOnews): The sewing of Chakman and weaving of Qaqma, traditional dress made with camel hair, wool and silk, ancient crafts in the northern and northeastern provinces of Afghanistan, particularly in Badakhshan, have faced a significant decline.

Artisans in Badakhshan said that while the province once had dozens of active workshops for sewing Chakman and weaving, only one workshop remains today. Ghulam Rabbani Amwaj, an experienced artisan with more than two decades in this profession, said that once dozens of workshops producing traditional clothing were operational in Faizabad city.

However, due to lack of government support and insufficient resources, many of these workshops have been closed.

Nevertheless, he mentioned an increasing interest among people in wearing these traditional winter

clothes.

“Unfortunately, in recent times, the necessary facilities have not been provided, and the government has not paid attention. Due to a lack of capital, artisans have been forced to shut down their workshops. But fortunately, the interest of citizens is growing day by day,” said Ghulam Rabbani.

Some of the youth learning the craft in Badakhshan’s only active workshop for sewing Chakman and weaving Qaqma have urged the government and aid organizations to support and revitalize this industry.

“Our request to the government is to develop handicrafts and pay more attention to them,” said Ahmad Farhad, one of the trainees.

“This is an ancient craft and should not be neglected,” said another trainee, Atiqullah.

The Directorate of Industry and Commerce in Badakhshan has also reported efforts to revive



traditional handicrafts in the province and assured that steps are being taken in collaboration with aid organizations to preserve this ancient heritage.

“We have asked supporting organizations to focus more on the local handi-

crafts of Badakhshan to ensure this heritage is preserved,” said Samaruddin Rahmani, Director of Enterprise Affairs of the Department of Industry and Commerce in Badakhshan. Chakman and Qaqma, winter garments made from

camel wool, sheep wool, or silk fabrics, are now sold in Badakhshan’s markets for prices ranging from 4,000 to 30,000 Afghanis. Artisans hope that with increased support, this ancient craft can regain its vitality.

Islamic Emirate reacts to ICG’s report on Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): The International Crisis Group (ICG) stated that some countries refrained from negotiating with the Islamic Emirate in a way to promote women’s rights and other international norms, apparently to see if the interim government leaders independently take such actions.

In its report, the group noted that after the Islamic Emirate’s takeover in Afghanistan, the country was subjected to sanctions and economic and diplomatic restrictions, exacerbating poverty in

Afghanistan.

Part of the International Crisis Group’s report reads: “Most countries declined to negotiate with the Taliban in a way that might have promoted women’s rights and other international norms, choosing instead to wait and see whether Afghanistan’s new leaders would do so on their own.”

“Neglect by neighboring, regional, and trans-regional countries occurred. Instead of engaging in understanding with the Islamic Emirate and resolving issues through dialogue, they

acted contrary to that. According to the Crisis Group, Afghanistan was left alone, and in fact, the people of Afghanistan were abandoned in these conditions,” said Mohammad Yasin Habib, a political analyst.

In response to this report, the Islamic Emirate stated that the country’s internal matters are based on domestic values, cultures, and priorities, and other countries should not interfere in internal affairs or use them as a tool for recognition.

Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of

spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, said: “The internal issues of the country belong to the nation, and they must find solutions within the country themselves. External countries should not interfere so deeply in a country’s internal matters that they impose conditions.”

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy said that the sanctions imposed by the world over the past three years have been unfair and should be lifted as soon as possible.

Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of

Economy, stated: “We ask countries not to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. Instead of interference, they should focus on cooperation in various fields, including economic issues, and we welcome the economic cooperation of countries.”

Earlier, the International Crisis Group had also reported that some regional countries, ignoring the protection of human rights in Afghanistan, were engaging with the interim government to achieve their interests.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari offering fateha over the sad demise of the wife of PPP secretary general, Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari at his residence.

Israeli strikes kill dozens in Gaza Strip

GAZA (Reuters): An Israeli military strike killed 12 people in a house in Gaza City early on Saturday, bringing the death toll from strikes across Gaza to 65 over the last day, Palestinian medics said, as mediators launched a new ceasefire push in Qatar.

Residents and medics said at least 14 people had been in the house of the Al-Ghoul family when the strike took place in the early hours, destroying the building. People scoured the rubble for possible survivors trapped under the debris and medics said several children were among those killed. A few flames and trails of smoke continued to rise from burning furniture in the ruins hours after the attack.

