

PAF aircraft crashed
Syed Waliullah Shah
NOWSHERA: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) training aircraft crashed in the Bahram Kali area of Nowshera due to technical failure, resulting in the martyrdom of the pilot, on Tuesday. According to details, PAF aircraft was on a routine training flight when it suddenly developed technical issues and crashed in the Bahram Kali area. The pilot, Squadron Leader Muhammad Ahmed was martyred on the spot.

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Parvez Elahi indicted
F.P. Report
LAHORE: An accountability court on Tuesday indicted PTI leader Parvez Elahi in a case related to alleged corruption in development projects. Accountability Court judge Zubair Shahzad Kayani framed the charges against the former chief minister of Punjab, who has denied the allegations. The judge has summoned witnesses to record statement in the next hearing. Elahi signed the charge-sheet.

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UAE rolls over \$2b debt for Pakistan: PM

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday told the federal cabinet that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced to extend the \$2 billion debt that was due to be paid back by Pakistan this month.

The prime minister, in his televised opening remarks at the federal cabinet meeting chaired by him, apprised the members of his "positive and constructive" meeting with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Rahim Yar Khan in which they discussed the ways to further strengthen bilateral ties and investment cooperation.

He said that as the UAE president emphasised moving swiftly on the investment projects, and also expressed his country's commitment to enhancing its longstanding partnership with Pakistan. He said in their one-on-one meeting, the UAE president announced to rollover \$2 billion debt for which he thanked the visiting dignitary.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that as the national economy was put on a stability course, it required sweating blood to make Pakistan a prosperous nation and regain its lost grandeur. "Due to our collective efforts, the economy is stabilizing. We will continue to work hard with the same commitment and devotion. Time is not far from when we will become a prosperous nation and regain our stature. But this needs a journey of sacrifice, blood, and sweat and nothing short of that," he remarked.

He said that as the program on the homegrown economy has been

unveiled, it required measures to reduce the cost of electricity calling it inevitable to improve exports and commerce. He said that he had chaired a meeting last week to mull reducing power prices, with the collaboration of provincial governments, and that a "comprehensive" meeting would be held this week on the subject.

Highlighting the significance of SMEs for the national economy, he referred to a recent meeting to complete the SMEDA Board wherein some crucial decisions were also taken. Another meeting on the subject is scheduled to be held on January 15, he added. The prime minister told the cabinet members that the textile exports were on the rise and reiterated an enhanced focus on export-led growth and non-traditional exports.

He said that Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto was due in Islamabad this month when the two sides would discuss strengthening and integration of bilateral cooperation. He said the government was formulating an agenda for cooperation in Halal meat and rice exports and the import of edible oil. Coming to a firing incident on a convoy in Lower Kurram injuring the deputy commissioner and others, Prime Minister Shehbaz called it an attempt to sabotage the peace agreement.

He prayed for the swift recovery of the deputy commissioner and others being treated in Peshawar. He said that the government was working in unison to curb the menace of human smuggling which has led to the death of hundreds of Pakistani citizens besides bringing defame to the country.



He said that he was regularly holding meetings on the subject with the Interior Ministry and relevant departments also striving to rid the country of this issue. According to a press release issued by the PM Office, the federal cabinet, upon the recommendation of the Revenue Division, approved declaring the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) infrastructure as critical infrastructure under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016.

The objective of this measure is to protect the FBR's highly sensitive data from cyberattacks such as hacking and any unlawful intervention. This step will help further safeguard the sensitive data of the FBR. The federal cabinet, upon the recommendation of the Aviation Division, approved the extension of the temporary operating permits for Fly Dubai's

weekly flights from Lahore and Islamabad to Dubai and from Dubai to Lahore and Islamabad. The extension is granted from January 4, 2025, to February 3, 2025.

The federal cabinet was briefed by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs regarding public sector imports and exports through the Gwadar Port by 11 federal ministries/divisions from March 2024 onward. The prime minister directed that all relevant ministries' reports be included in the briefing, and a comprehensive report be submitted.

The prime minister also instructed that 60% of all public sector imports and exports should be conducted through Gwadar Port. The federal cabinet was briefed by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication on the progress of implementing the e-Office system

in federal ministries and divisions. The meeting was told that, for the first time, the government was implementing e-Office on such a large scale.

It was further explained that, starting January 1, 2025, all communication between federal ministries and divisions will be paperless, with all file movements and correspondence being conducted solely through e-Office. It was also shared that e-Office has been fully implemented in 21 ministries/divisions.

The implementation of e-Office will not only save time but also benefit the national exchequer through savings on stationery and fuel. With the introduction of e-Office, the processing time for summaries at the PM's Office has now been reduced to a maximum of just three days.

The federal cabinet, upon the re-

commendation of the Cabinet Division, approved the purchase of refurbished Chromebooks for schools and colleges, granting an exemption under Section 21-A of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Ordinance. The prime minister directed that a third-party audit of the purchase be carried out. The federal cabinet approved the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Investment Board and Shandong Ruyi Group of China regarding the establishment of textile parks.

The federal cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approved the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and the Foreign Service Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The federal cabinet was presented with the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee on Private Hajj Operators Court Cases.

The committee recommended that the current 46 operators manage the Hajj arrangements for 2025. The committee also suggested that a new Hajj policy be formulated for the upcoming years. The federal cabinet approved the committee's recommendations and instructed that steps be taken to conclude all pending court cases concerning private Hajj operators. The federal cabinet also validated the decisions made during the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases meetings held on December 31, 2024, and January 1, 2025.

126 killed after strong earthquake hits China's Tibet

TIBET: A powerful earthquake has struck a remote region of Tibet, killing at least 126 people and wounding more than 100 others, with tremors felt in Nepal, Bhutan and parts of northern India.

The United States Geological Survey said the earthquake on Tuesday measured 7.1 on the Richter scale, while the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC) recorded a magnitude of 6.8.

The epicentre of the quake was the Shigatse high-altitude county of Dingri, located on the Chinese side of Mount Everest and home to about 62,000 people. Shigatse is the seat of the Panchen Lama, a significant figure in Tibetan Buddhism, whose spiritual authority is second only to the Dalai Lama. The Xinhua state news agency reported that more than 1,000 houses have been damaged to varying degrees by the quake that shook the region at a depth of about 10km (6 miles) at 9:05am (01:05 GMT).

"Dingri county and its surrounding areas experienced very strong tremors, and many buildings near the epicentre have collapsed," reported state broadcaster CCTV. "A total of 126 people have been confirmed dead and 188 others injured as of 7:00pm (11:00 GMT) Tuesday," Xinhua reported.

Dingri is currently experiencing temperatures of about minus 8 degrees Celsius (17.6 degrees Fahrenheit). The China Meteorological Administration forecast that the mercury will drop to minus 18 degrees Celsius (minus 0.4 degrees Fahrenheit) by Tuesday evening. The remote Shigatse is far from China's main cities. This, combined with the extreme cold, has hindered rescue efforts, according to Al Jazeera's Katrina Yu, reporting from Beijing.

The Global Times learned from the Xizang Military Command's Xigaze Military Sub-command that rescue teams have been mobilized to head toward the epicenter. Videos from the

scene show significant damage to the roads leading to the epicenter, and buildings along the route showing varying levels of damage. The sub-command is rapidly deploying personnel to the affected area to participate in rescue efforts.

As of 1:15 pm Tuesday, a regiment of 160 personnel from the sub-command has reached Jijiao Bridge in Dinggye county, while a company of 40 personnel has been dispatched to areas near Dingri Airport. The Global Times also learned from the Xizang Military Command that at 1:00 pm, the General Hospital affiliated to the Command dispatched 50 medical personnel to the earthquake-stricken area in Xigaze.

By 1:15 pm, the second batch of rescue forces from the Xigaze Military Sub-command, totaling over 680 personnel, had been deployed to three directions — Dingri, Lazi, and Sa'gya—to assist in the rescue efforts in nearby towns and villages, working tirelessly to protect people's lives and property. Video footage from the scene showed a regiment from the Xigaze Military Sub-command rescuing a child from the rubble and providing emergency medical assistance.

The Global Times learned from the Chinese People's Armed Police (PAP) Force Xizang Contingent that following the earthquake, they responded swiftly and urgently. As of 12:30 pm on Tuesday, 389 officers and soldiers had been dispatched, carrying with them various rescue equipment. They rushed to the severely affected areas to participate in rescue operations. Videos from the scene show that they have successfully rescued multiple individuals from the collapsed buildings. Currently, the rescue efforts are still ongoing.

The air force of the PLA Western Theater Command quickly activated its emergency disaster relief plan and dispatched a drone to assess the situation at the epicenter. At the same time, multiple transport aircraft, medical planes, heli-

Pakistan expresses condolences

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan has expressed heartfelt condolences over the tragic loss of lives caused by the earthquake in Xizang. According to a statement on Tuesday, the foreign office said Pakistan extends its support to the people and government of China in their relief efforts. The foreign office said our thoughts remain with the injured and those still missing.

copters, and ground forces from the Western Theater Command Air Force have been assembled and are on standby, according to Xinhua.

At around 2 pm on Tuesday, the air force of the PLA Western Theater Command dispatched a Y-20 aircraft sending the forward command post of the Western Theater Command to the disaster-stricken area in Dingri. The aircraft has taken off from a military airfield in Chengdu, and will arrive at airport in Dingri this afternoon, according to the PLA media China Bugle.

China's National Disaster Reduction Commission and the Ministry of Emergency Management have activated the national level-II emergency response for disaster relief. China's national commission for disaster prevention, reduction and relief, along with the Ministry of Emergency Management, provided over 130,000 relief supplies to the disaster-stricken area in southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, including heaters, electric blankets, and emergency food, to ensure the basic living needs of the affected population are met. Earlier on Tuesday, the two departments had allocated 22,000 pieces of national disaster relief supplies to the area. — Agencies

19 terrorists killed, three troops embrace martyrdom

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces killed 19 Khwarij terrorists in three separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where as three soldiers embraced martyrdom during intense fire exchange.

"On reported presence of Khwarij, an intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in general area Matani, Peshawar District. During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the Khwarij location and resultantly, eight Khwarij were sent to hell," said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release.

Another intelligence based operation was conducted in general area Baizai, Mohmand District. In ensuing fire exchange, eight Khwarij were effectively engaged and neutralised by the security forces.

"In third engagement in Karak District, own troops effectively engaged Khwarij location as a result of which three Khwarij were sent to hell," it said.

"However, during intense fire exchange, three brave sons of soil, Lance Havaldar Abbas Ali (age: 38 years, resident of District Ghizer), Naik Muhammad Nazir (age: 37 years, resident of District Skardu) and Naik Muhammad Usman (age: 37 years, resident of District Attock), having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced Shahadat," the press release further said. "Sanitisation operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Kharij found in the area, as security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," it said.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Tuesday lauded the security forces operations against militants in Matni, Mohmand district, and Karak district to kill 19 terrorists. He said that the operations were part of ongoing efforts to combat extremism and ensure the safety of citizens.

Governor Kundi said that the actions of our brave security personnel deserve our highest respect and admiration. Governor Kundi also expressed his heartfelt condolences and solidarity with the families of three soldiers who sacrificed during the operations.

PTI calls for swift decision in Al-Qadir Trust case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar expressed concern over delay in the decision in the Al-Qadir Trust case. He also said negotiations with the government should not be thwarted.

Speaking to media, the PTI chief highlighted two demands: formation of a judicial commission to investigate the May 9 and Nov 26 happenings, and the release of innocent party workers. Gohar, who was flanked by PTI leaders Omar Ayub, Salman Akram Raja and Shibli Faraz, said: "We have held two rounds of talks with the government's negotiation committee and want to ensure that discussions do not face deadlock."

He said former prime minister Imran Khan did not benefit from the Al-Qadir Trust and demanded that the case should be promptly solved. PTI leader Omar Ayub demanded an open and unfettered meeting with PTI's

funder, criticising the government for delaying such a meeting. He reiterated demands for the release of all political detainees, including Imran Khan, and urged the government to treat these demands seriously.

"There is widespread chaos in the country. Unemployment is on the rise, and over two million young people have left the country in the last two years. The economy faces zero growth," Ayub cautioned. He stated that the only solution to the country's problems was holding free and transparent elections.

Legal expert Salman Akram Raja, speaking at the event, said he recently met Imran Khan in jail. "Imran Khan stands with his workers and has demanded the release of all political prisoners," Raja said while noting that the gap between the state and the people had grown alarmingly. Shibli Faraz condemned what he called politically-motivated cases against PTI's leaders. He

said delay in the Al-Qadir Trust case verdict was a calculated move.

He demanded an immediate ruling in the case, arguing that Imran Khan and his wife, as trustees of the Al-Qadir Trust, were being punished for their philanthropic work. Faraz accused the government of sidelining the country's largest political party, saying, "Without the rule of law, there can be no stability. This is a short-term government and the bigwigs paralysed the nation while clearing their own cases."

Faraz also criticised development initiatives such as Uraan Programme as "inflation has broken the back of the public and the current government is misleading the nation with hollow initiatives." The PTI leaders concluded by asserting that the government's days are numbered, and they will continue to push for justice, accountability, and transparent elections as the ultimate solution to Pakistan's challenges.

US, Afghan Taliban 'in talks to swap detainees'

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The Biden administration is negotiating with Afghanistan to exchange Americans detained in the country for at least one high-profile prisoner held in Guantanamo Bay with alleged ties to former al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

Representatives for the White House and the US State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the report. Representatives for the Afghan Taliban also did not immediately respond. US President Joe Biden's administration is seeking the return of three Americans seized in 2022

— Ryan Corbett, George Glezmman and Mahmood Habibi — in exchange for Muhammad Rahim al-Aghani, the WSJ reported.

Corbett and Habibi were detained in separate incidents in August 2022 a year after the Taliban seized Kabul amid a chaotic US withdrawal. Glezmman was detained later in 2022 while visiting as a tourist. Afghanistan is an Afghan man described as a high-level al Qaeda operative who was transferred to Guantanamo in 2008 from CIA custody.

The talks have been in motion since July, according to the WSJ, which cited sources who attended a classified House Foreign Affairs Committee briefing last month with White

House national security adviser Jake Sullivan. The report comes after Biden's administration on Monday sent 11 Guantanamo detainees to Oman, slashing the prisoner population at the detention center in Cuba by nearly half as part of its effort to close the facility as the president prepares to leave office January 20.

"The United States appreciates the willingness of the government of Oman and other partners to support ongoing US efforts focused on responsibly reducing the detainee population and ultimately closing the Guantanamo Bay facility," the US military said in a statement.

Check posts to be increased on roads in Kurram: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister for Information, Barrister Dr. Saif has said that check posts would be increased in Kurram Road in the light of apex committee decisions. He said that conveys would be soon after taking needed security measures.

He said that provincial government was making efforts to clear Kurram of miscreants and urged masses to support provincial government in its efforts to establish peace in Kurram.

He said that elements involved in attack on Deputy Commissioner would be brought to court of law and peace would be ensured in Kurram under peace agreement.

CM's aide also vowed to clear area of arms and bunkers and said that lasting peace would be established in the area with mutual support of people and district administration.

Civilians to face military trial for Army Act offences: SC judge

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar said on Tuesday that the civilians would not face a military trial merely for standing near an army checkpoint but, they certainly would if they committed an offence listed under the Army Act.

The remark was passed during a constitutional bench's hearing of a case centred on appeals against decisions allowing civilian trials in military courts. It came in response to Justice Musarrat Hilali's concern over "extension of powers" to try civilians under the Army Act, while the question remains whether the civilians can be tried in military courts.

During the proceedings, Khawaja Haris, representing the Ministry of Defence, argued that the apex court had previously ruled that civilians could be court-martialed under specific circumstances.

At this, Justice Mandokhail raised constitutional concerns, questioning whether an executive body like the Ministry of Defence could act as both accuser and judge. "The constitution

clearly prohibits the executive from performing judicial functions," he remarked. Haris argued that the Army Act was not limited to armed forces personnel, encompassing various categories, including civilians in specific situations. However, Justice Jamal questioned whether criminal matters could fall under Article 8(3), which pertains to military discipline.

Responding to this, Haris concurred that the members of the Pakistan Armed Forces are just as much citizens as any other citizens. The constitutional bench sought clarity on whether extending military jurisdiction to civilians was constitutional. Justice Mandokhail further questioned whether joining the armed forces deprived individuals of fundamental rights, noting that the Army Act was introduced to maintain military discipline, not to curtail civilian rights. At the hearing's conclusion, Hafeezullah Niazi, a senior journalist and father of a convicted civilian, raised concerns over the treatment of his son, who was transferred to prison following a recent military court sentence.

"Despite being moved to jail, my son is not being treated as per the jail

manual," Niazi stated, highlighting that 22 convicts are held in Lahore Jail's high-security zone under similar conditions. Justice Musarrat Hilali remarked that the Supreme Court had directed authorities to ensure compliance with the jail manual. She said that Punjab and federal governments were "disregarding court orders".

Meanwhile, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar pointed out that these individuals were not under trial but had already been sentenced, some receiving two- to ten-year sentences. The court also noted that detailed reasons for these sentences had not been provided.

The court requested reports from the Punjab government regarding the treatment of convicts transferred from military courts, demanding transparency about whether they were being treated in line with the jail manual. Constitutional bench's head Justice Ameenuddin directed the Punjab government to respond to Niazi's complaints, ensuring adherence to legal protocols. Later, the court adjourned the proceedings till today (Wednesday). Defence ministry's lawyer will continue his arguments today.



Kurram delegation calls on Sindh governor

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori today announced that millions of rupees worth of medicines and other relief items have already been dispatched to the affected areas of Kurram district, with more aid to be sent if required.

According to a statement issued from the Sindh Governor House, Mr Tessori made these remarks during a meeting

with an 18-member delegation of noteables from Kurram district at the Governor House.

The governor said that all stakeholders must work collectively for a permanent resolution to the issues facing Kurram district. He highlighted the importance of mutual unity to counter external conspiracies, adding that the current government was committed to addressing

the district's challenges.

During the meeting, there was a shared commitment to eradicating hatred and maintaining peace. The delegation expressed gratitude to the Sindh governor for providing medicines and food supplies to the affected areas. In a gesture of traditional tribal hospitality, the notables extended an invitation to Tessori to visit Kurram district.

Government transfers various officers

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Government has issued a notification of transfer and posting of various officers, on Tuesday.

According to the notification, Saeed Najaf Iqbal has been posted as CEO of Punjab Board of Investment and Trade; Abdul Shakoor, awaiting appointment, posted as DG Monitoring, Home Department; Muhammad Ijaz Joiya, awaiting appointment, posted as Secretary, Women's Status Commission; Abdul Rauf, awaiting appointment, posted as Director M&E, P&D Department; Attal-Haq posted as Additional DG, Multan Development Authority; Muhammad Ansar posted as Director Admin, Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board; Muhammad Saleem, awaiting appointment, posted as Director, Punjab Economic Research; Muhammad Farooq Manzoor posted as Additional Secretary, Higher Education Department; Dr. Safdar Hussain posted as Director Development & Finance, Sahiwal and Dr. Saifullah has been posted as Additional

Commissioner, Sahiwal. Ashfaq-ur-Rehman, awaiting appointment, has been posted as Additional Secretary, Specialized Healthcare; Muhammad Arif Rahim appointed as Additional Secretary, School Education (South Punjab); Imtiaz Ahmad, awaiting appointment, posted as Director, Special Education; Muhammad Arshad Bhatti, awaiting appointment, appointed as Director, Public Prosecution and Muhammad Arshad, awaiting appointment, has been posted as DG, PHA Sargodha.

Crackdown on illegal parking stands in Shalimar

LAHORE (APP): Following the directives of Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza, a crackdown on illegal parking stands was carried out in Shalimar Tehsil, here on Tuesday.

The operation was led by Assistant Commissioner Dr. Anum Fatima, who oversaw the registration of cases against two illegal parking stands.

During the operation, an illegal parking stand near Pakistan Centre, which had been previously closed, was found to have resumed operations. As a result, legal action was taken, and cases were registered.