"At about 2 a.m. we were woken up by the sound of a huge explosion," said Ahmed Ayyan, a neighbor of the Al-Ghoul family, adding that 14 or 15 people had been staying in the house. "Most of them are women and children, they are all civilians, there is no one there who shot missiles, or is from the resistance," Ayyan told Reuters.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the incident. The military said in a statement on Saturday that its forces had continued their operations this week in Beit Hanoun town in the northern edge of the enclave, where the army has been operating for three months, and had destroyed a military complex that had been used by Hamas.

In Jabalia in the north, an Israeli airstrike killed three Palestinians, medics said. Earlier in the day, another Israeli airstrike killed three people in a car east of the central town of Deir Al-Balah, they

said. Saturday's deaths brought the toll to 65 since Friday, health officials said.

A surge in Israeli operations and the number of Palestinians killed in recent days comes amid a renewed push to reach a ceasefire in the 15-month-old war and return Israeli hostages before US President-elect Donald Trump takes office on Jan. 20. Israeli mediators were dispatched to resume talks in Doha brokered by Qatari and Egyptian mediators, and US President Joe Biden's administration, which is helping to broker the talks, urged Hamas on Friday to agree to a deal.

Hamas said it was committed to reaching an agreement but it was unclear how close the two sides were. Later on Saturday, the armed group released a video showing an Israeli female hostage — identified by Israeli media as a soldier — urging Israel to do more to secure the hostages' release, saying her life and that of other captives was in danger because of the ongoing Israeli military action in Gaza.

There was no immediate comment by Israel's military, which has in the past called such videos "psychological warfare" by Hamas. Israel launched its assault on Gaza in response to the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023, in which militants stormed border communities from Gaza, killing about 1,200 people and seizing around 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Its military campaign, with the stated goal of eradicating Hamas, has leveled swathes of the enclave, driving most people from their homes, and has killed 45,717 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry.

Pakistan urges UN to demand immediate truce in Gaza

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has urged the UN Security Council to demand an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to halt the bloodshed and destruction in Gaza.

Delivering a statement at the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East including the Palestinian Question, Pakistan's Alternate Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Asim Iftikhar said the bloodshed in Gaza must end. He asked the international community to finally come together to defend and uphold the universal respect for the UN Charter and international law. He impressed upon the Security Council to establish safe and secure humanitarian corridors to allow people to access life-saving care and prioritize reconstruction efforts aimed at rebuilding of Gaza's shattered healthcare system.

Asim Iftikhar reiterated Pakistan's call for the grant of full membership of the United Nations to Palestine and termed this step as a moral imperative that will ensure the irreversibility of the Two-State solution.

Fire at China market kills eight people

BEIJING: A fire at a market in China's northern province of Hebei has killed at least eight people and wounded 15, according to state media.

The blaze at the Liguang market in Hebei's city of Zhangjiakou broke out at about midday local time (04:00 GMT) on Saturday and was mostly extinguished two hours later, according to Xinhua News Agency, quoting a government official in Qiaoxi district where the market is located.

"The injured have been sent to hospital for treatment and are currently not in life-threatening danger," state broadcaster CCTV said after the blaze. CCTV said authorities were investigating the cause of the fire. Videos posted on China's Weibo microblogging site showed huge dark billows of smoke hanging over the market, along with large flames.

The Liguang vegetable market opened in 2011 and sells items ranging from fruit and seafood to electronics, company data provider Qichacha said. Such traditional markets are often tightly packed with shoppers seeking prices lower than at supermarket chains. Zhangjiakou hosted events during the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. — Aljazeera

Syria says int'l flights to resume from 7th

DAMASCUS (AFP): Syria said on Saturday the country's main airport in Damascus would resume international flights beginning next week after such commercial trips were halted following last month's ouster of ex-president Bashar al-Assad.

"We announce we will start receiving international flights to and from Damascus International Airport from January 7," state news agency SANA said, quoting Ashhad al-Salibi, who heads the General Authority of Civil Aviation and Air Transport.

Trump must be sentenced in hush money case

NEW YORK (Reuters): President-elect Donald Trump will be sentenced on Jan. 10 in the criminal case in which he was convicted on charges involving hush money paid to a porn star, but is unlikely to face jail time or other penalties, a judge said.

Justice Juan Merchan's ruling means Trump will be required to appear at a court hearing just 10 days before his Jan. 20 inauguration - an unprecedented scenario in US history. Before Trump, no US president - former or sitting - had been charged with or convicted of a crime. The judge said Trump, 78, may appear at his sentencing either in person or virtually.

He wrote that he was not inclined to sentence Trump to jail, and that a sentence of "unconditional discharge" - meaning no custody, monetary fine, or probation - would be "the most viable solution." The imposition of the sentence would pave the way for Trump to appeal. Merchan acknowledged in his ruling that Trump has made clear he intends to appeal.