In another incident, a parking stand at Lee Park in Baghbanpura was discovered issuing fake receipts, and fraudulent fine books were seized from the contractor.

Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza reiterated that the crackdown on illegal parking stands would continue without compromise, emphasizing the importance of these actions for ensuring public convenience and safety.

CM Murad to inaugurate first segment of MEW on Jan 11

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah is set to inaugurate the first segment of the highly anticipated Malir Expressway, a state-of-the-art, high-speed corridor on January 11.

The initial 9.1 km stretch, which runs from Korangi Causeway to Shah Faisal, represents a significant milestone in Karachi's infrastructure development, promising improved connectivity and reduced traffic congestion.

This decision was taken during a high-level meeting chaired by Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah at the New Secretariat, where the project's final progress was reviewed.

Minister for Local Government Saeed Ghani, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Mayor of Karachi Murtaza Wahab, PSCM Agha Wasif, Commissioner of Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Adl IG Karachi Javed Odho, Secretary Local Government Khalid Hyder Shah, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, and PD Malir Expressway Niaz Soomro attended the meeting.

The Malir Expressway (MEW) is the largest Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project in Sindh. It features a three-lane dual-car-

riageway with modern, access-controlled infrastructure. Spanning approximately 40 km, the expressway connects Korangi Creek Avenue (DHA) to the M-9 Motorway (Superhighway) near Kathore, offering a critical link for commuters and significantly reducing travel time.

The expressway will include dedicated interchanges, providing seamless access to key residential and commercial areas along the route. The first segment will feature a ramp to facilitate immediate traffic flow and will be complemented by a connecting flyover from Korangi, which is expected to be completed within two months.

The construction of the Jam Sadiq Interchange and road rehabilitation projects at the EBM and Shah Faisal Interchanges are progressing steadily. Encroachments at the Quaidabad Interchange have been cleared, and construction is ongoing to enhance connectivity.

A Toll Plaza will manage traffic flow, charging Rs100 for cars and jeeps, and Rs200 for heavy vehicles. Security measures will include patrols by traffic police, fire brigades, and Rescue 1122 ambulances.

The CM directed law enforcement agencies to deploy district and traffic police at key entry and exit points, including the Jam Sadiq, EBM, and Shah Faisal Interchanges.

The traffic police will patrol both sides of the expressway continuously in vehicles. Dedicated traffic police will be present on the expressway to ensure proper traffic flow.

To ensure smooth operations, the CM has declared the stretch from the Shah Faisal Interchange to the Shah Faisal Colony Bridge as a no-parking zone. Only commercial vehicles, cars, jeeps, and buses will be permitted on the expressway, while motorcycles and rickshaws are prohibited.

The Malir Expressway is poised to transform Karachi's transportation landscape, providing swift access to residential developments and commercial hubs. Once fully operational, it is expected to alleviate congestion and boost economic activity throughout the city. The CM emphasized the importance of efficient traffic management and directed officials to promptly address any operational challenges to ensure the timely completion of ongoing works.

CPSP delegates showcase achievements in Senate meeting



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services Regulation and Coordination held a meeting with an executive delegation of College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan (CPSP) at Karachi on 07th Jan 2025.

The committee was represented by Senator Amir Waliuddin Chishti, Senator Ahmed Kha, Senator Anusha Rahman, Senator Farwzia Arshad, Senator Irfan Ul Haq Siddiqui, Senator Liaquat Khan Tarkai, Senator Humayun Mohmand and Senator

Masroor Ahsan.

While the committee praised CPSP's progress and achievements, it also highlighted grey areas such as ethics of medical professionals, quantity and quality of research being done in medical field of Pakistan and lack of proper check on private medical colleges.

Chairman of the committee Senator Amir Waliuddin Chishti praised CPSP's progress and said that the committee was ready to facilitate the college to unlock more potential and gain improvement in grey areas.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui

while praising the college of being few public institutions who are working exceptionally good, highlighted that apart from focusing on Post Graduate quality, the college should explore ways to improve the under graduate education as well and in this regard the senator extended the committee's platform for doing so.

Speaking about the ethics of the medical professionals, Senator Anusha Rahman Ahmed Khan raised the issue of lack of medical ethics education in Pakistan. She highlighted that every Doctor except

few were opting C-section operations that was not only unethical but inhumane as well. She urged the college to work more in the medical ethics of the Doctors.

Similarly Senator Dr. Humayun Mohmand raised the issue of lack of research orientation in medical professionals. He highlighted that the medical journal of the CPSP get impact factor of 1 only, that was satisfactory only. He urged the college to do more to introduce the research trend in medical professionals.

The delegation of CPSP, represented by Professor Khalid Masood Gondal, Prof. M.Amir Khan, Prof. Khalid Ahmed Ashrafi, Prof. Abdullah Muttaqi, Prof. Irshad Waheed and others, assured the committee of strong mechanism on ethics education.

The delegation also requested the committee for their facilitation to get access in medical institutions of Gulf countries, which was assured by the committee.

Kashmiris striving for self-determination under Indian oppression

LAHORE (INP): A ceremony was organized by the Kashmir Center Lahore in connection with the Right to Self-Determination Day, where the speakers emphasized that Kashmiris are struggling for their birthright under the shadow of Indian guns.

The speakers stated that on January 5, 1949, the United Nations Commission for Pakistan and India passed a resolution granting Kashmiris the fundamental right of self-determination, which was accepted by both Pakistan and India. However, due to India's stubbornness, the promises made to the Kashmiris have not been

fulfilled. The speakers added that the United Nations Security Council has repeatedly reaffirmed the commitment to grant Kashmiris the right to self-determination in its resolutions.

They emphasized that the only durable and just solution to the Kashmir issue is through a plebiscite in accordance with the United Nations resolutions. The speakers also pointed out that India has disregarded these resolutions, creating obstacles in resolving the Kashmir dispute while simultaneously fueling state terrorism in the occupied territory.

The speakers declared that the right

to self-determination is the fundamental and birthright of Kashmiris, for which hundreds of thousands of people have already sacrificed their lives.

Speakers at the event included Syed Naseeb Ullah Gardezi, Vice President of the PMLN AJK chapter; Huriyyat leader Engineer Mushtaq Mehmood; PPP leader Ghulam Abbas Mir; Inam-ul-Hassan; PTI leader Mirza Sadiq Jarra; Farooq Azad; President of Jamiat Ittehad-ul-Ulama Lahore Ihsan Ullah Tabassum; Shehzad Nazki; Allama Fida-ur-Rehman; Abdul Majeed Butt; Qazi Anwar; Naveed Malik; Maqbool Awan; and others.

‘Sartyoon Sang Crafts’ brings artistry of thousands of women to Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The works of Thousands female artisans from different districts of Sindh are being displayed at the 16th 'Sartyoon Sang Crafts' exhibition at Ocean Mall Clifton, Karachi.

The exhibition will open to the public on Thursday January 9th and will run till Sunday, 12th 2025. The four-day exhibition is going to be organised by the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) in collaboration

with the Sindh Government to display the work of female artisans from rural Sindh and aims to provide them with market linkages.

Different stalls have been set up in the mall's main foyer that exhibit garments, Ajrak, furniture, decoration pieces, leather handbags, bed sheets and other traditional items. SRSO arranges such exhibitions from the last sixteen years in which visitors took keen interest in hand-made household goods and

other traditional products. SRSO Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Muhammad Dittal Kalhoro said that the event is aimed at facilitating better incomes for female artisans of rural Sindh.

We have trained thousands of rural women in different trades from some of the most under-devel-

oped regions of Jacobabad, Kandhkot-Kashmore, Shikarpur, Ghotki, Qambar-Shahdakt, Badin and all other districts of Sindh, he said, adding that the artisans have incorporated urban trends into their work to gain maximum monetary benefit from their skills.

Sindh govt to file FIRs for misused state vehicles

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to file FIRs against individuals who fail to return government vehicles.

In a meeting of the Sindh Cabinet Sub-Committee, it was decided that FIRs will be filed against individuals who fail to return government vehicles and use them without authorization.

An important meeting of the Sindh Cabinet Sub-Committee on Austerity Measures was chaired by Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, at his office in the Sindh Secretariat, Karachi.

The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister for Local Government, Housing, and Town Planning, Public Health Engineering Saeed Ghani; Provincial Minister for Prisons, Works, and Services Ali Hassan Zardari; Chief Secretary Sindh Syed Asif Haider Shah; and Secretary GA



Muhammad Nawaz Soho.

The committee meeting also resolved to auction the abandoned vehicles of the Sindh government. During the meeting, the esteemed members shared their recommendations and proposed suggestions to ensure a reduction in expenses.

The meeting discussed the use of government vehicles, controlling expenditure on petroleum, oil, and lubricants, and the auctioning of idle vehicles. The committee members directed the authorities to ensure the implementation of clear guidelines for the allotment

and regulation of vehicles.

The meeting also included proposals to ensure transparency in the auction process and to allocate the funds generated toward priority projects.

Speaking during the meeting, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized the need to curb the unnecessary use of government vehicles and reduce the rising expenditure on petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL)? steps must be taken to ensure complete transparency in the auction of idle vehicles.

Punjab apex committee reviews security

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired the Provincial Apex Committee meeting held at Chief Minister Secretariat Lahore on Tuesday.

The forum took a holistic view of the security situation in the province and measures being taken to meet the challenges and mitigate multifaceted threats, including jointly conducted IBOs (intelligence-based operations). The forum paid tribute to the Law Enforcement

Agencies and Security Forces for their relentless efforts and sacrifices for the peace of the country.

The forum was briefed on the comprehensive security plan for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy. Special focus was laid on border areas security to break the nexus between crime, illegal spectrum, and terrorism besides ensuring foreign nationals security, especially the Chinese nationals employed on CPEC and non CPEC projects.

The forum underscored the need for registration of madrassas, regulating use of loud speakers and driving out the illegal foreign nationals who remain the spoilers of peace in the province. The forum was also apprised on the massive capacity building of the CTD, Punjab Police and expansion of the Punjab Safe City Project to all the districts. The forum reaffirmed the joint resolve to continue working in synergy to ensure public safety and well-being.

Illegal foreign nationals being repatriated

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Office, Islamabad Capital Territory on Tuesday clarified that only the illegal foreign nationals are being repatriated as per law of the land.

"With regard to Afghan national, it is being clarified that those holding valid documentation—such as Proof of Registration (POR) cards, Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC), visas, or those listed for third-country resettlement—are not being repatriated. Islamabad Civil Administration remains

committed to safeguarding the rights of all documented individuals," said a news release.

It added that the administration during the search and combing operations ensure that the law is upheld while giving undocumented foreign nationals the opportunity to validate their status.

In 2025, a total of 183 illegal foreign nationals have been deported from Islamabad while 2 illegal nationals are in holding areas. It is important to emphasize that all the time

these deported individuals lacked any form of legal documentation to remain in Pakistan. The authorities continue to act strictly in accordance with the law, targeting only those who fail to present valid credentials. The civil administration reaffirms its commitment to ensuring fair and humane treatment of all individuals while strictly adhering to legal requirements. Foreign nationals are encouraged to ensure they carry valid documentation to avoid any inconvenience.

UET's Toseef Nawab wins NUST X UNDP innovation award

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Toseef Nawab, 7th-semester student from the Industrial Engineering Department, University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar has emerged as a winner in the Students Category of the "NUST X UNDP Innovation and Entrepreneurship Award", an initiative supported by UNDP and USAID in collaboration with NUST, Islamabad.

Toseef would receive the grant of Rs. 1 million as part of the Business Development Support Fund and has been invited to join a tailored incubation program to further enhance his business idea.

The project addresses a critical environmental issue in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa where more than 700 marble factories generate an estimated 300 tons of marble slurry waste annually.

This waste has detrimental effects on agricultural lands and aquatic ecosystems. His innovative solution involves waste management by reusing marble slurry to create tuff tiles and curb stones, offering an environmentally sustainable and cost-effective alternative.

Earlier, Toseef was shortlisted to attend a two-week boot camp at NUST, which he successfully completed refining his project idea further.

Kudos to Toseef Nawab, our emerging entrepreneur, for pitching such an innovative and impactful idea aimed at the sustainable development in the field of agriculture.



**PAF BASE, PESHAWAR**
TENDER NOTICE : BWO FLT

PAF Base, Peshawar invited sealed bids from Contractors, registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments for Purchasing of NCF items (Alyssum, Admiral tall, Calceolaria, Astar Verbena, Pansy Jema, Kochia, Bougainvillea, Sapling / Seeds Manure, Urea, Seasonal Paneri, Plants, Grass etc) for Financial year 2024-2025).

Last date for submission of tender is **24 January, 2025** at **1000 hrs.** which will be opened on the same date, at **1300 hrs.** The Officer Commanding reserves the rights to accept / reject any / all tenders, on technical grounds.

Note: Quotations may be sent in favor of BWO, PAF Base, Peshawar. Detailed specifications may be obtained on Telephone No: 091-9505031-5037, Cell No.: 0323-9411311

ADDENDUM/CORRIGENDUM

Reference to the Tender No. INF(P)3547/2024 regarding **"Disposal of the Assets of the Road Transport Board (RTB)"** published on the official website of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPPRA) dated 27-12-2024 and also published in daily newspapers i.e. Daily Hurmat Peshawar, Daily Quaid Peshawar, Daily Jang Rawalpindi, Daily Awaz-e-Subha Peshawar and The Frontier Post dated 28-12-2024. All prospective bidders are hereby informed that the application fee for the Bid Solicitation Documents to be submitted through a bank draft in favor of Director Transport, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa may be read as Rs. 500/- per application instead of Rs. 5000/- per application. Moreover, the prospective bidders must be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPR).

All other terms and conditions mentioned in the bid solicitation documents will remain the same.

Director Transport, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Address: Room No. 135, Ground Floor,
Benevolent Fund Building, Peshawar Cantt.
Phone# 091-9214185

www.khyberpakhtunkhwa.gov.pk Our Faith Corruption Free Pakistan **INF(P)65/2025**



peshawar: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Transport Haji Rangeez Ahmed inspecting the commercial plazas during one-day visit to Trans Peshawar headquarters and commercial plazas Chamkani Dabagri Garden and Hayatabad

Special Assistant to CM visits Trans Peshawar Headquarters

Directions issued for handing over 3 BRT plazas to Trans Peshawar for out sourcing and commercialization

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Transport Haji Rangeez Ahmed has said that the commercialization of BRT commercial plazas will not only provide business and employment opportunities to the people of the province but will also significantly increase the revenue of the province and the transport department. He said that the commercialization and outsourcing of BRT commercial plazas, including Chamkani Commercial Plaza, BRT Dabgari Garden Commercial Plaza and Hayatabad Commercial Plaza, which are spread over 18 kanals, 18 and 35 kanals respectively, which will make Peshawar a business hub and big firms here will be able to easily set up their own businesses here. He expressed these views on Tuesday during a one-day visit to Trans Peshawar headquarters and commercial plazas

Chamkani Dabagri Garden and Hayatabad. During his visit, the Special Assistant also chaired a meeting in the committee room of Trans Peshawar headquarters. On this occasion, MD Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority (PUMA) Pervez Subatkhel, Director General Peshawar Development Authority Abdul Ghafoor, CEO Trans Peshawar and other senior officials were also present.

The officials gave a detailed briefing to the meeting on commercial plazas, Trans Peshawar and BRT. While giving the briefing, the officials said that BRT Chamkani Commercial Plaza will be handed over to Trans Peshawar this week, on which 100 percent work has been completed, while Chamkani Commercial Plaza covers an area of 18 kanals.

Similarly, the area of BRT Dabagri Garden Commercial Plaza is also 18 kanals, which will be handed over to Trans Peshawar by the end of

April this year. Similarly, the BRT Hayatabad Commercial Plaza, which covers an area of 35 kanals, will be handed over to Trans Peshawar by the end of March this year and after the outsourcing process, these three plazas will be ready for commercial activities.

The Special Assistant personally visited and inspected the three plazas after the meeting and expressed satisfaction over the civil work. On this occasion, he said that the process of handing over the commercial plazas to Trans Peshawar should be further accelerated while the commercial plazas should be outsourced for commercial activities and open and transparent bidding should be done in this connection.

He said that it will also promote business in Peshawar which is the capital of the province and through these commercial activities Peshawar will become a business center. He said that the Transport Department is introducing

digital online driving licenses for which an MoU is being signed with the KPIT Board tomorrow, January 8, 2025, while concrete and practical steps are being taken to improve the quality and efficiency of transport Addas across the province.

The Special Assistant has said that he is trying his level best to increase revenue of the Transport Department to 100% by the end of June this year. He said that the agenda of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf PTI is to provide better services to the public and to promote prosperity in the province.

He further said that , the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has given clear instructions that all resources should be utilized for the welfare of the people and in the light of these instructions, today's visit has been made so that employment opportunities can be provided to the people here and the province can move on the path of development.

Tordher orders expedition of digitization process

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries and Commerce, Abdul Karim Tordher has stated that the process of digitizing all sectors related to industries and commerce should be expedited to make public services and facilities more accessible. He emphasized that facilitating ease of doing business is the vision of the Provincial Government and their effort is to integrate all services of relevant departments regarding business operations in the province on this online portal. He made these remarks while presiding over a meeting on Tuesday at the

Civil Secretariat in Peshawar, reviewing the digitization of various public services and institutional business of the Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Department's attached institutions related to industry and commerce.

The meeting was attended by Director of Industries Hassan Abid, Deputy Managing Director of Small Industries Development Board Noman Fayaz, Acting Chief General Operations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company Muhammad Rafiq, Director of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board Shakirullah, Deputy Manager of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade Miss. Rais Anjum, Deputy Secretary of Industry Azazullah and other relevant officials.

The meeting reviewed steps taken to provide various services digitally for the convenience of the public, focusing on the digitization of services by SIDB, KP EZDMC, KP Board of Investment and Trade, and Directorate General of Industries. The forum was also briefed on the ongoing process of digitizing institutional matters within these sectors.

During the meeting, it was informed that, in line with the vision of the Special Assistant, 13 departments have already been integrated into the

online platform for ease of doing business. The process of connecting more departments to the platform is progressing rapidly. It was further shared that departments whose services are already available online on ease of doing business Portal, are being made even more user-friendly.

The meeting was also informed that the IT Board has forwarded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the digitization of all matters under the Directorate General of Industries. Officials from the Directorate General of Industry assured the meeting that they would accelerate their efforts to fulfill their responsibilities in this regard.

FATA integration with KP: A new dawn for prosperity for tribal people

PESHAWAR (APP): After decades of economic stagnation and abolition of draconian Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), the tribal people of erstwhile Fata has started moving speedily on path of development and socioeconomic progress.

The merger of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has brought with it new opportunities for over five million tribal people, putting the once-neglected region on a path toward sustained growth and prosperity besides strengthening connectivity.

The merger has unlocked significant prospects for development across diverse sectors, with the government launching numerous ambitious projects aimed at uplifting the region's economic and social conditions. Many of these development projects are either nearing completion or already completed, with several more in the pipeline. Both the Federal and KP governments besides NGOs have made substantial investments in the area to bring the tribal people on par with the residents of developed districts of Pakistan. Mustafa Khan Wazir, a trader

from South Waziristan, highlighted the positive shift in the tribal region, saying the economic and industrial development projects, along with job creation, bring significant improvement in the lives of tribal people.

"The integration has brought about a drastic positive transformation, particularly in infrastructure, education, agriculture and healthcare that were historically neglected in erstwhile FATA. The new projects have not only improved the region's physical infrastructure but have also created employment opportunities, boosting the local economy. With new roads, schools, hospitals, and businesses springing up, the region is speedily moving away from its legacy of underdevelopment and insecurity" he said.

With better roads facilitating trade and movement, farmers are now able to access broader markets, leading to an increased agricultural productivity and income.

Shahabudin Khan, former member national assembly from Bajaur said that additionally, educational initiatives have seen a rise in literacy rates and vocational training programs,

equipping the youth with essential technical skills are meeting the demands of modern era.

"The development pace in erstwhile Fata is highly encouraging under PMLN Govt, and the support of community as well as NGOs to drive a vibrant economic and social change there was highly praised worthy," he said.

The establishment of business incubators and support for small and medium enterprises has started bolstering the economic landscape, he added.

Investments in infrastructure such as roads, schools, and hospitals are being prioritized and the government's development projects, including the construction of new roads and establishment of vocational training centers have started creating jobs opportunities for tribal youth.

Agriculture and livestock sectors are backbone of erstwhile FATA's economy were promoted besides introduction of modern farming techniques and irrigation projects aims to increase foods productivity and improve over livelihoods of tribesmen.

Forests projects under green growth initiatives and national livestock development pro-

grams including calves fattening and save the calf schemes extended to erstwhile Fata provided jobs to thousands of people, he said.

He said police stations were established and judicial system started functions besides forts constructed and the western border was fenced to stop infiltration of unwanted elements from across the western border.

Shahab Khan, a senior planning officer in KP Education Department told APP that the Govt and NGOs are working together to rebuild of education infrastructure in all seven tribal districts vital for peace and economic stability.

Besides provision of stipends under Govt's education for all programs and Benazir Income Support Program, he said that new schools are being constructed, and existing ones being rehabilitated in terms of furniture and academia to increase students' enrolments.

Under KP Govt Education Emergency, Program he said that education card would be launched in Upper and Lower Kohistan, Kolai Palas, Torghar, Upper and Lower Chitral, Tank, and Upper and Lower South

Waziristan intially and later would be extended to other districts.

He said all the children attending government schools in these areas will receive Rs1,000 per month, adding these beneficiaries would also get free admission in the registered private schools of their choice.

About 40,000 children would benefit from this program in the first phase in KP and upon its success the facility would be extended to other districts.

Additionally, girls in grades 6 to 10 across the province would receive Rs500 per month as an educational stipend, benefiting around 550,000 girls. Annually about Rs 3.1 billion would be spent to be funded by the provincial government, adding free textbooks and scholarships would also be provided under the Education Card.

A Rs3 billion education emergency endowment fund would be created for financial sustainability of the program.

He said increase investment in education in erstwhile FATA has lead to enhancement of girls education and skilled workforce which are paving the way for

creation of more economic opportunities for tribal youth and consolidating peace at rural areas.

Ikhtair Wali Khan, PMLN KP spokesman said that ex Fata have witnessed substantial development works under the federal government's public sector development programme (PSDP) during PMLN Govt to facilitate over five million tribal people.

Khyber Pass Economic Corridor (KPEC) project has been planned to accelerate pace of economic development and bolster industrialisation in erstwhile Fata.

KPEC with 47.5 kilometres length would be a four lane expressway connecting Pakistan with Afghanistan and onward Central Asian Republics (CARs).

KPEC is a three year project for which the federal government would provide about \$385.6 million with KP government's share of \$75 million.

To link North Waziristan and South Waziristan tribal districts with KP's southern districts through enhanced road connectivity, work on the 60 kilometres long Sarai Gambila-Karak section was completed.

Besides expending construction work of Kurram-Tangi Dam in North Waziristan and completion of Gomal Zam dam of 17.4 MW in South Waziristan, he said the federal government accelerated work on Mohmand dam with capacity to produce 800MW electricity and gross storage capacity is 1.293 million acres feet (MAF). Umair Khattak, senior research officer, Planning and Development Department KP said under the Economic Development Plan (EDP) focusing on 113 initiatives for development of merged areas, about 55 projects would be completed in North Waziristan in three years and 57 projects in South Waziristan.

The experts said the journey of the erstwhile FATA from economic backwardness to development serves as a testament to the resilience of its people and Govt unwavering commitment for the socioeconomic empowerment of tribal people.

As infrastructure improves and opportunities expand further, the path to prosperity becomes more accelerated, signaling a new chapter of overall prosperity in the lives of tribesmen.

KP becomes first province to pay off debt: Muzzammil

Transfers Rs 30 billion to debt management fund

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Finance and Interprovincial Coordination, Muzzammil Aslam, underscored Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's historic achievement in becoming the first province to actively reduce its debt. The provincial government has deposited an substantial amount of PKR 30 billion into the Debt Management Fund, with plans to contribute an additional PKR. 30-40 billion, depending on the financial landscape. In a video statement

issued on Tuesday, Muzzammil Aslam elaborated that the Debt Management Fund can accommodate up to 10% of KP's total debt of PKR. 725 billion. The province has already initiated transfers and remains committed to reducing its financial liabilities, setting a benchmark for other provinces and the Federal Government.

Mr. Muzzammil highlighted KP's recent key accomplishments, including the allocation of Rs. 20 billion each to pension and gratuity funds over the past six months, alongside generating Rs. 3-4 billion in profits

through efficient fund management. Additionally, KP has secured three months' worth of advance salary funds, marking a significant improvement from past challenges in salary disbursements.

KP Advisor for Finance also emphasized that the KP Government is steadfast in its goal to eliminate debt and stabilize the economy, aligning with the vision of PTI founder Imran Khan and under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur.

KP Advisor on Finance criticized the Federal Government for its unsus-

tainable financial policies, noting that Pakistan's national debt has surged to Rs. 70,400 billion. He revealed that the federal government borrowed PKR. 1,248 billion debt in the November 2024 alone, surpassing KP's total debt of Rs. 725 billion accumulated over 77 years. He further highlighted that the country's debt has grown by Rs. 27,000 billion since April 2022. The Advisor urged the federal government to adopt more responsible fiscal practices, drawing lessons from KP's success in debt reduction and financial stewardship.

Speaker acknowledges UNFPA's efforts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Mr. Babar Saleem Swati, met with a delegation from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) led by International Family Planning Advisor Dr. Mela Hidayat. The meeting focused on UNFPA's ongoing initiatives in KP and explored avenues for enhanced collaboration to address critical social challenges in the province.

The session was attended by Secretary KP Assembly Kifayat Ullah Afridi, Special Secretary Syed Waqar Shah, and MPA Akbar Ayub Khan, who actively participated in the discussions and shared their insights on the subject.

Dr. Mela Hidayat expressed her gratitude to the Speaker for his proactive role in the newly constituted Parliamentarians' Forum on Family Planning. She highlighted the forum's pivotal role in enhancing parliamentary oversight of family planning programs and mobilizing resources for effective implementation.

Syed Waqar Shah, Special Secretary to the Speaker, emphasized the importance of the Speaker's vision in advancing family planning and gender equality in the province. He also outlined the past contributions of the KP Assembly in addressing these critical issues, stressing the continued need for legislative support in promoting the welfare of the population.

The meeting also covered UNFPA's broader programs on gender equality and youth empowerment. Dr. Hidayat underlined the importance of sustained collaboration with the Provincial Assembly to address pressing issues related to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender equity.

Speaker Babar Saleem Swati praised UNFPA for their impactful work in KP, particularly their contributions to promoting family planning, SRH, and gender equality.

He reaffirmed the Provincial Assembly's commitment to supporting initiatives that uplift the well-being of the province's population.

Secy Health inaugurates training program for nurses

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The inaugural ceremony of the 3rd batch of the Leadership and Capacity Building Training Program for nurses of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was successfully held under the joint initiative of Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, Health department and SAME RPS UK. This training program aims to enhance the quality of nursing education and skills to meet international standards with the support of expert trainers from the United Kingdom.

The ceremony was graced by Syed Adeel Shah, Secretary of Health, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as the chief guest. In his address, he highlighted the importance of such programs in strengthening the nursing profession and emphasized that refresher courses and modern training methods would significantly enhance participants'

skills.

Secretary Health remarked, "Nursing is a cornerstone of the healthcare system. The Provincial Government is committed to raise the standards of nursing colleges and institutions to produce highly skilled professionals. This training program will bring remarkable changes in the nursing sector and positively impact the province's overall healthcare system."

He assured participants of full support and residential facilities during the program. He further highlighted that the Leadership and Capacity Building Training Program is being highly appreciated for its role in fostering professional development and enhancing the skills of nurses. Refresher courses and continuous exposure to modern practices are expected to significantly improve the participants' capabilities, contributing to the establishment of a strong and

effective healthcare system, he added.

Dr. Ijaz Hussain, Project Director SAME RPS, UK, outlined the goals and significance of the program, stating that it is designed to equip nurses with advanced leadership skills and professional expertise. Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, Pro Vice-Chancellor KMU, and Ms. Akhtar Bano, Director of Nursing, KP, also addressed the participants. They praised the transformative impact of this training initiative in elevating the standards of the nursing profession in the province.

The program provides participants with hands-on training aligned with international standards, incorporating modern techniques and best medical practices. In addition, facilities such as internet access, IT resources, modern classrooms, and hospital visits are being provided to ensure a comprehensive learning experience.

Jammiat Lawyers Forum meets at PHC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The general body meeting of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) lawyers' organization, Jamiat Lawyers Forum held at the Abdul Latif Afridi Memorial Hall at Peshawar High Court, on Tuesday.

The meeting was presided over by Provincial President Jalal u Din advocate, while Provincial General Secretary Muhammad Farooq Afridi Advocate conducted the proceedings. The meeting was attended by Peshawar division president Maulana Shamsul Haq, Executive Member Essa Khan, Mazmal Khan Mehmood, Finance Secretary Bilal Khalil, Hussain Ahmad Madani, Jehanzeb Shinwari and Peshawar district president Muftie Kamran Sarwar advocates, among others.

The meeting reviewed the oath-taking ceremony of the Jamiat Lawyers Forum cabinet, elections of the High Court Bar, Peshawar Bar, and divisional and district bar associations across the province.

Addressing the meeting, Provincial president Jalal u Din, Maulana Shamsul Haq, Farooq Afridi advocates and other leaders from various districts shared their views on the Peshawar High Court Bar election and district bar elections.

The leaders said that the Jamiat Lawyers Forum is moving forward with its ideology and party manifesto, and is playing its role in resolving the problems faced by the lawyers' community.

They noted that the Jamiat Lawyers Forum has emerged as a strong force at the bar association level. The leaders urged all

lawyers to discuss the

party's manifesto with their colleagues at the local district level and invite them to join the Jamiat Lawyers Forum.

The meeting decided to grant full authority to all district bar associations to make seat adjustments for elections at the local level, enabling them to move forward freely with their political objectives.

The meeting paid tribute to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman and his team for their efforts to pass the Madrassa Bill and their role in the 26th Constitutional Amendment.

The meeting prayed for Maulana Fazlur Rehman's health and well-being.





In brief

Performance meeting held F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: The district administration constantly ensuring supply of edible and drinkable items at the official price across the district. A meeting was held on the performance of price control magistrates on the direction of Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naeem Sindhu. Additional Deputy Commissioner Zeeshan Labbha Masih chaired the meeting. The Additional Deputy Commissioner reviewed the performance of all Price Control Magistrates. He said that strict action will be taken against the shopkeepers selling essential items at prices higher than the fixed rates. No shopkeeper shall charge more than the prescribed rate. Traders and shopkeepers should display price lists prominently.

48 acres of forest land retrieved

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Rashid Mahmood, stated on Tuesday that about 48 out of 65 acres of forest department land had been retrieved from squatters. In a statement issued here, the DFO revealed that an FIR had been registered against 37 individuals accused of the unlawful activity at the police station as well as attacked the forest department team during the operation. "The accused subjected the officials to torture, snatched their mobile phones, and even attempted to kidnap them," the FIR stated. It added that the suspects also stole money from the public officials. The DFO disclosed that 42 acres of forest land had previously been recovered from the land mafia and assured that the ongoing retrieval operations were being carried out under the directives of the Chief Minister of Punjab. He reiterated that no individual would be allowed to encroach on government land, emphasizing the department's commitment to protecting public property.

Weapons recovered

SARGODHA (INP): The police arrested 13 criminals during a crackdown in the district on Tuesday. A police spokesman said different police stations raided and arrested Nadeem, Naseer, Nouman, Naveed, Nasrullah, Muhammad Ashfaq, Muhammad Aslam, Tariq, Waqas, Waleed. The police also recovered 2-kg hashish, 2-kg opium, 231 litres of liquor, nine pistols, nine guns, and 203 rounds.

Bugti visits DLA office F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, on Monday paid a surprise visit to the Motorway Police's Driving License Authority (DLA) in Quetta. During the visit, the Chief Minister conducted a detailed review of the driving license issuance process and expressed satisfaction with the performance of the institution. He also expressed his desire to obtain an international driving license from the Motorway Police and decided to personally go through the necessary steps. Mir Sarfraz Bugti not only successfully completed the theoretical driving test but also passed the practical driving test. Following this, his application for an international driving license was sent to DLA Islamabad for issuing International Driving license. During the visit, the Chief Minister praised the Motorway Police's transparent and modern system, added that the driving license system of the Motorway Police is a reflection of public trust.

Minister reiterates improving life standard of people

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister on Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate has reiterated the pledge to spare no moment in improving the life standard of the people of his constituency and projects of collective interest will be started on priority basis.

This he said while talking to the people of his electorate on the eve of his visit to Shadi Khel and Kamal Khel areas here on

Tuesday along-with Daud Shah Afridi MPA. He, on this occasion, reviewed in detail the ongoing development works in the area, especially the cleaning and ongoing repairs of the Canal.

He on the spot issued directions to the authorities concerned to restore the said canal to its original condition. With completion of the canal, 800 acres of land will be under cultivation, he said, adding that a new canal will be constructed for another 2000

acres of land.

The Law Minister directed the Irrigation Department to speed up the restoration and repair work of the canal and ensure its timely completion without compromise on its quality of work. He maintained that special attention is being given to the irrigation sector to bring maximum barren land under cultivation in the area. He further, he will not make any such promise to the people that he cannot be fulfilled.

Zardari offers condolence with PPP KP ex-president

F.P. Report

PABBI: President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari expressed his condolences over the phone to former provincial president of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Sardar Ali Khan on departure of his wife, on Tuesday.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, PPP's Central Additional General Secretary Muhammad Humayun Khan, PPP's Provincial

President Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, Awami National Party's Provincial President Mian Iftikhar Hussain, former Nazim of Peshawar Town-3 Haji Sherif Khan, former Speaker of Provincial Assembly and Member of Provincial Assembly Karamat Khan Chagharmatti, MPA Zark Khan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's MNA Zulfiqar Khan, MPA Ashfaq Ahmed Khan, Pakistan Muslim League-N's District President Hamza Khan, Jamiat

Ulema-e-Islam's Mian Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Maulana Taj Qadir, JI Amir Ghulam Nabi Sina, QWP Waliur Rehman, and the wife of Shaheed Qamar Abbas.

Pabbi Bar Association Tariq Mahmood Advocate, DPO Nowshera Azhar Muhammad Khan, President of Pabbi Press Club Muhammad Ilyas, and others including scholars, leaders of various political parties, workers, traders, and civil society members attended the Rasm-e-Qul.

PPP celebrates ZAB birthday anniversary

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In connection with the 97th birthday of former Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the function was held at the District Bar Association under the chairmanship of former President Bar Muhammad Arshad Mehind Advocate. District President of People's Party Women's Wing, former President Bar Khalida Shahid Advocate and a large number of lawyers participated in the event.

On this occasion, Muhammad Arshad Mehind Advocate cut the cake of former Prime

Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's 97th birthday in echo of Jai Bhutto's slogans. Speaking at the event, Muhammad Arshad Mehind Advocate said that personalities like Bhutto are born after centuries. The remarkable deeds performed by Bhutto Shaheed in the country's history are unforgettable. Bhutto Shaheed started Pakistan's nuclear program by calling it a necessity for the balance of power in the region.

Bhutto Shaheed gathered 77 developing countries of the world on one platform and organized efforts to solve common problems

from a single platform. Along with this, he not only organized the Islamic Summit in Lahore, but also made such valuable decisions for the unity of the Muslim Ummah.

The District President of People's Party Women, former President Bar Madam Khalida Shahid Advocate said that no other leader has been able to do the same as Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Shaheed highlighted the problem of Kashmir with his fiery speech at the United Nations. At the end of the ceremony, a special prayer was offered for the country's integrity and the Bhutto family.

Swat journalists meet MS Saidu Group of Hospitals



Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The Medical Superintendent of Saidu Group of Hospitals, Dr. Naeemullah, has stated that he is committed to equipping Saidu Group of Hospitals with modern medical facilities. Providing comprehensive healthcare services and serving humanity in distress are top priorities. Efforts are underway to fully restore MRI, CT scan, and X-ray machines. Doctors, driven by the spirit of serving humanity, act as healers and instill hope in patients through their compassionate care.

He expressed these views during a meeting in his office with senior journalists, including Ghafoor Khan Adil, Shehzad Alam, Shah Asad Ali, Murad Ali Khan, and Niaz Muhammad. The journalists congratulated him on assuming charge and assured their full cooperation for the betterment of the hospital. In response, Dr. Naeemullah thanked them and stated that they would address their shortcomings based on media feedback while focusing on improving the hospital.

He further added that people have high expectations from them, and, God willing, they will turn this hospital into a center of public trust, ensuring better medical facilities for everyone. Initially, the main focus will be on casualty (emer-

gency services) to ensure effective treatment for patients brought in emergency situations.

Newly appointed DPO Swat welcomed: In a warm gesture of welcome, Sardar Waqar Shahzad advocate extended his congratulations to the newly appointed district police officer Swat, Nasir Mehmood along with a delegation from Gurny Upper Swat. During the meeting, held at SP Swat's office, Sardar Waqar invited DPO Nasir Mehmood to his residence, an invitation which was graciously accepted, on Tuesday.

Expressing his commitment to fostering cooperation between the people of Swat and Upper Swat and the police force, Sardar Waqar assured DPO Nasir Mehmood of their full support. Highlighting the linguistic diversity of the region, Sardar Waqar emphasized the importance of recruiting police officers who speak different languages, particularly for the inclusion of women in law enforcement. This, he explained, would greatly aid the department in carrying out investigations and other policing duties effectively.

In a statement to the press, Sardar Waqar Shahzad underscored the necessity of promoting inclusivity in policing in Malakand Division, specifically in Swat. He urged for the recruitment of police

officers from various linguistic backgrounds, with a special emphasis on including women officers, to enhance the department's ability to serve the diverse community. Sardar Waqar's advocacy for inclusive policing reflects a progressive vision for a more integrated and effective law enforcement system in the region.

Project launched

GUJRANWALA (INP): As many as nine U-turn will be created on 12.7 kilometers long signal-free corridor which was being constructed from Chan Da Qila Chowk to Aziz Bypass in Gujranwala.

The project will be completed by June 2025 with an estimated cost of Rs4.5 billion. The project of remodeling of the old GT road to convert it into a signal-free corridor has recently been launched by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for the smooth flow of traffic.

Official sources said the secretary communication and works department was also due in Gujranwala in the current week to review the project as well as possibilities for any change in the design in the wake of Punjab government's plan to launch the bus service in the city.



HYDERABAD: Head Constable, Ladies Jail, Tofeeq Hussain along with his children holding a protest for acceptance of their demands.

APCA elects office bearers for Dir chapter F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Mr Sehat Jan was elected unopposed as president and Rahatullah as general secretary of the All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA) Lower Dir. According to the notification issued by Muhammad Salim Khan, the election commissioner of APCA elections, the association had issued its schedule but only one group had submitted its nomination papers.

It said that Sehat Jan was elected as president, Malik Shad Muhammad as senior vice president, Rahatullah as general secretary, Mukhtiar Khan as additional general secretary, Muhammad Halim Khan as finance secretary, Arshad Iqbal as coordination secretary, Rahman Saeed as press secretary and Inamullah as office secretary of the APCA Lower Dir for the next term. Speaking on the occasion the newly elected district president promised to work hard for getting rights of the clerks' community. He said that he would not disappoint the community and would fight for its rights.

DHO hospital visit: The Lower Dir district health officer Dr Muhammad Nisar Tarkalani on Tuesday paid a surprise visit to the category D Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Talash. The hospital's Medical Superintendent Dr Arshad Ali briefed him regarding various units of the facility. The DHO inspected the emergency unit, general OPD, X-ray section, dental block and other departments.