In a statement, Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung said there should be no sentencing in the case. "This lawless case should have never been brought, and the Constitution demands that it be immediately dismissed," Cheung said. Merchan announced his plan for the sentencing in denying Trump's motion to dismiss the case due to his presidential election victory. Trump's defense lawyers had argued that having the case hang over him during his presidency would impede his ability to govern. Apple is to pay \$95 million to settle a lawsuit claiming its Siri voice assistant snoopers on users.

Merchan rejected that argument, writing that setting aside the jury's verdict would "undermine the Rule of Law in immeasurable ways." "Defendant's status as President-elect does not require the drastic and rare application of (the court's) authority to grant the (dismissal) motion," Merchan wrote in the decision. Merchan also rejected Trump's argument in a Dec. 3 court filing that dismissal was warranted because his "civic and financial contributions to this city and the Nation are too numerous to count."

While acknowledging Trump's service as president, the judge said Trump's public statements excoriating

the justice system were also a factor for him in determining how Trump's character would factor into the decision. Merchan criticized what he called Trump's "unrelenting and unsubstantiated attacks" against the integrity of the criminal proceeding, and noted that he had found him guilty of 10 counts of contempt during the trial for repeatedly violating an order restricting out-of-court statements about witnesses and others.

"Defendant has gone to great lengths to broadcast on social media and other forums his lack of respect for judges, juries, grand juries and the justice system as a whole," Merchan wrote. "Defendant's character and history vis-a-vis the Rule of Law and the Third Branch of government must be analyzed," the judge said, referring to the judiciary. "In that vein, it does not weigh in his favor."

The case stemmed from a \$130,000 payment that Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen made to adult film actor Stormy Daniels. The payment was for her silence before the 2016 election about a sexual encounter she has said she had a decade earlier with Trump, who denies it. A Manhattan jury in May found Trump guilty of 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up the payment. He had pleaded not guilty and called the case an attempt by Manhattan District Attorney Bragg, the Democratic prosecutor who brought the charges, to harm his 2024 campaign.

Trump's sentencing was initially scheduled for July 11, 2024, but has been pushed back several times. On Thursday, Merchan said Trump's request in August that the sentencing be pushed back until after the election implied that he consented to being sentenced during the transition period. "Any claim Defendant may have that circumstances have changed as a result of Defendant's victory in the Presidential election, while convenient, is disingenuous," Merchan wrote.

Bragg did not oppose delaying the sentencing until after the election. Merchan in September pushed it back to Nov. 26. After Trump defeated Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris in the Nov. 5 election, the judge delayed the sentencing indefinitely to figure out next steps.

Bragg's office had argued there



were measures short of the "extreme remedy" of overturning the jury's verdict that could assuage Trump's concerns about being distracted by a criminal case while serving as president, such as delaying the sentence until after Trump leaves the White House in 2029, Merchan wrote on Thursday he found that alternative "less desirable" than sentencing Trump before the inauguration.

Trump on Dec. 16 lost a separate bid to toss the hush money conviction in light of the US Supreme Court's July 1 decision that presidents cannot be criminally prosecuted over their official actions, and that evidence of their official actions cannot be presented in criminal cases over personal conduct.

In denying Trump's motion to dismiss, Merchan said the prosecution over "decidedly personal acts of falsifying business records poses no danger of intrusion on the authority and function of the executive branch." Falsifying business records is punishable by up to four years in prison, but incarceration is not required. Before his election victory, legal experts said it was unlikely Trump would be locked up due to his lack of a criminal history and advanced age.

Trump was charged in three other state and federal criminal cases in 2023: one involving classified documents he kept after leaving office and two others involving his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss. He pleaded not guilty in all three cases. The Justice Department moved to dismiss the two federal cases after Trump's election victory. Trump's state criminal case in Georgia over charges stemming from his effort to overturn his 2020 election loss in that state is in limbo.

122nd Midshipmen Commissioning Parade held

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The commissioning parade of the 122nd Midshipmen and 30th Short Service Commission (SSC) Course was held at Pakistan Naval Academy (PNA), Karachi, marking the graduation of 49 Midshipmen and 29 SSC Cadets.

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Upon arrival, the Chief Guest was received by Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf.