He issued instructions that all emergency patients should be provided with all facilities including free medicines and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard. Talking to the media, he said that biometric system had been installed in 72 small and big hospitals across the district and ghost employees would no more be spared. He said that 62 different types of medicines had been delivered to the hospitals.

AD&SJ convicts Tik Tok star F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Additional District and Sessions Judge (AD&SJ) Takhtbhai Arbab Muhammad Kashif convicted Peshawar's based famous dancer and Tiktoker Bisma Bibi for lifetime imprisonment in killing of her husband Samiullah at College Colony on 04 September 2023.

AD&SJ also imposed Rs5 lakh fine on the murderer. It should be remembered that the accused Bisma Bibi is a well-known Peshawar dancer and Tik tok star. Who was married to Samiullah son of Khaista ur Rahman (deceased) watchman of JK Plaza in Takhtbhai College Colony on 15/08/2023 who killed her husband Samiullah by shooting with a pistol for unknown reasons at 8 am in the morning after 19 days of marriage. The counsel for complainant Mian Ijaz Ali Shah and Imtiaz Malik advocates contested the case.

Blind murder case Police arrests two alleged culprits

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Police has arrested two suspects alleged involved in blind murder case in which abandoned dead body found in the premises Toru police station while recovered the victim's car, mobile phone, pistol and other important evidences, on Tuesday.

In this regard, SP City said that on 30 December, the police found an abandoned dead body near Sokia Bridge in the premises of Toru police station, which was faithfully buried in Singer Baba graveyard. The police shared the picture of the deceased on social media to help identify the body.

The next of kin of the deceased identified the body as Noman Ahmed son of Mukhtiar Ahmed, resident Takht-E-Nusrati area of district Karak. The body was exhumed on January 1 and handed over to the heirs. The relatives of the deceased said that he was washer-man (Dhobi) and also resided near Peshawar University on Canal Road. And on the day of the incident, he left home for some work and did not return.

The deceased's brother Dr. Atif told the police that the deceased had left the house with his car, mobile phone, driving license and other necessary documents. DPO formed a special team consisting of experienced

officers under the leadership of SP City Shafiqullah Khan and Station House Officer (SHO) Toru Jahangir Khan.

The team started the investigation on modern scientific lines and while making progress in the case, two persons Muhammad Khan Resident Swabi, currently residing at Pabbi, Nowshera and Muhammad Umar resident Rorya Jadied, Mardan were arrested and investigated.

The car, mobile phone, driving license and murder weapon of the deceased were recovered from their possession. Further investigation is going on with the arrested accused to bring out the motives of the murder and other evidences.

COCI demands action against crimes in Larkana

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Due to the increase in street crime in the cities of Larkana district and the daily increase in incidents of unrest in other villages and towns, the Chamber of Commerce & Industries Larkana convened a meeting.

COCI Larkana President Khair Muhammad Sheikh expressed serious concern and said that the law and order situation in the district has deteriorated to the point that no trader or common person is safe. Criminals are openly looting cash, motorcycles, and mobile phones from shops and fleeing, but unfortunately, the administration is not taking any action. He added that the dirty water standing on the main roads of the city and encroachments inside the trade mar-

kets are increasing day by day.

The meeting was attended by Hindu Panchayat Chairman and Senior Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Harish Lal, Vice President of the Federation of Traders Masood Ahmed Sheikh, President of the Sindh Balochistan Rice Millers and Traders Association Asad Ali Tunio and other businessmen also participated.

On this occasion, two members of the executive committee of the Larkana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Asad Ali Tunio and Shamshad Ahmed Sheikh, were also sworn in.

Women protests against house sale: Women residents of Muradwahn locality of Larkana city protested in

front of the Press Club against the alleged land encroachment. On this occasion, the affected women, widows Gulzar Khatoun Bhutto and Sanam Bhutto, protested and said that there is a house in Muradwahn neighborhood consisting of 720 sq m in the name of our family member Ali Anwar Bhutto, whose papers are also available.

She alleged that the sister of my late husband has sold the house where I live to influential people for a sum of Rs 40 lakh, due to which they have been continuously threatening us to vacate the house for the last 15 days and have also been threatening to implicate us and my children in false cases. They appealed to the DIG Police Larkana to take notice and provide justice.

Asst Prof Hunar Shah defends PhD thesis

F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Assistant Professor Hunar Shah of English at Government Degree College Jamrud, successfully defended Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph. D) thesis in literature from Qurtuba University of Science and information Technology, Peshawar.

The scholar was supervised by Professor Dr. Samina Ashfaq at Department of English, Qurtuba University, Peshawar. However, the



external examiner Professor Dr. Rooh ul Amin at Women University Rawalpindi.

Professor Dr. Hunar Shah tribute the success to teachers and his hard work as well as commitment.

Two startups launched at Khushal Incubation Centre

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Incubation Centre at Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, witnessed the successful launch of two exciting startups today: Jube Joy and Hijab Haven.

The event was attended by enthusiastic students, faculty members, and esteemed guests. Dr. Muhammad Zubair, Director of the Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC), and other faculty members expressed their sincere appreciation for the hard work and dedication



of the young entrepreneurs. Jube Joy and Hijab Haven represent innovative concepts with the potential to make a significant impact, highlighting their unique selling propositions and target markets. The launch of these startups underscores the growing entrepreneurial spirit with-

in the university community and the vital role of the Khushal Incubation Centre in nurturing and supporting student ventures. The center provides a platform for aspiring entrepreneurs to develop their business ideas, access mentorship, and gain valuable resources.



US eases curbs on Syria while keeping sanctions in place

WASHINGTON (AP): The US eased some restrictions on Syria's transitional government to allow the entry of humanitarian aid after Islamist insurgents ousted Syrian leader Bashar Assad last month. The US Treasury issued a general license, lasting six months, that authorizes certain transactions with the Syrian government, including some energy sales and incidental transactions.

The move does not lift sanctions on the nation that has been battered by more than a decade of war, but indicates a limited show of US support for the new transitional government. The general license underscores America's commitment to ensuring its sanctions "do not impede activities to meet basic human needs, including the provision of public services or humanitarian assistance," a Treasury Department statement reads. Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo said his agency "will continue to support humanitarian assistance and responsible governance in Syria."

Since Assad's ouster, representatives from the nation's new de facto authorities have said that the new Syria will be inclusive and open to the world. The US has gradually lifted some penalties since Assad departed Syria for protection in Russia. The Biden administration in December decided to drop a \$10 million bounty it had offered for the capture of a Syrian rebel leader whose forces led the ouster of Assad last month. The announcement followed a meeting in Damascus between the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, Ahmad al-Sharaa, who was once aligned with al-Qaida, and the top US diplomat for the Middle East, Barbara Leaf, who led the first US diplomatic delegation into Syria since Assad's ouster. The US and UN have long designated HTS as a terrorist organization.

HTS led a lightning insurgency that ousted Assad on Dec. 8 and ended his family's decades-long rule. From 2011 until Assad's downfall, Syria's uprising and civil war killed an estimated 500,000 people. Much of the world ended diplomatic relations with Assad because of his crack-down on protesters, and sanctioned him and his Russian and Iranian associates. Most of Western-led sanctions targeted Assad, and his associates, for the brutal crackdown on protesters and their manufacturing of the amphetamine-like stimulant Captagon, which reportedly generated billions of dollars as packages of the little white pills were smuggled across Syria's porous borders. With Assad out of the picture, Syria's new authorities hope that the international community will pour money into the country to rebuild its battered infrastructure and make its economy viable again.

Syria's infrastructure has been battered, with power cuts rampant in the country and some 90% of its population living in poverty. About half the population won't know where its next meal will come from, as inflation surges. The pressure to lift sanctions has mounted in recent years as aid agencies continue to cut programs due to donor fatigue and a massive 2023 earthquake that rocked Syria and Turkey. The tremor killed over 59,000 people and destroyed critical infrastructure that couldn't be fixed due to sanctions and overcompliance, despite the US announcing some humanitarian exemptions. Qutaiba Ildbi, a research fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank who leads work on Syria said ahead of the general license issuance: "There is a general agreement," among regional and international governments, "that we need to avoid driving Syria back into chaos." "The only path forward is to engage positively."

Thousands left without heat or gas in Moldova

MOSCOW (Reuters): More than 51,000 households were left without gas and 1,500 apartment buildings had no winter heat in Moldova's Moscow-backed separatist enclave, authorities said, as Moldova and Russia traded blame for an escalating energy crisis.

Transnistria, a mainly Russian-speaking break-away region along the Ukrainian border, had received Russian gas via Ukraine for decades, using it to generate electricity also sold to the rest of Moldova, providing 80% of the country's power. But that gas was cut off along with flows to Central and Eastern Europe that stopped on New Year's Day, after Kyiv refused to extend a transit deal that had persisted through nearly three years of all-out war between Russia and Ukraine.

The Moldovan government blames the energy crisis on Russian gas export giant Gazprom, which it said refused to supply contracted gas to Transnistria via an alternative and tested Transbalkan route. Gazprom said it would suspend exports to Moldova on Jan. 1 because of unpaid Moldovan debts that Moscow says total \$709 million. Moldova disputes that debt and says its position is

backed up by an international audit. The Transnistrian separatist authorities said on Telegram that a total of 122 settlements had lost gas supplies, and only small amounts were being supplied to some apartments for cooking. Authorities ordered schools not to reopen after the winter holidays, with at least 131 schools and 147 kindergartens left without heat.

"There is not a single person in Transnistria who is guilty of this situation - it's all an external factor," the president in the region's administration, Vadim Krasnoselsky, said on a televised statement. Gas piped via Ukraine has long been the main way Russia supported the separatist region, which broke free of control of Moldova's central government, fought a brief war against government forces in 1992 and still hosts 1,500 Russian soldiers. Russia's foreign ministry said in a statement it was following the deteriorating situation with alarm, blaming the gas cutoff on Ukraine and accusing Moldova of deliberately ignoring the problem.

Moldova said it had summoned a Russian diplomat and accused Moscow of falsely blaming it for the crisis, which it said Moscow had artificially stoked to

undermine Moldova's government before parliamentary elections this year. Moldova, which has a pro-European government that seeks membership in the European Union and has been at odds with Moscow for several years, has alternated between pro-Western and pro-Russian governments since it gained independence during the 1991 break-up of the Soviet Union. "The meaning of all of this is for Russia to create instability in the region but also very importantly to influence the results of the parliamentary elections in Moldova... They want to achieve a pro-Russian government..." Moldovan Prime Minister Dorin Recean said during an online briefing. Disruptions of water supply in Transnistria had begun, he added.

Since Russian gas was halted with the new year, Moldova has met its power needs by importing about 60% of its energy requirement from neighbouring Romania. The government says it has offered to assist the separatists, but that the offer was rejected. Krasnoselsky has said Moldova's goal is the "strangulation" of the enclave and has urged residents to use firewood.

Rebels seized 2 key towns in Congo

GOMA, Congo (AP): Rebels with the M23 group have seized two key towns in eastern Congo as they advance in the volatile region, civil society and a local politician said, as the security and humanitarian crisis deepened. The rebels over the past week took Katala and Masisi towns, the latter located 80 kilometers (49 miles) west of the regional capital, Goma, and a strategic entry point into the country's interior.

The M23 is one of over 100 armed groups that have been vying for territory in mineral-rich eastern Congo near the border with Rwanda, in a conflict that has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. More than 7 million people have been displaced. M23 political spokesman Lawrence Kanyuka claimed responsibility for the capture of Masisi on social media platform X. He asserted that the group is committed to protecting civilians. Alexis Bahunga, deputy for the Masisi territory, confirmed that Masisi was under the M23's control.

French police arrest three Algerians

PARIS (AP): Police in France have arrested three Algerian men described by authorities as social media influencers accused of posting videos inciting violence, against a backdrop of soured relations between Paris and its former colony in North Africa. French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau announced the latest arrest the third in as many days. A French media report that the minister attached to his post on X said the influencer posted a video to his 138,000 followers on TikTok that French authorities deemed anti-Semitic.

The arrest in Montpellier, southern France, and two others in the Alpine city of Grenoble and the western port city of Brest come amid renewed turbulence in the often complicated relationship between France and Algeria, which shook off French rule in 1962 after a brutal war. A shift last July in France's decades-old position on the disputed Western Sahara region of northern Africa angered Algeria and prompted the withdrawal of its ambassador in Paris. The French government, meanwhile, has denounced Algeria's detention since November of French-Algerian writer Boualem Sansal, who is an outspoken critic of the Algerian government.

The French government hasn't linked the tensions with Algiers to the three arrests. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said that France wants "the best relations" with Algeria. But he said Paris has doubts about the Algerian government's commitment to deals agreed in 2022 that were seen as important steps toward mending their relationship.



BEIRUT: Lebanese soldiers standing near a damaged site in Khiam village after Israeli strikes.

Ukraine needs 'realistic' stance on territorial issues: Macron

PARIS (Reuters, AFP): French President Emmanuel Macron said that Ukraine needs to have a realistic position on territorial issues as part of efforts to bring about a negotiation with Russia. Speaking at an annual conference to French ambassadors to outline their strategy for the year, Macron's comments were the first time he had suggested that Kyiv should consider a position beyond seeking to regain all territory seized by Russia.

Moscow, which annexed Crimea in 2014, launched a full-blown invasion of Ukraine in Feb. 2022 and currently controls about a fifth of the country, including most of the eastern Donbas region. "The Ukrainians need to hold a realistic discussion on the territorial questions and only they can do that, and the Europeans are counting on building security guarantees that will be their responsibility," Macron said. The United States' role should be to convince Russia to come to the negotiation table, he said, while adding that no solution to the conflict could be agreed without the direct involvement of Ukraine and Europe.

Speaking at a news conference in Paris, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski made it clear his country's position had not changed and said only Ukraine could decide on the future of its borders. "Poland thinks that the most natural and lasting solution would be a return to the recognised borders," he said alongside his French counterpart Jean-Noël Barrot. "Let us recall that it was President

Vladimir Putin who personally negotiated and ratified the border treaty between Russia and Ukraine in 2004." Macron reiterated that Ukraine's allies needed to ensure that Kyiv has enough backing so that it can come enter any negotiations from a position of strength. He made no specific new commitments to help Ukraine. "There will not be a quick and easy solution," Macron said, referring to US President-elect Donald Trump's promise to end the war quickly.

Meanwhile, several dozen Ukrainian soldiers have deserted while training in France, a French army official told AFP. "There have been a certain number of desertions, but they remain very marginal given the volume of people who have undergone training," a French army official told AFP. "They were in French barracks, they had the right to go out."

According to the French army official, the Ukrainian soldiers who were trained in France were subject to a disciplinary regime "imposed by the Ukrainian command". "We don't criminalise desertion in France", the official said. "If someone deserted, a French prosecutor had no authority to arrest that individual. And the right granted to the Ukrainian authorities on French soil is just a disciplinary right." The French army trained on French territory 2,300 soldiers from a brigade named "Anne of Kyiv" after a Kyiv-born princess who married French King Henri I in the 11th century.

Most of the soldiers were conscripts with no combat experience. They were accompanied by 300 Ukrainian supervisors. The other 2,200 soldiers in the brigade were trained in Ukraine.

Earlier, Ukraine's land forces commander admitted there were "problems" with the army unit after reports that many of its soldiers had deserted. The unit was one of several formed last year as Ukraine sought to boost preparations for possible new Russian offensives. "Yes, there are problems, we are aware of them," Land Forces Commander Mykhailo Drapaty said of the Anne of Kyiv unit, the informal name for the 155th Mechanised Brigade, in comments to media including AFP. Prominent Ukrainian journalist Yuriy Butusov wrote in December that 1,700 soldiers had fled the brigade without going into combat, and that 50 had escaped while training in France. Asked about Butusov's report, Drapaty said: "I will not refute it." He said "a number of the facts that were presented did take place", while "perhaps not on the scale and scope that was presented". "I don't really see what could be described as an abuse of power," said the French army official. "In any case, nothing has come to light about the Ukrainians being stationed in France or what happened during these training sessions." He insisted that the training had been in line with the Ukrainians' wishes, in terms of "equipment" and "training time".

California governor proposes \$322b budget with no deficit

TURLOCK, Calif. (AP): California Gov. Gavin Newsom has proposed a \$322 billion budget without a deficit, a welcome change after two years of significant budget shortfalls in the nation's most populous state.

But the budget Newsom announced is mostly a placeholder as California waits to see if incoming President Donald Trump will follow through on threats to revoke billions in federal dollars, which could force lawmakers to make painful cuts to essential programs. About a third of California's budget relies on funding from the federal government, including tens of billions of dollars to provide health care services. Trump takes office on Jan. 20, and Newsom must sign the

final budget by the end of June.

California lawmakers already opened a special session to consider giving a fresh \$25 million to Attorney General Rob Bonta's office to defend against or take on potential legal challenges from the Trump administration. Fights are likely between California and Washington, D.C., over climate policy and immigrant rights. State senators have also proposed additional funding to provide free legal services to immigrant communities. Finding a way to balance the budget in the face of potential federal funding losses will be a major test for Newsom, who is entering the last two years of his last term and continues to be seen as a future presi-

dential contender.

One project that could be at risk is the state's high-speed rail project, which would eventually carry passengers between Los Angeles and San Francisco but is woefully underfunded and behind schedule. Trump cancelled nearly \$1 billion in federal funding during his first term in 2019, and several Republican Congress members are already taking aims at the project over its costs. President Joe Biden later restored the federal dollars allotted to it. Perhaps anticipating a challenge, Newsom also traveled to a construction site for the project to highlight progress including obtaining all environmental permits needed for building.

Long silenced by fear, Syrians now speak about rampant torture under Assad

DAMASCUS (AP): Handcuffed and squatting on the floor, Abdullah Zahra saw smoke rising from his cellmate's flesh as his torturers gave him electric shocks. Then it was Zahra's turn. They hanged the 20-year-old university student from his wrists until his toes barely touched the floor and electrocuted and beat him for two hours. They made his father watch and taunted him about his son's torment.

That was 2012, and the entire security apparatus of Syria's then-President Bashar Assad was deployed to crush the protests that had arisen against his rule. With Assad's fall a month ago, the machinery of death that he ran is starting to come out into the open. It was systematic and well-organized, growing to more than 100 detention facilities where torture, brutality, sexual violence and mass executions were rampant, according to activists, rights group and former prisoners. Security agents spared no one, not even Assad's own soldiers. Young men and women were detained for simply living in districts where protests were held.

As tens of thousands disappeared over more than a decade, a blanket of fear kept the Syrian population silent. People rarely told anyone that a loved one had vanished for fear they too could be reported to security agencies. Now, everyone is talking. The insurgents who swept Assad out of power opened detention facilities, releasing prisoners and allowing the public to bear witness. Crowds swarmed, searching for answers, bodies of their loved ones, and ways to heal. The Associated Press visited seven of these facilities in Damascus and spoke to nine former detainees, some released on Dec. 8, the day

Assad was ousted. Some details of the accounts by those who spoke to the AP could not be independently confirmed, but they matched past reports by former detainees to human rights groups. Days after Assad's fall, Zahra - now 33 -- came to visit Branch 215, a detention facility run by military intelligence in Damascus where he was held for two months. In an underground dungeon, he stepped into the windowless, 4-by-4-meter (yard) cell where he says he was held with 100 other inmates.

Each man was allowed a floor tile to squat on, Zahra said. When ventilators weren't running -- either intentionally or because of a power failure -- some suffocated. Men went mad; torture wounds festered. When a cellmate died, they stowed his body next to the cell's toilet until jailers came to collect corpses, Zahra said. "Death was the least bad thing," he said. "We reached a place where death was easier than staying here for one minute." Assad's system of repression grew as civil war raged Zahra was arrested along with his father after security agents killed one of his brothers, a well-known anti-Assad graffiti artist. After they were released, Zahra fled to opposition-held areas. Within a few months, security agents returned and dragged off 13 of his male relatives, including a younger brother and, again, his father. They were brought to Branch 215. All were tortured and killed. Zahra later recognized their bodies among photos leaked by a defector that showed the corpses of thousands killed while in detention. Their bodies were never recovered, and how and when they died is unknown. Rights groups estimate at least 150,000 people went missing after anti-government

protests began in 2011, most vanishing into Assad's prison network. Many of them were killed, either in mass executions or from torture and prison conditions. The exact number remains unknown. Even before the uprising, Assad had ruled with an iron fist. But as peaceful protests turned into a full-fledged civil war that would last 14 years, Assad rapidly expanded his system of repression.

New detention facilities sprung up in security compounds, military airports and under buildings - all run by military, security and intelligence agencies. Touring the site of his torture and detention, Zahra hoped to find some sign of his lost relatives. But there was nothing. At home, his aunt, Rajaa Zahra, saw the pictures of her killed children for the first time. She had refused to look at the leaked photos before. She lost three of her six sons in Branch 215 and a fourth was killed at a protest. Her brother, she said, had three sons, now he has only one. "They were hoping to finish off all the young men of the country."

The Assad regime's tortures had names. One was called the "magic carpet," where a detainee was strapped to a hinged wooden plank that bends in half, folding his head to his feet, which are then beaten. Abdul-Karim Hajeko said he endured this five times. His torturers stomped on his back during interrogations at the Criminal Security branch, and his vertebrae are still broken. "My screams would go to heaven. Once a doctor came down from the fourth floor (to the ground floor) because of my screams," he said.

He was also put in "the tire." His legs were bent inside a car tire as interrogators beat his back and feet with a plastic baton. When they were

done, he said, a guard ordered him to kiss the tire and thank it for teaching him "how to behave." Hajeko was later taken to the notorious Saydnaya Prison, where he was held for six years. Many prisoners said the tire was inflicted for rule violations -- like making noise, raising one's head in front of guards, or praying - or for no reason at all. Mahmoud Abdulkabi, a non-commissioned air force officer who defected from service, was put in the tire during detention at a military police facility. They forced him to count the lashes - up to 200 - and if he made a mistake, the torturer would start over.

"People's hearts stopped following a beating," the 37-year-old said. He was later held at Saydnaya, where he said guards would terrorize inmates by rolling a tire down the corridor lined with cells and beat on the bars with their batons. Wherever it stopped, the entire cell would be subjected to the tire. Altogether, Abdulkabi spent nearly six years in prison over different periods. He was among those freed on the day Assad fled Syria. Saleh Turki Yahia said a cellmate died nearly every day during the seven months in 2012 he was held at the Palestine Branch, a detention facility run by the General Intelligence Agency.

He recounted how one man bled in the cell for days after returning from a torture session where interrogators rammed a pipe into him. When the inmates tried to move him, "all his fluids poured out from his backside. The wound opened from the back, and he died," he said. Yahya said he was given electric shocks, hanged from his wrists, beaten on his feet. He lost half his body weight and nearly tore his own skin scratching from scabies. "They broke us," he said, break-

ing into tears. "Look at Syria, it is all old men ... A whole generation is destroyed." But with Assad gone, he was back visiting the Palestine Branch. "I came to express myself. I want to tell." The mounting evidence will be used in trials Torture continued up to the end of Assad's rule.

Rasha Barakat, 34, said she and her sister were detained in March from their homes in Saqba, a town outside Damascus. Inside a security branch, she was led past her husband, who had been arrested hours earlier and was being interrogated. He was kneeling on the floor, his face green, she said. It was her last brief glimpse of him: He died in custody. During her own hours-long interrogation, she said, security agents threatened to bring in her sons, 5- and 7-years-old, if she didn't confess. She was beaten. Female security agents stripped her and poured cold water on her, leaving her shivering naked for two hours. She spent eight days in isolation, hearing beatings nearby. Eventually she was taken to Adra, Damascus' central prison, tried and sentenced to five years for supporting rebel groups, charges she said were made up. There she stayed until insurgents broke into Adra in December and told her she was free. An estimated 30,000 prisoners were released as fighters opened up prisons during their march to Damascus. Barakat said she is happy to see her kids again. But "I am destroyed psychologically ... Something is missing. It is hard to keep going." Now comes the monumental task of accounting for the missing and compiling evidence that could one day be used to prosecute Assad's officials, whether by Syrian or international courts. Hundreds of thousands of documents remain scat-

tered through the former detention facilities, many labeled classified, in storage rooms commonly underground. Some seen by the AP included transcripts of phone conversations, even between military officers; intelligence files on activists; and a list of hundreds of prisoners killed in detention. Shadi Haroun, who spent 10 years imprisoned, has been charting Assad's prison structure and documenting former detainees' experiences from exile in Turkey. After Assad's fall, he rushed back to Syria and toured detention sites. The documents, he said, show the bureaucracy behind the killings. "They know what they are doing, it is organized."

Civil defense workers are tracking down mass graves where tens of thousands are believed to be buried. At least 10 have been identified around Damascus, mostly from residents' reports, and five others elsewhere around the country. Authorities say they are not ready to open them. A UN body known as the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism has offered to help Syria's new interim administration in collecting, organizing and analyzing all the material. Since 2011, it has been compiling evidence and supporting investigations in over 200 criminal cases against figures in Assad's government. Robert Petit, director of the UN body, said the task is so enormous, no one entity can do it alone. The priority would be to identify the architects of the brutality. Many want answers now. Officials cannot just declare that the missing are presumed dead, said Wafaa Mustafa, a Syrian journalist, whose father was detained and killed 12 years ago. "No one gets to tell the families what happened without evidence, without search, without work."

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Why Trump should listen to the Gulf countries on Yemen

AS the Middle East enters a new year, several major changes are taking place. Syria's interim government is hosting foreign dignitaries and sending envoys on regional tours. In Gaza, there are reports that negotiations on a ceasefire and the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas have made significant progress.

In Lebanon, an imperfect ceasefire continues to hold as the country's politicians prepare to meet this week and choose a new president. There is less expectation for progress in Yemen, which remains a hotspot of entrenched volatility. Last week, it was reported that extremists from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula executed 11 people, including a Yemeni journalist. On New Year's Eve, Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels fired missiles at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport and a power station in southern Jerusalem. The Houthis were on the receiving end of attacks, too, with US Central Command saying it carried out strikes against rebel targets in Yemen's capital and coastal locations. The plight of ordinary Yemenis continues with little global attention.

Despite the recent setbacks experienced by the so-called Axis of Resistance, the Iran-backed proxy network that includes the Houthis, the Yemeni rebels appear to be secure at home and continue to rule with a heavy hand.

Last month, The National spoke to Yemeni parents who were concerned about their children after the Houthis introduced a weapons-training programme for high school and university students in areas under their control. The country continues to experience the world's worst humanitarian crisis and internationally, the Houthis have turned the Red Sea into a battleground by attacking international shipping.

This stalemate could soon be shaken up as US president-elect Donald Trump prepares to return to power. Under President Joe Biden, Washington's Yemen policy began with a focus on aid and diplomacy but since the Gaza war has changed to one defined largely by air strikes.

This has achieved little. It has failed to dislodge the Houthis, whose attacks against Israel and international shipping continue. Arguably, it has even emboldened them further.

Previous attempts to support Yemen's legitimate government with mainly military means ultimately proved unsatisfactory. Saudi Arabia, which led the Arab Coalition – the multinational force that responded in 2015 to a request for help from Yemen's then president – has engaged in mediation efforts with the Houthis since 2022. Although it has been a drawn-out process, it remains an important diplomatic route out of perpetual crisis. The experience of Yemen's neighbours in so engaging with the Houthis could be instructive.

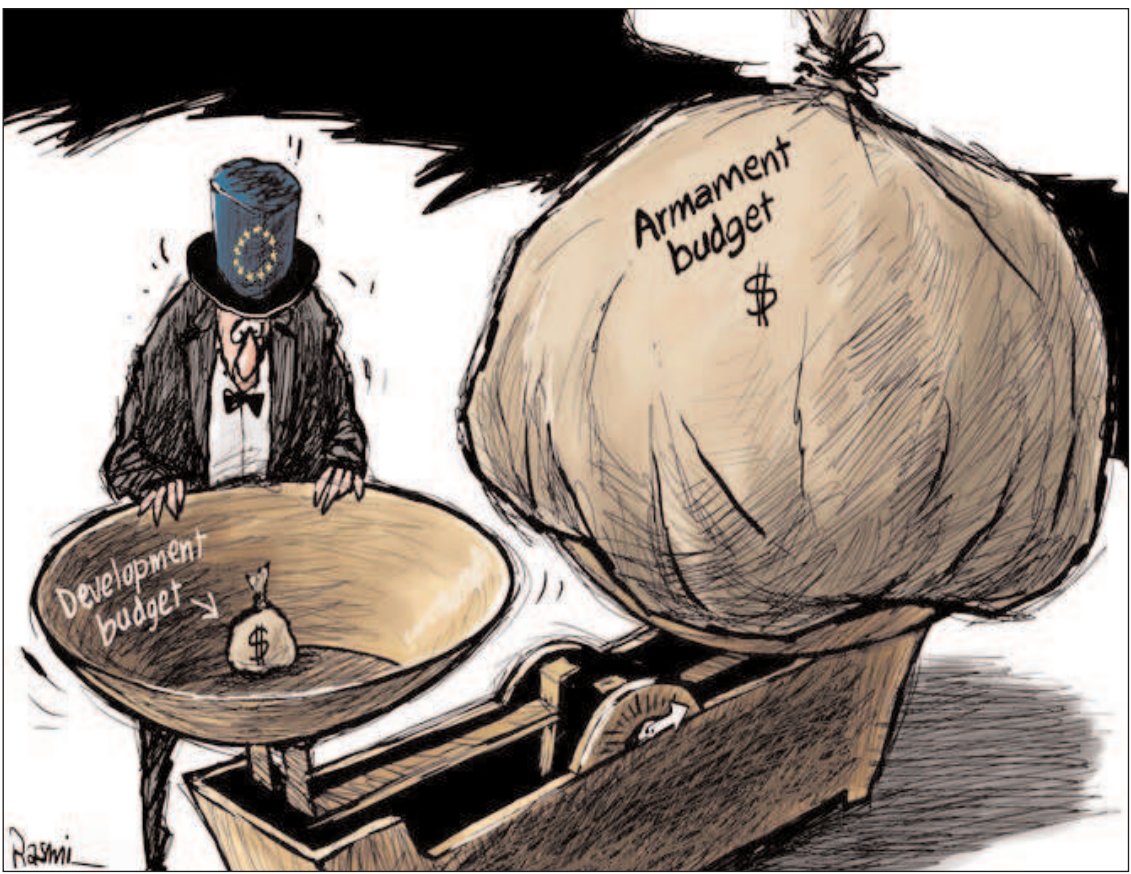
By listening to security partners in the Gulf, empowering Yemen's legitimate government, putting pressure on external actors who support the Houthis, breaking arms-smuggling routes, and backing a unified talks process, the US can play a meaningful and multifaceted role in ending this persistent crisis.

But the first step must be for Washington to use its undoubted influence to swiftly end Israel's war in Gaza. This would not only remove the excuse used by the Houthis for their destabilising actions in the Red Sea and wider Middle East, it would also end the situation in which Israel effectively shapes US actions towards Yemen.

A failure to find new ways forward offers only festering instability and militant rule over large parts of the country. Yemen's people, and the Middle East, deserve better than that.

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Will 2025 elections continue the incumbency backlash?

Andrew Hammond

LAST year was the biggest 12 months for elections in living memory, with billions of people going to the polls. However, 2025 will also be a key year, with its ballots shaping international economics and politics into the 2030s.

The Middle East is heavily involved this year. Key ballots expected in the region include a parliamentary election in Iraq, Iranian local elections and a parliamentary vote in Egypt.

Beyond the region, elections will be held across time zones and geographies, including Belarus in January, Ecuador in February, Australia on a date to be confirmed before September, Gabon and Bolivia in August, Argentina and Tanzania in October, and Honduras in November. But the most systemically important ones may be in the G7 nations of Germany in February, Canada before November and, in all likelihood, a ballot in France over the summer.

Perhaps the key question is whether 2025 will be another year in which incumbents face the wrath of the electorate.

Regardless of time and place, voters tended to disrupt the status quo in 2024, including in the US and the UK, which saw the opposition Republican and Labour parties, respectively, win power.

Meanwhile, established parties in Japan, as well as India and South Africa in the BRICS club, saw their electoral mandates slashed.

While each country had its own unique issues, there were a number of common

factors in what was one of the world's biggest ever anti-incumbent backlashes. These included significant economic and political insecurity brought about by the pandemic, alongside inflation. In 2025, the elections to be held in G7 countries may well bring about major change. Next month, for example, Germany faces a ballot that is likely to sweep Chancellor Olaf Scholz from the nation's top job in a potentially erasing defining moment.

To be sure, Germany has faced tough times before. However, the country is today facing what may be the broadest range of economic and political stress in the post-Cold War era – and at the same time as neighboring France is facing major uncertainty too.

The far-right Alternative for Germany, the party that Elon Musk last month declared to be the only one that can “save” the country, is currently second in national polls. It last year became the first far-right party to win a statewide ballot, in Thuringia, since the Nazi era.

The political star of the Alternative for Germany is therefore rising, even though it will probably not be part of the next German government. This is because other key parties have said, at least to date, that they will not be part of any coalition with it.

The party's growing success underlines the fracturing of the nation's polity. This has seen the breakdown of the traditional duopoly of power of Scholz's left-of-center Social Democrats and the

right-of-center Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union, formerly led by Angela Merkel, which have been the twin pillars of German politics since 1945.

While there is a clear desire for change, the timing of February's election may prove suboptimal for the German national interest. Although it looks likely that the CDU/CSU bloc, led by former corporate lawyer Friedrich Merz, will win the most votes, it will probably need one or two coalition partners. This may mean it could be months before any final coalition deal is agreed. In the process, the party's reform program will be diluted.

Germany could therefore have a weak caretaker government led by Scholz for months after the election. During this time, it will face key international challenges, from the future of the Ukraine war to responding to potential economic tariffs from Donald Trump's second US administration.

In France, meanwhile, there is a growing possibility of new legislative elections in the summer. Last month, the fourth prime minister to take office in 2024, Francois Bayrou, officially announced a new government amid growing questions about whether President Emmanuel Macron will see out his final term of office to 2027.

The primary cause of France's 2024 turmoil stemmed from Macron's huge, failed gamble in June, when he dissolved

parliament much earlier than needed. He calculated that voters would back his centrist coalition.

However, last summer's vote saw the lower chamber fragment three ways, between the leftist New Popular Front coalition, centrists and the populist right of National Rally. There is still no clear-cut pathway out of this polarized legislature, so it is possible that Bayrou's prime ministership may not last beyond June, which is the earliest time that Macron can call a fresh ballot.

Canada is also experiencing political change in 2025, after almost a decade of the Liberal Party rule of Justin Trudeau, who resigned as prime minister on Monday. Trudeau, a long-standing centrist ally of Macron, has become very unpopular.

With national elections required before November, several polls have put the Liberals more than 20 percentage points behind the Conservatives. So, Trudeau's replacement as Liberal leader and prime minister will have their work cut out to stop Conservative Pierre Poilievre taking the top job later this year.

Amid the political and economic uncertainty 2025 will bring, the outcome of these high-profile G7 ballots is still not clear, despite the anti-incumbency trend.

However, whatever their exact outcome, what is certain is that they will not just shape domestic politics and international relations, but also the wider global landscape in the decade ahead.

Can Netanyahu maintain control after the war?

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

Y OAV Gallant, Israel's notorious former minister of defense, has disappeared into obscurity. The man who served his country's military for about 35 years, was in politics for nearly 10 and oversaw major wars, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza, has retreated from the headlines and political significance.

In a letter announcing his resignation from the Knesset last week, Gallant accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — who fired him from the Cabinet on Nov. 5 — and his replacement, Israel Katz, of endangering the country's security. However, he kept his criticism largely focused on the issue of military conscription for Israel's ultra-Orthodox community.

Gallant's refusal to offer an exemption to Israel's Haredim had always been a source of tension between him and his domineering boss. The political weight of that issue seems to have been greatly inflated by all parties, each with a political purpose in mind.

Gallant wanted to signal to the more secular and nationalistic factions within the Likud party — the largest in Netanyahu's ruling coalition — that he advocated for a fairer and more equitable Israel. Netanyahu, who heads the Likud, wanted to appeal to the more religious segments of the party and to

his deeply religious coalition partners.

Considering Israel's shift toward the extreme religious right, it was only natural for Netanyahu to ultimately win this round. Gallant made his resignation letter largely about the Likud and less about Israel itself.

“My path is the Likud path, and I believe in its principles, trust its members and voters,” he wrote, linking his first vote for the party to a partnership in “Menachem Begin's revolution,” while priding himself on remaining “loyal to the movement's national and ideological path.”

Gallant's sentiment could be understood in two ways: either as a way to seal his legacy before quitting politics altogether or, more likely, as the charting of a new political course that will allow him to compete for the leadership of Likud — and perhaps even the premiership.

Netanyahu understands this well and seems to have concluded that his only path to political survival is the continuation of the Gaza war and the expansion of the conflict to engage multiple parties. It is this expanded war that has allowed him to recover his pre-war approval ratings and keep his coalition partners satisfied.

The Israeli prime minister's strategy over the last 15 months of genocidal war has been consistent with his political strategy: achieving power and hold-

ing onto it. But the events that followed Oct. 7, 2023, have made his chances of political survival much slimmer.

Netanyahu has mastered the art of survival by exploiting his rivals' weaknesses, using his power to emotionally manipulate the Israeli public with a mix of nationalistic, religious and personal discourse. This narrative often portrays Netanyahu and his family as victims of numerous enemies who have ceaselessly plotted his downfall, despite all the good he has done for the country.

“Netanyahu's victim mentality” has long been a topic in the Israeli media, even years before the war. It is a strategy he has used to defend himself in court against accusations of corruption and it continues to serve him. Even the arrest warrants issued against him and Gallant by the International Criminal Court last November have been used to feed the narrative that Netanyahu is being punished for simply loving Israel too much.

However, when the war ends, merely playing the victim card will no longer suffice. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to explain what transpired beginning on Oct. 7: the collapse of the security apparatus, the failure of the military, the lack of strategy, the severely weakened economy, the splintering of the nation, the killing of hostages and

much more.

Even Netanyahu, the master politician, will struggle to keep the public on his side and his angry coalition partners in line.

In fact, his right-wing coalition is already on the verge of collapse. The joining of Gideon Sa'ar and his New Hope party in September may have breathed some life into it, but the constant threats from Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir make the government unstable at best.

The strength of the government was tested on Dec. 31, when a decisive vote on the budget law sparked a public fight between Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, almost leading to the latter's removal.

But the government remains intact simply because the war remains ongoing. The Gaza war, and the expanded conflict, have allowed Netanyahu's ministers to push their extremist agendas without question, which ultimately allows the PM to stay at the helm a bit longer.

However, none of this is likely to change the post-war scenario, in which the coalition is likely to falter. Likud may enter its own civil war and Israeli society will likely erupt in mass protests. It is then that coalition partners will become enemies and the likes of Gallant may return, offering themselves as saviors. What will Netanyahu do then?

Good riddance, Justin Trudeau

Andrew Mitrovia

WATCHING Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announce that he was quitting on a chilly Monday morning in Ottawa, I was reminded of the moment when battered prize fighter, Roberto Duran, raised his hands in a boxing ring and said: “No mas [No more].”

It was a merciful and predictable denouement to an unexpected political career that had begun with promise and expectations and has ended engulfed by rejection and recriminations.

“I'm a fighter,” the soon-to-be-ex-prime minister said.

Clearly, the fight had drained out of Trudeau after some of his closest allies in cabinet abandoned him, and the party that once celebrated his youthful exuberance now considered the Liberal boy wonder a loser and a liability.

Faithful readers know of my longstanding antipathy and, at times, disgust of

the innocent victims of war to appease racists and xenophobes in and outside parliament is a contemptible hypocrite.

Justin Trudeau did just that, turning his sorry back on children in desperate need. That obscenity will forever stain his legacy.

As I explained in several columns, while the Liberal leader sitting in opposition, Trudeau openly and repeatedly threw his imprimatur behind an initiative organized by the celebrated Palestinian Canadian, Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish, called Heal100Kids.