While addressing the parade, the Chief Guest extended his felicitations to the newly commissioned officers and their parents on successful completion of their training. He commended Pakistan Naval Academy for imparting

high-quality training to cadets, including those from friendly countries. He expressed the hope that these cadets from friendly nations will serve as ambassadors, strengthening bonds of friendship and mutual respect. The Chief of the Air Staff emphasized the importance of staying updated with modern trends, technologies, and the evolving geo-strategic landscape. He advised the commissioning term that in today's high-tech and information-driven era, only knowledgeable leaders can effectively address emerging challenges.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Commandant Pakistan Naval Academy, Commodore Tasawar Iqbal, highlighted the key features of the academic and professional training provided to the cadets at the Academy. Later, the Chief Guest pre-

sented awards to the distinguished holders. The prestigious Quaid-i-Azam Gold Medal was awarded to Lieutenant Imad Ud Din PN for being the best all-round officer throughout training. Midshipman Tennakoon M.L. Vimukthi from Sri Lanka won the coveted Sword of Honour. Midshipman Muhammad Shayan was awarded the Academy's Dirk. Officer Cadet Abdul Rehman received the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gold Medal. Officer Cadet Ali Jalil Ibrahim Sharif Shuhaib Al Shabani from Iraq was awarded the Chief of the Naval Staff Gold Medal. The Commandant Gold Medal was awarded to SSC Course Officer Cadet Sidra Saeed. The Proficiency Banner was claimed by the Fox-1 Squadron.



KARACHI: Chie of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal, Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu awarding sword of honour to best midshipman during 122nd Midshipmen and 30th Short Service Commission course at Pakistan Naval Academy.

US plans \$8b arms sale to Israel, US official says

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The administration of President Joe Biden has notified Congress of a proposed \$8 billion arms sale to Israel, a US official said, with Washington maintaining support for its ally whose war in Gaza has killed tens of thousands.

The deal would need approval from the House of Representatives and Senate committees and includes munitions for fighter jets and attack helicopters as well as artillery shells, Axios reported earlier. The package also includes small-diameter bombs and warheads, according to Axios. The State Department did not respond

to a request for comment.

Protesters have for months demanded an arms embargo against Israel, but US policy has largely remained unchanged. In August, the United States approved the sale of \$20 billion in fighter jets and other military equipment to Israel. The Biden administration says it is helping its ally defend against Iran-backed militant groups like Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen.

Facing international criticism, Washington has stood by Israel during its assault on Gaza that has displaced nearly all of Gaza's 2.3 million population, caused a hunger

crisis and led to genocide accusations that Israel denies. The Gaza health ministry puts the death toll at over 45,000 people, with many additional feared buried under rubble.

Diplomatic efforts have so far failed to end the 15-month-old Israeli war in Gaza that was triggered after an Oct. 7, 2023 attack by Palestinian Hamas militants that killed 1,200 and in which about 250 were taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies. Washington, Israel's biggest ally and weapons supplier, has also previously vetoed UN Security Council resolutions on a ceasefire in Gaza.

Russia clears beaches after Black Sea oil spill

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia declared a regional state of emergency on Saturday in Crimea, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, as workers cleared tons of contaminated sand and earth on either side of the Kerch Strait following an oil spill in the Black Sea last month.

Mikhail Razvozhaev, the Russia-installed governor of the city of Sevastopol, said new traces of minor pollution required urgent elimination and declared a state of emergency in the city - giving authorities more power to take swift decisions such as ordering citizens to evacuate their homes. The Kerch Strait runs between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and separates Crimea's Kerch Peninsula from Russia's Krasnodar region.

Rescue workers have now cleared more than 86,000 metric tons of contaminated sand and soil, the emergencies ministry said on Saturday. The oil leaked from two ageing tankers that were hit by a storm on Dec. 15. One sank and the other ran aground. More than 10,000 people have been working to shovel up viscous, foul-smelling fuel oil from sandy beaches in and around Anapa, a summer resort. Environmental groups have reported deaths of dolphins, porpoises and sea birds.

The emergencies ministry said on the Telegram messaging app that oil-tainted soil had been collected in the broader Kuban region in Russia and in Crimea, whose annexation by Russia has not been recognised by most other countries. The ministry published video footage of dozens of workers in protective suits loading bags of dirt onto loaders and others skimming dirt off the sand with shovels.

Russia's transport ministry said this week experts had established that about 2,400 metric tons of oil products had spilled into the sea, a smaller spill than initially feared. When the disaster struck, state media reported that the stricken tankers, both more than 50-years old, were carrying some 9,200 metric tons (62,000 barrels) of oil products in total. The spill involved heavy M100-grade fuel oil that solidifies at a temperature of 25 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit) and, unlike other oil products, does not float to the surface but sinks to the bottom or remains suspended in the water column.