Dr Abuelaish had enlisted the support of provincial politicians, doctors, nurses, hospitals and other volunteers to arrange to have 100 wounded Palestinian children — accompanied by members of their immediate families — travel to Canada for treatment to mend their damaged minds, bodies, and spirits.

After Trudeau won a majority in 2015, Dr

Clearly, the fight had drained out of Trudeau after some of his closest allies in cabinet abandoned him, and the party that once celebrated his youthful exuberance now considered the Liberal boy wonder a loser and a liability. Faithful readers know of my longstanding antipathy and, at times, disgust of a prime minister who struck me, from the first, as a dauphin whose hollow acts of performative nonsense were a trite substitute for conviction and intelligence. But much of the international press was smitten by Trudeau's craven persona and empty antics, heralding him as a shining antidote to United States President-elect Donald Trump's politics of anger and grievance. Trudeau was a “progressive” fraud. Rather than mounting a sustained and determined challenge to the status quo, he devoted his almost 10 years as prime minister to defending it at home and abroad.

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Trudeau was a “progressive” fraud. Rather than mounting a sustained and determined challenge to the status quo, he devoted his almost 10 years as prime minister to defending it at home and abroad.

He was adept at making practised speeches about the urgent need to bridge the chasm between rich and poor and then not doing anything tangible about it.

Trudeau and parochial company only agreed to pass legislation making universal, affordable day and dental care available to struggling Canadian families as part of a deal with the New Democratic Party to keep his minority government afloat — such was the Liberal Party's calculated commitment to fairness and equity.

Time and again, Trudeau made plain that he was an establishment man — through and through — who revelled in playing Cold War warrior vis-a-vis Ukraine and handmaiden to the Israeli apartheid regime led by an accused war criminal who is committing genocide in Gaza and razing the occupied West Bank.

On the two defining geopolitical issues of this awful era, Trudeau not only toed but parroted, to the letter, the lines dictated to him by his superior in the Oval Office — US President Joe Biden — good, obedient errand page that he was.

Still, if Trudeau had any true sense of the prime minister's duties and obligations, he would have heeded calls to resign when his racist, black-face-wearing-well-into-adulthood days were exposed in 2019.

Instead, Trudeau and his pack of myopic handlers put the prime minister's interests ahead of the country's.

It was a humiliating affair that confirmed, to my mind at least, that Trudeau had forfeited the privilege of holding any public office, let alone the prime minister's office.

True to infantile form, Trudeau and company weathered the brief storm by having the jejune prime minister issue a succession of vacuous, unconvincing apologies that compounded his disgrace.

Perhaps the episode that best established Trudeau's essential character — and, not surprisingly, has escaped the attention of both his devoted supporters and apologetic detractors in the corporate media and beyond — was his shameful face-to-face to desert injured Palestinian children.

Anyone, at any time, who reneges on a promise to help

Abuelaish — who has endured the killing by invading Israeli forces of three of his daughters and a niece in Gaza in 2009 with remarkable grace — made several public and private overtures to have Trudeau keep his word. Trudeau never responded. Dr Abuelaish — a distinguished man not prone to hyperbole — told me that Trudeau was a liar and that history would judge his betrayal harshly. He is right on both counts.

Trudeau has betrayed others for other telling reasons.

He betrayed his so-called “feminist” credentials when he fired female ministers, including an Indigenous colleague, for daring to challenge him at the cabinet table or defending the rule of law. As I wrote in September 2023, the supposed “champion” of climate “action”, bought a floundering oil pipeline for 4.5 billion Canadian dollars (\$3.3bn).

The supposed “champion” of human rights and the rules-based international “order”, tried, with a little help from his insurrectionist-friendly friends in Brazil, to install a malleable marionette in Venezuela.

The supposed “champion” of the plight of hurting “ordinary” Canadians, allowed predatory corporate monopolies to continue to reap extraordinary earnings while the divide between the uber-wealthy and the other, much less fortunate 99 percent, mushroomed.

Despite the anguished rhetoric of amnesia in the House of Commons and newsrooms across Canada, Trudeau's departure is not evidence of a national “crisis” or that the capital is gripped by “chaos” or “paralysis”.

It is further proof that, given the inexorable cycle of politics, prime ministers — Liberal or Conservative — have a natural life expectancy. Trudeau's Conservative predecessor, Stephen Harper, lasted a little shy of 10 years as prime minister before voters soured on him.

Harper's Liberal predecessor, Jean Chretien, spent a decade as prime minister before voters soured on him.

Chretien's Conservative predecessor, the late Brian Mulroney, also held office for approaching a decade before, you guessed it, voters soured on him.

I suspect the same fate awaits current Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, who looks poised — if the consensus among pollsters is accurate — to win a handsome majority during the next federal election that is likely to occur in the spring.

In the meantime, frantic Liberals will choose an eager sacrificial lamb — not named Trudeau — to take on the repellent, schtick-addicted Poilievre in a futile effort to stave off the inevitable.

So, to borrow a phrase made famous by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, “welcome to” 2025, Justin.

Good riddance to you.

— Aljazeera

Musk plays politics abroad as world leaders brace for Trump’s return

ELON Musk’s personal foreign policy of promoting far-right parties is sparking outrage among leaders in Europe and handing them a dilemma: How do they rebuke the tech titan without angering his new patron — Donald Trump?

Musk could easily be dismissed as a mischievous antagonist who simply loves to shock and is pursuing his own obsessions one X post at a time.

But he’s not just some troll. He’s the world’s richest man, owns some of the globe’s most strategic and influential businesses, and is wielding a mighty social media network. Musk is highlighting his enormous influence as a populist force galvanizing political provocateurs as a kind of one-man supranational non-state power.

He’s also previewing the international disruption that likely lies in store when the president-elect returns to the White House in two weeks and the potential conflicts of interest ahead. That’s because the Tesla and SpaceX pioneer will not simply be a powerful free agent — but an inner circle adviser to the new US government at the head of the Department of Government Efficiency. It’s therefore going to be hard to know where Musk’s policy ends and official US foreign policy starts.

To foreigners, his attacks on elected officials with whom he disagrees risk coming across as an attempt by a future US government to interfere in the politics of fellow democracies and sovereign nations to destabilize their governments.

And his moves beg the question of whether he’s working at Trump’s direction, is seen by the president-elect as a useful vanguard of disruption or could soon end up irking the 47th president as he tries to put his stamp on the world.

“Will Musk be carrying out Trump’s foreign policy agenda, acting as a personal ambassador of Trump to everywhere?” said Lindsay Gorman, managing director and senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund. “Or will Musk be advancing his own vision for global affairs, which may align with Trump in some ways, but not in others. And then what will be the power dynamics between those

two?”

Trump’s willingness to tolerate Musk’s fierce attacks on allied leaders is also a sign that the coming months could be even more rocky for America’s friends than his first term. That reality played out Monday when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation. Trudeau had long since squandered the trust of Canadians and his own Liberal Party. But Trump’s threats of imposing a 25% tariff exacerbated the political crisis in Ottawa and may have hastened the departure of an antagonist Trump branded the “governor” of America’s 51st state.

The apparent sense of freedom that Trump and Musk feel in playing politics abroad is also a marker of the self-confidence in MAGA world ahead of Trump’s inauguration. They’re demonstrating a belief that their strength allows them to bully smaller countries and may augur a new and brasher incarnation of “America First.”

Musk’s attacks — conveyed to his 211 million followers on X — have snapped the patience of the leaders of some of America’s closest traditional allies and stoked already elevated transatlantic tensions ahead of Trump’s second term.

— British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who has been targeted by Musk for weeks, warned the SpaceX owner had crossed “a line” after he said the British minister responsible for safeguarding children should be jailed and was an apologist for rape.

— French President Emmanuel Macron accused Musk of fueling a new “international reactionary movement” and intervening in elections.

— Norway’s Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said it was “worrying” that a man with such power was so directly involved in the affairs of other countries.

— The German government has already criticized the multi-billionaire for backing a far-right pro-Russia party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), in upcoming elections. Musk will host the party’s leader in an interview on X this week.

The resentment provoked by Musk reflects the core ideology of Trump’s “Make America Great Again” movement. He is going after establishment

Stephen Collinson

politicians and seeking to promote far-right, outsider populists whose views and temperaments mirror those of the president-elect. In Europe, as in the United States, many voters have become resentful of governments they believe have failed to improve their economic situations and to stem immigration.

To many Americans, Musk is simply exercising his First Amendment rights. But in Europe, a continent haunted by the horror of far-right extremism, his support for radical populism is seen by many leaders as offensive and less an example of free speech than an attempt to stifle freedoms and democracy.

If there’s a strategy in Musk’s rabble rousing, it’s that opposition forces in these countries are far more in line with Trump’s anti-immigration and anti-free trade instincts than the leaders who are currently in place. And Trump may be hoping to promote political interlocutors who would be more sympathetic to him.

In France, for instance, the far-right National Rally party (formerly known as the National Front) of Marine Le Pen has its best chance yet in 2027 to win in the two-round presidential election system that has always blocked it from power. While the AfD is unlikely to form a government in the German system that promotes coalitions, its influence may grow after federal elections in February.

And Trump has already rolled out the red carpet at Mar-a-Lago to far-right European leaders including Hungary’s strongman Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Italy’s right-wing populist Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who may be the strongest national leader in the European Union right now.

Trumpism is incompatible with some of America’s allies

The nationalist DNA of Trump’s foreign policy is often a reaction to policies and demeanor of center-left leaders in the West.

This may help explain the president-elect’s tormenting of Trudeau — who, as a self-professed feminist who offered a warm welcome to immigrants, is the antithesis of MAGA. Trudeau is likely to be succeeded in the

short-term by a Liberal Party prime minister, but the most likely outcome of a general election that must take place this year is a new government under Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre. The Albertan shares some of Trump’s populist tendencies, including on immigration, and his penchant for awarding his opponents mocking nicknames. But he has also condemned Trump’s branding of Canada as the 51st state, and at the helm of a majority government, he might turn out to be a more formidable negotiator on trade issues than a severely weakened Trudeau.

Similarly, if Musk is trying to destabilize Starmer, his actions spring from a misunderstanding of Britain’s political dynamics. The Labour Party leader has just won a huge landslide and won’t have to face the electorate for again for nearly five years.

And Musk even the far-right Reform Party leader Nigel Farage, the father of Brexit and a friend of Trump, is now deemed by Musk as insufficiently radical after he said he didn’t agree with the X owner’s support for jailed anti-Muslim far-right campaigner Tommy Robinson.

Starmer felt compelled to speak out after Musk used X to accuse him of being complicit in the actions of grooming gangs in a historic child abuse scandal that he handled while director of public prosecutions. In other distortions of the truth, Musk also claimed Jess Phillips, the government safeguarding minister, was “pure evil” and a “wicked creature.” Starmer warned that “those that are spreading lies and misinformation, as far and as wide as possible — they’re not interested in victims, they’re interested in themselves.” He added: “When the poison of the far right leads to serious threats to Jess Phillips and others, then in my book, a line has been crossed.”

Despite Starmer’s tough tone, the showdown with Musk is unwelcome turbulence for a prime minister, who, like all other world leaders, has been trying to build a relationship with Trump to spare his nation from the worst consequences of a new US foreign policy built on forcing American might on friends and foes alike.

But the transatlantic fury might soon become a prob-

lem for Trump as well.

Despite his transactional instincts and desire to intimidate other leaders, Trump may need the help of American allies one day, and Musk’s antics are making it far harder for them to accommodate an incoming American president who is already deeply unpopular in many of their nations.

Ed Davey, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, the party with the third most members in Britain’s House of Commons, reflected that antipathy toward Trump on Monday. “People have had enough of Elon Musk interfering with our country’s democracy when he clearly knows nothing about Britain,” Davey said, ironically, on X. “It’s time to summon the US ambassador to ask why an incoming US official is suggesting the UK government should be overthrown.”

Musk’s jabs might also cause problems stateside. They already look like a headache for more conventional US foreign policy officials, including Marco Rubio, the Florida senator Trump has picked to serve as secretary of state, and Florida Rep. Michael Waltz, his pick for national security adviser.

“I think it’s going to get very confusing very quickly. I don’t envy the career diplomats at the State Department, who are certainly going to have their hands full trying to figure out whose agenda they’re carrying out,” said Gorman.

Apparent conflicts between US policy and Musk’s business interests pose another complication. He has already sat in on calls between Trump and world leaders like Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, whose forces use Musk’s Starlink internet system to support their war against Russia.

Musk’s massive commercial exposure in China might also weigh heavily on Trump’s approach and may clash with the hawkish instincts of Waltz and Rubio, who are set to be part of the most anti-Beijing Cabinet in modern American history.

In Trump’s first term, when he made foreign policy by tweet, America became a force for global disruption. Musk’s prominent role in his second administration may make those four years seem stable by comparison.

An exhausted empire

Li Xing

SAMUEL Huntington’s book The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order has retained significant influence. However, it also continues to face criticism for its broad generalizations and controversial assumptions, along with the rising global interconnectedness of economies and cultures that challenge the inevitability of Huntington’s vision.

But there is an often overlooked yet critical argument in the work, where Huntington asserts: “The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion ... but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do.” This statement fosters a deeper understanding of the historical dynamics of US hegemony.

Huntington’s statement emphasizes that Western global dominance in modern world history stems not from any inherent cultural or moral superiority but from its mastery of military technology, strategy and state organization. This proficiency allowed European powers to colonize extensive territories, outmaneuver rival nations and dominate global trade and the distribution of resources. Technological advancements, especially in

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..... The fact that Western dominance has historically been rooted in organized violence rather than cultural or ideological superiority, undermines claims that universal values such as democracy or human rights are the primary drivers of its global influence. Huntington’s assertion explains why global military alliances such as NATO, the “Five Eyes” alliance, the quadrilateral security dialogue (the Quad) among the US, Japan, India and Australia and worldwide military bases, armed interventions in the Ukraine crisis, the Middle East and Afghanistan, as well as ruthless containment of China, are integral to the geopolitical strategy of the United States in the nexus between the “internal and external dimensions of its reliance on organized expansionist violence as its foreign policy tool”. The current international order is designed to uphold the capacity and sustainability of US hegemony across economic, trade and security domains, as well as in cultural leadership, norm-setting and value projection. The architecture of this order was built with an unspoken yet clear underlying objective, explicitly articulated by George Kennan, a US diplomat: “We have 50 percent of the world’s wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population ... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. We should cease to talk about vague and ... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.” Kennan’s candid statement revealed that the strategic objective of US foreign policy during the Cold War was less about engaging in an ideological battle against the “communist threat” and more about embedding a “reward mechanism” within the US-led international “rules-based order”. This mechanism aims to preserve the vast economic and political inequalities of the international system and the immense privilege and power this global wealth disparity afforded the US. More importantly, this mechanism requires and perpetuates a reciprocal dynamic: the US has to align its internal social, political, economic and defense systems with the external imperatives of imperial armed expansion, while ensuring that its global strategies reinforce its internal structures of power.
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organized warfare — such as firearms, naval forces and later air power — were pivotal in establishing and sustaining Western hegemony on the global stage.

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The architecture of this order was built with

imperial expansion enabled the US to maintain its image as a unique and aspirational global power. This dynamic illustrates a positive connection between outward armed expansion and the preservation of the rewards mechanism, where military intervention and imperial expansion help maintain internal stability and support the broader geopolitical and economic interests of the dominant power.

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

If the victory of Donald Trump in 2016 symbolized the emerging

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..... The fact that Western dominance has historically been rooted in organized violence rather than cultural or ideological superiority, undermines claims that universal values such as democracy or human rights are the primary drivers of its global influence. Huntington’s assertion explains why global military alliances such as NATO, the “Five Eyes” alliance, the quadrilateral security dialogue (the Quad) among the US, Japan, India and Australia and worldwide military bases, armed interventions in the Ukraine crisis, the Middle East and Afghanistan, as well as ruthless containment of China, are integral to the geopolitical strategy of the United States in the nexus between the “internal and external dimensions of its reliance on organized expansionist violence as its foreign policy tool”. The current international order is designed to uphold the capacity and sustainability of US hegemony across economic, trade and security domains, as well as in cultural leadership, norm-setting and value projection. The architecture of this order was built with an unspoken yet clear underlying objective, explicitly articulated by George Kennan, a US diplomat: “We have 50 percent of the world’s wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population ... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. We should cease to talk about vague and ... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.” Kennan’s candid statement revealed that the strategic objective of US foreign policy during the Cold War was less about engaging in an ideological battle against the “communist threat” and more about embedding a “reward mechanism” within the US-led international “rules-based order”. This mechanism aims to preserve the vast economic and political inequalities of the international system and the immense privilege and power this global wealth disparity afforded the US. More importantly, this mechanism requires and perpetuates a reciprocal dynamic: the US has to align its internal social, political, economic and defense systems with the external imperatives of imperial armed expansion, while ensuring that its global strategies reinforce its internal structures of power.
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has to align its internal social, political, economic and defense systems with the external imperatives of imperial armed expansion, while ensuring that its global strategies reinforce its internal structures of power.

As Greg Grandin, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, rightly points out: “One of the things that has made America exceptional — compared to other crisis-prone and class-conflicted countries — is that it has long enjoyed a benefit no other modern nation in the world could claim: the ability to engage in ceaseless, endless movement outward.”

Greg’s observation accurately captures the essence of the argument that the US’ pursuit of endless expansion — whether through militarism or markets — has been instrumental in alleviating domestic tensions and establishing resilient institutions.

Recognizing the inseparable connection between US imperial expansion — military, economic and ideological — and its domestic stability provides key insights into how the US legitimized and sustained its global identity as the embodiment of the “American dream” and “American exceptionalism”.

By creating external outlets for economic surplus, fostering ideological cohesion, and promoting social stability and democracy at home,

— China Daily

Elon Musk disrupted US politics, but meddling in Europe may not work out so well

WHAT is Elon Musk up to? Perhaps only he himself knows. And perhaps even he doesn’t know.

What we do know is that Mr Musk is a successful disruptor. He disrupted the automobile industry with Tesla, social media with Twitter (now X), and is also disrupting American politics. But is he now trying to disrupt European politics, too? Here’s a flavour of some of his most recent utterances.

One tweet demands that a British judge “should be removed from the bench in disgrace”. The judge had delivered a jail sentence on a British lawbreaker. Mr Musk did not agree with the sentence.

Then there is: “At this rate, the UK government will pretty soon be executing people for liking a meme!” Presumably it’s a joke. But the death penalty in the UK — even for murder — was abolished decades ago. It is unlikely that anyone will be executed for liking or disliking anything on social media.

Then he commented on an anonymous tweet that reads: “British Man Arrested for Making Meme Offensive to Child Rapists”.

This was followed by Mr Musk backing the idea that the British monarch should “dissolve Parliament” over “grooming gangs”, involved in illegal sexual activity. King Charles is much respected in Britain. But this recommendation from Mr Musk is, to put it politely, somewhat eccentric.

Mr Musk also backed the idea that British MPs hold a vote of “No

Confidence” in Prime Minister Keir Starmer. But Mr Starmer became Prime

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..... Mr Musk suggested that a jailed convicted criminal and far-right activist, a man who calls himself “Tommy Robinson”, was in some way innocent and should be freed. Robinson’s real name is Stephen Christopher Yaxley-Lennon. In April 2005 at Luton Crown Court, Yaxley-Lennon was convicted of assault occasioning actual bodily harm and assault with intent to resist arrest against an off-duty police officer. He also has other convictions for the use of a false passport, mortgage fraud and other matters. Mr Farage praised Mr Musk for his activities in American politics but made clear that there is no place for Yaxley-Lennon in his Reform UK party. Mr Musk responded: “The Reform party needs a new leader. Farage doesn’t have what it takes.” Reform UK, incidentally, is doing well in recent opinion polls. After reading through the astonishing number of tweets from the world’s richest man about how Britain is supposedly a failing state, I was then distracted by his further comments about German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Mr Scholz is apparently a “fool” in Mr Musk’s eyes. The Chancellor has plenty of political problems and shrugged off the “fool” comment.
.....

Minister by winning a huge parliamentary landslide for his Labour party last summer. A “No Confidence” idea supported by a foreign billionaire seems unlikely. Nevertheless, he tweeted about “the snivelling cowards who allowed the mass rape of little girls in Britain” and saying they “are still in power ... for now”.

Then he directly attacked some UK politicians in terms that I won’t repeat here, concluding that Mr Starmer “is guilty of terrible crimes against the British people”. He also attacked what he called “the legacy media” — he meant newspapers and broadcasters — for lies and falsehoods.

What is striking — and a bit sad — is that if some lonely figure standing at a street corner in London shouted out comments like these, most pedestrians would cross the street to avoid the disruption. Readers can make their own judgments. But these

Gavin Esler

comments echo some of

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the tropes that appeal to right-wing and far-right activists in the UK and elsewhere.

Despite this, Mr Musk earned a (mild) rebuke from Reform UK party leader Nigel Farage.

Mr Musk suggested that a jailed convicted criminal and far-right activist, a man who calls himself “Tommy Robinson”, was in some way innocent and should be freed. Robinson’s real name is Stephen Christopher Yaxley-Lennon. In April 2005 at Luton Crown Court, Yaxley-Lennon was convicted of assault occasioning actual bodily harm and assault with intent to resist arrest against an off-duty police officer. He also has other convictions for the use of a false passport, mortgage fraud and other matters.

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The Chancellor has plenty of political problems and shrugged off the “fool” comment. Instead, he focused on Mr Musk cosying up to the far-right German party, Alternative für Deutschland. AfD is so far to the right that France’s opposition leader Marine Le Pen and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will have nothing to do with them.)

And so, to return to the initial question: what is Mr Musk up to?

There are all kinds of theories, mostly turning on Mr Musk’s personality and public statements. A few



Business community paid rich tribute to services of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour:

SCCI organises condolence reference in memory of Bilour

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Members of the business community paid a glowing tribute to services of Businessmen Forum leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour and vowed they will follow footprints of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour and make vigorous efforts to accomplish his mission.

Traders during a condolence reference organized by Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in memory of Businessmen Forum leader and former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour (Late) recalled the memories, dedication, bravery, and wellbeing for business community, achievements and struggle of Ilyas Bilour for rights of people of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa.

Business community said the services of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour will be written in golden words in history.

The session was chaired by SCCI president Fazal Moqeem Khan.

Besides, former federal minister and elder brother of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, Haji Ghulam Ali Bilour, Senator Mohsin Aziz, Senator Nauman Wazir, son of the Ilyas Bilour and former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour,

Anjuman e Tajran KP chairman Shaukat Ali Khan, BF senior leader Amanullah Mohmand, SCCI SVP Abdul Jalil Jan, former presidents Riaz Arshad, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Fuad Ishaq, Adeel Rauf,



Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Husnain Khurshid, Sherbaz Bilour, former vice presidents Inayat Khan, Naeem Butt, former SVPs Sanaullah Khan, Imran Khan Mohmand, IAP president Ayub Zakori, former president IAP Malik Imran Ishaq, executive committee members Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Aftab Iqbal, Mujeeb Rahman, Abbas Fuad Azeem, Nadeem Rauf, Malik Saddam Hussain, Haji Abdul Nasir,

Sultan Muhammad, Haji Gul Zaman, Saifullah Khan and Sohail Javed, Zarak Khan, Ihsanullah, Saddam Gul, Faiz Rasool, Husnain Sheraz, Zafar Khattak, Monawar Khurshid, Ishtiaq Ahmad, Pervez Khattak, Naeem Qasmi, Ghulam Hussain and Rashid Iqbal Siddique, Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan, along with traders, industrialists and others were in attendance in a large number.

Fazal Moqeem in his

opening remarks shed light on the services of BF leader Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, stating that Bilour achieved successes in the resolving the business community issues and rights of the KP.

He added Ilyas Bilour was a great personality, which gained fame through his dedication, work and services for the business community and people of KP not only countrywide but also global level and proved his mettle at every

forum.

The condolence reference was also addressed by Haji Ghulam Ahmad Bilour, Senator Mohsin Aziz, Senator Nauman Wazir, Amanullah Khan Mohmand, Shaukat Ali Khan, former presidents Riaz Arshad, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Adeel Rauf, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Inayat Khan and others and enlightened the participants about untiring and unmatched services

of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour for the business community and people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Paying rich tribute to Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, speakers said Bilour was a radiant star of Pakistan's politics and industries, who had dedicated whole life for people service, democratic struggle and business community, adding his life filled by devotion and sacrifices is torch bearer for the next generation and the business community.

The speakers further said Ilyas Ahmad Bilour through the chamber platform rendered selfless services for people and the business community of the country, which are fully opened before everyone, adding that the business

community always trusted upon the leadership of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour and his service will always be remembered.

Earlier, a multi-media documentary was also played, in which various aspects of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour life, services, achievement and dedication to the business community and people of KP were highlighted comprehensively.

Earlier, a Quran Khawani and special prayers were held for the departed soul of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour.

The participants expressed sympathy with the members of the beavered family and announced full support to Ghazanfar Bilour, the son of the Ilyas Ahmad Bilour on the occasion.

PSX stays bearish, loses 202 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 202.44 points, a negative change of 0.17 percent, closing at 116,052.68 points as compared to 116,255.13 points on the last trading day.

A total of 792,770,655 shares were traded during the day as compared to 819,805,715 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs39,694 billion against Rs38,326 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 453 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 133 of them recorded gains and 275 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 45 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 80,583,371 shares at Rs1.71 per share, Nergycio PK with 76,600,722 shares at Rs7.35 per share and K-Electric Limited with 45,707,217 shares at Rs5.03 per share.

JDW Sugar Mills Limited witnessed a maxi-

mum increase of Rs74.79 per share price, closing at Rs822.68, whereas the runner-up was Lucky Core Industries Limited with Rs51.67 rise in its per share price to Rs1,148.16.

Hallmark Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs89.38 per share closing at Rs857.84 followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs75.39 decline to close at Rs7,344.08.

Rupee sheds 04 paisa against dollar

Pakistani rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 04 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.66 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.62.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.60 and Rs280.10 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs2.45 to close at Rs290.30 against the last day's closing of Rs287.85, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged to

close at Rs1.76, whereas an increase of Rs2.74 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs349.81 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs347.07.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 and 03 paisa to close at Rs75.86 and Rs74.22, respectively.

Gold prices up by Rs1,000 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs1,000 and was sold at Rs276,000 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs275,000 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs857 to Rs236,625 from Rs235,768 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs216,907 from Rs216,121.

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 increased by \$10 to \$2,642 from \$2632, the Association reported.

Naveed Qazi appointed as CEO of NCCPL

F.P. report

KARACHI: Qazi is a seasoned banking and financial services professional with over 38 years of extensive experience in Corporate and Retail Banking, Microfinance, Capital Markets, Operations Risk Management & Information Technology. Prior to joining NCCPL, he served as an Advisor for Digitalization and Strategic Initiatives at the Pakistan Stock Exchange where he focused on streamlining processes, enhancing operational controls and driving automation to improve efficiency and customer service.

Qazi has held senior leadership roles including President and CEO at JS Bank and First Microfinance Bank, Chief information Officer at Standard Chartered Bank, Pakistan and Chief Operating Officer at American Express Bank Pakistan, where he played a key role in establishing and growing these institutions, optimizing their operations and managing regulatory relationships. His experience spans across leading organizational transformations, implementing strategic business plans and overseeing large-scale projects.

Academically he holds Masters degree in Business Administration from Institute of Business Administration. He also attended various local and international trainings on advanced leadership including leadership training from INSEAD, with a strong focus on continuous improvement and innovation in the financial sector.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where five ships, MSC Positano, Honest-1, African Plover, Tonda and Hafnia Excellence scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice, Palm oil and Gas oil, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal and FOTCO oil Terminal respectively on Monday. Meanwhile five more ships, Maersk Pittsburgh, Pacific Julia, Rich Rainbow, Hafnia Executive and Maya Gas carrying Container, Gas oil and LPG are also arrived at outer anchorage during last 24 hours.

A total of eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, MSC Positano, MSC Aquarius, Alaa and Amir Gas are left the port on today morning while another bulk cargo carrier 'African Bari Bird' is expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 107,603 tonnes, comprising 35,549 tonnes imports cargo and 72,054 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,121 Containers (844 TEUs Imports & 3,277 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 20 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Bitumen Kosai, Tivoli Park and Maersk Pittsburgh & another ship 'MSC Laussane-VI' scheduled to load/offload Bitumen, Chemicals and Container are expected to take berths at MW-1, EVTL and QICT respectively on Tuesday.

Chairman urges youth to play role in shaping nation's future

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani urges youth to play role in shaping nation's future. He was addressing the Quaid-e-Azam Leadership Summit and Quaid-e-Azam National Leadership Awards in Karachi organized by the Youth Parliament in collaboration with Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Government of Sindh.

The event was attended by Sindh Ministers Syed Sardar Ali Shah and Saeed Ghani, youth representatives, civil society and media professionals.

Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani said that the Qaid's life and legacy is a beacon of hope, courage and dedication for the nation and it is a pride to address those who carry the hopes and aspirations of our beloved father of the nation.

He said that the Quaid's philosophy and ideas guide us in our common bid to build a prosperous and progressive Pakistan as envisioned by him. The Quaid-e-Azam had a profound belief in the transformative power of the youth as

active builders of Pakistan and he urged the youth to equip themselves with knowledge, character, and resilience.

The Senate chairman said the youth have both responsibility and the power to shape the nation's future through commitment, innovation, and resilience, and whether it is through participating in democratic processes, contributing to technological advancements, or advocating for social justice, your efforts will determine the course of our nation.

Seed Ghani Minister for Local Government & Housing Town Planning, Government of Sindh addressing the audience underscored the significance of channelizing the potential of youth bulge to lead the country on path of progress and realizing the dreams of the country's founding father, he said that youth should take active part in politics so that they could understand the governance system of the country and contribute in the development of the country.

Syed Sardar Ali Shah,



Minister for Education & Literacy, Mines & Minerals, Government of Sindh, addressing the audience, stressed the need for revising the educational curriculum and promoting political education.

Anthony Naveed Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly in his speech while addressing the youth said your energy, innovation, and determination are the key to overcoming the

challenges we face today. Whether it is addressing climate change, fostering education, or strengthening democracy, your partnership with parliamentary efforts can lay the foundation for a better Pakistan.

Chairman Youth Parliament Rizwan Jaffer thanked the Senate chairman for his guidance and assistance in organizing the gathering and supporting the youth.

Call for collaboration with China's chemical industry

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCICI) Vice President (PCJICI) Vice President Zafar Iqbal Tuesday stressed the need for taking collaborative measures with China's chemical industry to enhance Pakistan's competitiveness.

During a think-tank session with PCJCICI executive committee members here, he added that Pakistan does not have mature technology to produce petrochemical complex facilities or cracking units, which is a very big constraint to the development of its chemical industry. He suggested, "Pakistan can collaborate with China and learn from China's experience to promote the sustainable development of the chemical industry and give full play

to the industry in the national economic growth."

Zafar Iqbal also highlighted that there is a vast potential of Pakistan in chemical manufacturing and processing. "Our vision is to transform the chemical industry of Pakistan from an import-oriented to an export-oriented industry."

The Vice President said that with the rapid development of biotechnology, the biochemical industry has injected new vitality into the traditional chemical industry and opened up new development directions and insights. He explained that China has a growing influence in the field of biochemical industry globally. Both approaches will be of great benefit to Pakistan.

With the continuous

growth of economy and population base, he mentioned, the demand of Pakistani citizens for chemical products is increasing day by day. The country is highly dependent on imported oil products, and the shortage of oil products has even affected national security. He added that China's successful chemical park model can provide Pakistan's small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with the necessary resources and facilities so as to achieve cluster development.

He said that Cracker is an important link in the transfer of chemical production to downstream and upstream operations. It is significant to establish a chemical industrial park with facilities such as common effluent treatment

plant, a sound supply network of water, electricity, centralized steam generating facility to reduce capital & operating expenditures for chemical manufacturers. With the promulgation of the SME Policy, Pakistani government is taking rational and challenging steps to develop SMEs for their growth.

In his concluding remarks, he said that Pakistan's chemical industry being a cross-cutting industry provides inputs for many other industries including textiles, agriculture, food & beverages, leather, paper, pharmaceuticals, plastics, printing, sugar etc. It is important to build the global reputation of "Made in Pakistan" from strength to brand in the above industries.

PBF for realisation of SIFC's long-term economic dividends

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Senior Vice President Aamna Munawwar Awan has said that Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is playing a pivotal role in taking the country's economy to development path and restoring the confidence of the world. As a result of these efforts, China, Russia and Brazil have recently expressed their desire to invest in various sectors of Pakistan.

According to a PBF spokesman here Tuesday, she was addressing the Forum's steering committee. She added that SIFC is a groundbreaking initiative that has redefined Pakistan's approach to attract investments and fostering economic growth. By providing a unified platform for decision-making and facilitating seamless coordination among key stakeholders, SIFC has set a new benchmark for economic governance and investment facilitation in Pakistan.

With objectives to streamline processes, remove bottlenecks, and offer a one-window solution for investors, she mentioned, the SIFC addresses the long-standing challenges which had hindered Pakistan's potential as a global investment destination. This initiative has introduced unprecedented levels of transparency, efficiency and responsiveness, which are critical for building investor confidence and driving long-term economic stability.

However a well developed regulatory framework that simplifies procedures, reduces bureaucratic burdens, and improves transparency will attract more investors, she said and asserted that bringing synergy in different institutions, and cutting down on red tape enhances predictability and modernisation. Entrepreneurs and corporations will be better positioned to significantly increase their investments in the national economy.

This influx of investment will drive stronger economic growth and improved social welfare.

Aamna Munawwar Awan said that SIFC should push the policy-makers to come up with viable policies for industrial revival, smart agriculture and scaling up IT services. The priority sectors must be offered to the private sector for joint ventures with suitable partners, while the government should provide more incentives and reduce red tape.

PBF Senior Vice President viewed that SIFC needs to remain focused on the facilitation of business transactions. Both G2G (government to government) and private sector joint ventures require very difficult skill sets and approaches, while the SIFC can facilitate G2G investments, similar arrangements may not be as effective for private sector investment, therefore, it is crucial to involve experts from private sector in the SIFC.

Pakistan Post to issue commemorative stamp

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Post will issue a commemorative postage stamp in recognition of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (ICCI) premier services to the business community, contributing significantly to the country's economic growth and prosperity.

This landmark development was made on the occasion of Rizwan Javed Hashmi, ADG of Operations at Pakistan Post, visiting the Chamber, said a press release.

It is noteworthy that on August 26, 2024, the ICCI celebrated its 40th anniversary. The Additional Director General acknowledged the significant role the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry plays in fostering business

growth and economic wellbeing in the country.

He mentioned that the postage stamp would serve as a testament to the Chamber's unparalleled services since its inception, benefiting both the community and the country.

It would also act as a platform to showcase the Chamber's ongoing commitment to addressing the challenges faced by the business community. Hashmi expressed hope that this partnership would serve the business community while benefiting Pakistan Post customers as well.

Hashmi also praised the ICCI for being the country's premier Chamber, with more than 10,000 registered members. He recognized the Chamber's critical role in bridging the gov-

ernment and the private sector to facilitate the ease of doing business.

Earlier, in his welcome address, acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, while acknowledging the services rendered by Pakistan Post for the government and the public, emphasized that this collaborative initiative would leverage the strengths of both organizations to drive economic development and improve service delivery.

He further noted that by joining forces, ICCI and Pakistan Post aspire to create a more conducive business environment, foster innovation, and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is Published Through This Notice That I Sami Ullah Khan Son of Auliya Khan R/o Takhat e Nasrati District Karak is the owner of Plot no. 203 Sector B-5 Size 5 Marla Phase-II KDA Kohat has Appointed has Mr. Zamaad Ullah Son of Inayat Ullah Khan R/o Takhat e Nasrati District Karak Through (Special) Deed no. 189 Bahi no. 04 Volume no. 244, Page no.91 Dated 18/03/2021 which is Registered in the office Kohat of Tehsildar/Sub Registrar the Attorney Holder now wants to Transfer The Above Said Plot If Any Bank/Institution/Firm/Person Has Any objection About The Transfer He Should Contact The Housing officer UADA Within 15 Days in Writing with Proofs otherwise Plot will be Transfer and no objection will Be Accepted (Director Urban Area KDA Kohat)

IN THE COURT OF SYED ZAMARRUD SHAH

JUDGE BANKING COURT-II

FEDERAL JUDICIAL COMPLEX PHASE-7 HAYATABAD PESHAWAR

Case No: 233/1,

Next Date: 31-01-2025,

Suit for recovery of **Rs.25,06,438/89**

UBL Regional Office Main Gulberg Jail Road Lahore, VS Imad Zafar **Notice Versus:** Imad Zafar S/o Zafar Ullah R/o Mohallah Nokhail P.O Nasir Bagh Mulazai Tehsil & Distt. Peshawar, Where is the plaintiff Bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of **Rs.25,06,438/89** against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institutions (Recovery of Finances) Ordinance 2001. You are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspaper failing which an ex parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issue today on 23-12-2024 under my signature & seal of the court.

Banking Court-II Peshawar



In brief

Saim Ayub heads to London for treatment

CAPE TOWN (Monitoring Desk): National cricket team opener Saim Ayub has traveled from Cape Town to London for medical treatment. He is accompanied by assistant coach Azhar Mahmood. Following the directives of PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, Saim Ayub will be examined by renowned sports orthopedists in England on Wednesday. Naqvi emphasised that Saim Ayub was a valuable asset for Pakistan cricket, and all possible resources would be utilised for his treatment. He also extended prayers for Ayub's full recovery. It is noteworthy that Saim Ayub suffered a fracture in his right ankle during fielding on the first day of the second Test match against South Africa, ruling him out of cricket for six weeks.

President's Trophy to begin from Wednesday

KARACHI (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) will begin their title defence in the President's Trophy Grade-I on Wednesday as they take on Pakistan Television (PTV) at the HPC Oval Ground, Karachi. The nine-team tournament comprises of 37 first-class matches including the final, which is slated to take place from 8-12 April. The single-league round matches will end on 28 February with all teams having played eight games each, all in Karachi. The top two teams will qualify for the final while the bottom two teams will be relegated to the President's Trophy Grade-II. A prize pot of PKR eight million will also be up for the grabs. In the other opening round matches, Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) will take on State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) at SBP Sports Complex, Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) will lock horns with Water and Power Development Authority at NBP Sports Complex and Higher Education Commission will be up against Eshaal Associates at the National Bank Stadium. Ghani Glass will play their opening match in the second round of the tournament against HEC.

Afghanistan wrap up test win over Zimbabwe

BULAWAYO (Reuters): Afghanistan took only 15 balls to wrap up victory on the last day of the second test against Zimbabwe at the Queens Sports Club on Monday, winning by 72 runs to take the two-match series. Zimbabwe were dismissed for 205, failing to add to their overnight score but losing their last two wickets in only 13 minutes. Richard Ngarava was run out in the second over of the day amid confusion with captain Craig Ervine, who went in the next over trapped leg before wicket by Rashid Khan, who finished with 7-66 in 27.3 overs. It was Khan's leg spin on Sunday that saw Afghanistan move into a winning position after Zimbabwe initially looked victory-bound when they were 157-4, chasing a winning target of 278 runs. The first test, also in Bulawayo, ended in a high scoring draw. Afghanistan have now won four of 11 tests played since winning test status in 2017 — two of them against Zimbabwe.

Pakistan fined 25% match fee for slow over-rate

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan have been fined 25% of their match fee and penalised five ICC World Test Championship points for maintaining a slow over-rate against South Africa in the second Test in Cape Town.

Richie Richardson of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction after Pakistan were ruled to be five overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration.

In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined 5% of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time, said the top cricketing body in a statement.

In addition, as per Article 16.11.2 of the ICC World Test Championship playing conditions, a side

is penalised one point for each over short. Consequently, five World Test Championship points have been deducted from Pakistan's points total.

Pakistan skipper Shan Masood pled guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing.

On-field umpires Kumar Dharmasena and Nitin Menon, third umpire Alex Wharf and fourth umpire Stephen Harris levelled the charge.

A day ago, South Africa had grabbed a dominating victory over Pakistan by 10 wickets to whitewash the two-match Test series at Newlands stadium, Cape Town.

The Proteas made light work of a modest target of 58 to claim victory against Pakistan by 10 wickets at Newlands on Monday, wrapping up the series 2-0 inside four days of the second and final Test.

Pakistan were bowled out for 478 in their second

innings, following on after being dismissed for 194 in reply to South Africa's massive 615.

South Africa won the first test in Pretoria by two wickets despite being reduced to 99-8 chasing 148 on a difficult surface, before a more comprehensive 10 wicket win in Cape Town on Monday.

The hosts have won their last seven tests in a row, their second best run of victories behind a nine-game winning streak between 2002-2003. It is perfect preparation for their appearance in the World Test Championship final against Australia at Lord's from June 11-15.

But even in their latest defeat, Pakistan showed fight as they scored 478 following on in their second innings, led by Masood's 145.

Masood expressed hope they can be more consistent in their upcoming two-Test home series against West Indies that starts on January 17.

Spurs trigger extension in Son contract until 2026



LONDON (Agencies): Tottenham have triggered an option to extend forward Son Heung-min's contract by a year, until the summer of 2026.

The 32-year-old joined Spurs from Bayer Leverkusen in 2015 and has scored 169 goals in 431 appearances for the club.

The South Korea international has 125 goals and 68 assists in 320 Premier League outings.

"Brilliant," said Tottenham boss Ange Postecoglou. "He's already had an outstanding career at this football club."

"He's played a big role in the last sort of 10 years,

made an impact at the club and in the Premier League. It's great to extend his stay."

"The ambition is to make sure he finishes his Tottenham career with some silverware."

Son was part of a Tottenham side that reached the club's first Champions League final in 2019, which Spurs lost to Liverpool, but he is yet to win a trophy with the club.

The north London side have made the announcement about his contract extension prior to the first leg of their Carabao Cup semi-final at home to Liverpool on Wednesday.

Spurs are 12th in the Premier League this season, with Son scoring five goals and registering six assists in 17 top-flight appearances.

Djokovic and Murray join forces in Melbourne



MELBOURNE (Agencies): It is a sight few could have foreseen a few months ago - but now it is likely to be one of the star attractions at the Australian Open.

Novak Djokovic and new coach Andy Murray

have practised together in Melbourne for the first time before the first Grand Slam of 2025 begins on Sunday.

Djokovic, who is targeting a record-extending 11th Australian Open title and historic 25th

Grand Slam crown, announced the surprise appointment of long-time rival and good friend Murray to his team in late November.

The pair, both 37, were born seven days apart, but Britain's three-time major winner Murray ended his playing career following the Paris 2024 Olympic Games in August.

The former rivals partnered during the off-season after Olympic champion Djokovic parted ways with long-time coach Goran Ivanisevic.

It is Murray's first coaching role since he retired and footage on

Tuesday showed the former world number one closely watching men's record 24-time major winner Djokovic hitting at Melbourne Park.

Antetokounmpo stars as Bucks beat Raptors



NEW YORK (Agencies): Giannis Antetokounmpo registered 11 points, 12 rebounds and a season-high 13 assists as the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Toronto Raptors 128-104 in the NBA.

Damian Lillard added 25 points in Toronto for the Bucks, who had lost four of their previous five games, all to teams with losing records.

Antetokounmpo suffered a cut finger in the first half that required stitches, but was able to

continue before being rested in the fourth quarter as the Bucks secured a comfortable win.

"He set the whole tone to our team," Bucks coach Doc Rivers said of Antetokounmpo's performance. "When your best player does that it becomes contagious and the ball just moved."

Zach LaVine notched up 35 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists as the Chicago Bulls fought back from 19 points down in the third quarter to beat the San

Antonio Spurs 114-110.

Victor Wembanyama starred in a losing cause for the Spurs, with 23 points, 14 rebounds, four assists and eight blocked shots.

The Dallas Mavericks, who were without Luka Doncic and Kyrie Irving, suffered a fifth successive defeat, losing 119-104 to the Memphis Grizzlies.

After winning nine matches in a row, the New York Knicks have now lost their past three after slipping to a 103-94 defeat by the Orlando Magic.

Bradley Beal came off the bench to score 25 points as the Phoenix Suns beat the Philadelphia 76ers 109-99 to end a run of four straight defeats.

The Sacramento Kings needed double overtime to edge the Miami Heat 123-118, while the Detroit Pistons beat the Portland Trail Blazers 118-115.

PCB chairman commits strategic support for uplift of hockey



LAHORE (APP): Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi has said the PCB will provide strategic support for the uplift of hockey and other support in the country.

During a meeting with former Olympians Shahbaz Senior and Khawaja Junaid at the National Cricket

Academy (NCA) Gaddafi Stadium here on Tuesday, he urged the need for reforms in hockey, adding the PCB remains committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure the uplift of sports in Pakistan.

The former stars of Pakistan hockey hailed Chairman Naqvi's princi-

pled stance on the ICC Champions Trophy, besides swift reforms undertaken to improve Pakistan's cricket structure. The former hockey greats emphasised the need for a similar pace of reforms to revitalise Pakistan's hockey system.

The meeting centred on exploring sustainable

measures to promote hockey across Pakistan.

Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi reiterated his unwavering support for the development of the sport, acknowledging hockey's status as the national game and its illustrious legacy.

"Hockey is Pakistan's national sport and holds a proud history of global achievements. Restoring its past glory remains a priority, and we will extend our full support to achieve this," Chairman Mohsin Naqvi said.

Shahbaz Senior and Khawaja Junaid provided insights from their visits to German and Dutch hockey clubs, sharing best practices for youth development and grassroots initiatives. They also briefed Chairman PCB on the scheduled tour of the German National Junior Hockey Team to Pakistan in March 2025, underscoring importance of international engagements in fostering growth of hockey.

UK asks ICC to 'deliver on own rules' over Afghanistan boycott calls

LONDON (AFP): The UK government says the International Cricket Council should "deliver on their own rules" relating to women's participation as the England men's team resist calls to boycott their upcoming match against Afghanistan.

A group of more than 160 British politicians have called on the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to refuse to play next month's Champions Trophy match against Afghanistan as a stand against the Taliban's policy on women's sport.

Female participation has effectively been outlawed since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, a move that puts the Afghanistan Cricket Board at odds with the ICC's rules.

The ICC have allowed the Afghanistan men's team to continue to compete in global competitions, with England due to face them in a one-day international in Lahore on February 26.

ECB chief executive Richard

Gould responded to boycott calls by saying he would "actively advocate" for collective action rather than take a unilateral stand by forfeiting the game -- a move that would likely lead to a points deduction.

A spokesman for British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Tuesday it was down to the ICC, cricket's global governing body, to take the lead on the issue.

"The ICC should clearly deliver on their own rules and make sure that they're supporting women's cricket as the ECB do," said the spokesman.

He added: "The erosion of women's and girls' rights by the Taliban is clearly appalling. We'll work with the ECB on this issue, we're in contact with them. Ultimately this is a matter for the ICC in relation to the Champions Trophy."

"We should remember that cricket for a long time has been a beacon of hope for the Afghanistan people. It's terrible the way in which the

women's team has been suppressed."

Former ICC chairman Greg Barclay last month criticised boards such as the ECB and Cricket Australia for having a twin-track approach -- refusing to play Afghanistan in bilateral series but still willing to face them in ICC events.

"If you really want to make a political statement, don't play them (Afghanistan) in a World Cup," Barclay told Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper.

"Sure, it might cost you a semi-final place, but principles are principles. It's not about having half a principle."

The New Zealander added: "It is not the Afghanistan board's fault. They used to have women's cricket. It would be easy to kick Afghanistan out, but their board haven't done anything wrong.... I don't think it would make a jot of difference to the ruling party there to kick them out."

PSL 10 player draft shifted from Gwadar to Lahore

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday confirmed that the player draft of the 10th edition of Pakistan Super League (PSL) was rescheduled and will now take place at Huzoori Bagh, Lahore fort in Lahore.

According to a statement issued by the cricket board, the event was relocated from Gwadar, Balochistan due to "unforeseen logistical challenges".

"PSL draft will now take place on 13 January at Huzoori Bagh, Lahore fort in Lahore at 12:30pm," it added.

The PCB further announced that the city will now be one of the key locations of PSL 2025 Trophy Tour across Pakistan.

The landmark 10th edition of the PSL is slated to take place between April 8 and May 19 later this year. The six franchises will assemble their star-studded squads on Monday, 13

January during the player draft ceremony.

Meanwhile, the pick order for the player draft has also been announced, with two-time champions Lahore Qalandars making the first pick in the opening round of the platinum category, followed by arch-rivals Karachi Kings.

2019 champions Quetta Gladiators will make the third pick, while Peshawar Zalmi will have the fourth.

Last season's runners-up, Sultans, and reigning champions United will make the fifth and sixth picks, respectively.

Meanwhile, the six teams have also announced their retentions ahead of the PSL 10 player draft.

Full Retentions List

Islamabad United (8): Platinum: Shadab Khan, Naseem Shah
Diamond: Imad Wasim (mentor), Azam Khan
Gold: Salman Ali Agha (brand ambassador),

Haider Ali
Silver: Colin Munro, Ruman Raees

Multan Sultans (7): Platinum: Mohammad Rizwan, Usama Mir
Diamond: David Willey (mentor), Iftikhar Ahmed (brand ambassador), Usman Khan

Gold: Chris Jordan
Silver: Faisal Akram
Peshawar Zalmi (7): Platinum: Babar Azam, Saim Ayub
Diamond: Mohammad

Haris
Silver: Arif Yaqoob, Mehran Mumtaz, Sufyan Moqim (brand ambassador)
Emerging: Ali Raza

Quetta Gladiators (8): Diamond: Abrar Ahmed, Mohammad Amir (mentor), Rilee Rossouw

Gold: Saud Shakeel (brand ambassador), Akeal Hosein, Mohammad Wasim Jnr
Silver: Khawaja Mohammad Nafay, Usman Tariq

Karachi Kings (7): Diamond: Hasan Ali, James Vince

Gold: Shan Masood, Muhammad Irfan Khan
Silver: Arafat Minhas (brand ambassador), Tim Seifert, Zahid Mehmood
Lahore Qalandars (8): Platinum: Shaheen Shah Afridi, Fakhar Zaman
Diamond: Haris Rauf (brand ambassador), Sikandar Raza

Gold: Abdullah Shafique, Jahandad Khan, Zaman Khan
Silver: David Wiese

Moreover, the PCB also announced the successful category relegation requests for the following players.

Successful category relegation requests:

Ruman Raees (Islamabad United), Hasan Ali, Shan Masood and Zahid Mehmood (all Karachi Kings), Abdullah Shafique (Lahore Qalandars), Faisal Akram (Multan Sultans).



ISLAMABAD: Winning players of Lahore board hockey team lifting trophy after hockey match between Mardan and Lahore Boards the Inter-Board Girls Gala organized by the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium Pakistan Sports Board. —APP Photo



In brief

Police hold 19 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Tuesday arrested some 19 accused during actions against criminal elements throughout the district. According to a police spokesman, the Civil Lines Police nabbed accused Jamshed and Muhammad Bilal with a 30 bore pistol each while the Kallar Syedan Police also recovered a 30 bore pistol from accused Abrar Ahmed. Similarly, the Ratta Amral and Morgah Police held accused Muhammad Khan and Abdullah on the recovery of 520 grams and 350 grams of hashish respectively. Likewise, during search operations in different areas, the police arrested 13 accused including Rehmanuddin, Gul Naqeeb, Zaheer, Babar, Sajid, Noor Muhammad, Daniyal, Rokhel, Yasir, Tauqeer, Tausif, Arshad and Waqar Ahmed, for violating the Tenancy Act. Meanwhile, the Jatli Police arrested two accused Danish and Shaheen for attempting to abuse a child.

IRSA releases 33,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 33,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 42,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1475.09 feet and was 77.09 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,500 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1133.20 feet, which was 83.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,600 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 12,000, 12,300, 7,600 and 18,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

AIOU launches career-making diploma programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has introduced career-making postgraduate diploma programs for aspiring fresh graduates. The programs include computer science, educational planning and management, educational leadership and management, early childhood education, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship in ECC, supply chain management, human resource management, gender and women studies, population and development, international financial reporting standards and TEFL. The programs will lead to professional development of the aspiring students to achieve excels in the relevant fields. These are one-year of duration, consisting of two semesters. BA/BSc/B.Com students are eligible to take admission. These will also help to organize and manage business venture in a competitive global marketplace that is constantly evolving. According to Director Admissions, "February 17 is the last day for the enrollment in these programs." Such programs are part of the University's recent initiative to enhance capacity-building of the students, enabling them to earn their livelihood and to take part in the country's socio-economic development. These are one-year diploma programs.

Efforts afoot to improve healthcare system: Bugti

ISLAMABAD (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Tuesday said that efforts have been taken to improve the healthcare system in the province, and under a public-private partnership, quality healthcare services will be provided, with aimed that the common people will have access to quality healthcare facilities at their doorstep.

The chief minister in called on meeting with Director of Sundas Foundation, Air Vice Marshal (Retired) Aftab Hussain was briefed about the activities of the Sundas Foundation across the country, including

Balochistan. During the meeting, they discussed the need to expand the Sundas Foundation's activities in Balochistan and provide facilities for the treatment of hemophilia thalassemia and blood related diseases in the underdeveloped areas.

He appreciated the services of the Sundas Foundation, highlighted that the foundation has done significant work in treating blood related diseases, benefiting millions of poor people.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti assured full cooperation regarding the establishment of a Sundas Foundation center in Quetta and emphasized

that the Balochistan government is committed to bring reforms in the healthcare sector.

He stressed the need to further expand cooperation between government and non-governmental organizations in public welfare matters.

During the meeting, Director of Sundas Foundation Aftab Hussain praised the chief minister's seriousness and strong resolve regarding the provision of quality healthcare facilities in Balochistan and assured that the Sundas Foundation is ready to expand its services in the underdeveloped areas of the province.

Dawat-e-Islami to award certificates to Ulema, students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dawat-e-Islami is set to host a grand ceremony in Islamabad on Thursday to award Dastar-e-Fazilat and certificates to 88 religious scholars and 3,465 students who completed Hifz, Nazirah, or Dars-e-Nizami in 2024.

The event will be hosted by Haji Muhammad Shahid Attari, the Pakistan Incharge of

Dawat-e-Islami, at Faizan-e-Madina in G-11.

In 2024, a total of 72,014 students across Pakistan completed Hifz, Nazirah, Dars-e-Nizami, and specialization courses at Dawat-e-Islami's Jamia-tul-Madina and Madrasa-tul-Madina.

This includes 54,222 students who completed Nazirah, 16,180 who completed Hifz, 1,433 who

completed Dars-e-Nizami, and 179 who completed specialization courses.

The Dastar-e-Fazilat ceremony will take place on Thursday, January 9, 2025, at 8:00 PM at Faizan-e-Madina in G-11, Islamabad.

The event will be hosted by Haji Muhammad Shahid Attari, the Pakistan Incharge of Dawat-e-Islami.

DIG Islamabad enforces strict accountability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, led by Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Syed Ali Raza, reinforced a strict accountability process on Tuesday.

A police spokesperson told APP that the services of multiple officers, including SHOs of various police stations, were suspended for negligence and misconduct, while a Dolphin Squad officer was dismissed over bribery allegations.

Furthermore, the services of the SHO of Shams Colony, Sabzi Mandi, and Secretariat Police Stations were suspended for two years, while the officer of the Dolphin Squad was dismissed

from his job following a bribery complaint.

On this occasion, DIG Raza emphasized that there is no room for corrupt police officers in the department. He stated that Islamabad Police is committed to the process of self-accountability, and no officer is above the law.

DIG further mentioned that any police officer who exceeds his powers or neglects his duties will face strict legal and departmental action. Non-compliance and negligence in duty will not be tolerated within the department.

DIG Raza added that the protection of the lives and property of the city's residents is the primary

responsibility of Islamabad Police, and no negligence will be accepted.

He also said that only officers who perform their duties properly will remain part of the team. Immediate action will be taken on any complaint, and no negligence will be tolerated in safeguarding the lives and property of citizens.

DIG Raza further said that the process of accountability will continue to improve the performance of the institution. Officers who perform well will be awarded with awards and certificates of appreciation, while those with poor performance will face appropriate penalties.

RDA issues notices to owners of five illegal land subdivisions

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) has issued notices to the owners of five illegal land subdivisions in various mouzas, said a RDA spokesman on Tuesday.

He informed that the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate of RDA issued notices to the owners of five illegal projects in various mouzas: Adhwal, Misriot, Morgha, Kataraiyan, and Pind Bhoti, Rawalpindi.

The illegal land subdivisions began development works without obtaining the necessary approval from RDA and involved in illegal marketing and booking of plots

through print and electronic media.

The spokesperson informed that the subdivisions were involved in illegal business. RDA issued notices and warned the violators that strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against the rules violators.

He said that Director General (DG) RDA, Kinza Murtaza, had directed MP&TE Directorate to take strict action against illegal advertisements and marketing of illegal housing schemes.

He further said that RDA would also lodge FIRs against the owners of these illegal land subdivisions.

"The developers are unlawfully advertising their schemes and running their offices without obtaining approval from RDA, in violation of Rule 46(1) of the Punjab Development Authorities Private Housing Scheme Rules-2021," he added.

The MP&TE Directorate has directed the owners of these illegal housing schemes to immediately stop all development activities, advertising campaigns, sale and purchase of the plots.

He informed that the DG has urged the citizens not to invest in illegal housing projects and check status of the schemes at RDA website: www.rda.gop.pk.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar addressed the trainees of the 52nd Common Training Programme who visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. —APP Photo

ANF recovers 14.4 kg drugs concealed in guava crates

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in an operation recovered 14.4 kg of drugs concealed in guava crates, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday.

He informed that in an operation near Motorway Toll Plaza, Islamabad, ANF foiled a drug smuggling bid disguised as guava cargo.

Acting on a tip-off, ANF intercepted a passenger bus near Islamabad Toll Plaza. During the search, 14.4 kg of hashish was recovered from the guava crates which were booked by a person namely Bilal Jan who belongs to a gang involved in drug smuggling at the inter-provincial level.

The members of the gang are involved in smuggling drugs in different cities of the country through bus cargo service, the spokesman added. He informed that further investigation has been initiated to arrest the accused involved in drug smuggling.

Two died, Seven injured in an accident on M-14

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as two people died and seven were injured in a tragic accident on the Motorway M-14 near Essa Khel here Tuesday.

According to Motorway Police North Zone spokesman, Muhammad Saqib, among seven injured two of them were in serious condition while five had minor injuries.

He said that the bus overturned due to the driver's negligence as the driver fell asleep.

As soon as the accident was reported, a heavy contingent of Motorway Police reached the spot and shifted the bodies and injured to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Essa Khel and DHQ Mianwali.

He added that the bus was going to Islamabad from Quetta. During the rescue operations, non-customs paid goods were recovered from the secret compartments of the bus including tobacco, chocolate and gutka.

He added that the bus was handed over to the concerned police station for further legal proceedings.

SCBAP stands with parliament, says President Mian Atta

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan (SCBAP) Mian

Muhammad Rauf Atta has expressed his confidence in the Constitutional Bench and the Supreme Court of Pakistan and said that SCBAP has always been at the forefront of upholding the rule of law and independence of the institutions, including the Parliament.

In a written statement issued here today, the President SCBA said that support for the 26th Constitutional Amendment stems from two main considerations. First, it represents the collective will of the Parliament. Secondly, it has effectively curtailed the judicial overreach and strengthened the very principle of the separation of powers for all times to come.

Instead of being skeptical of the collective will of the Parliament, we must recognize and acknowledge that only the Parliament is competent to amend the Constitution.

This power has been exercised lawfully, and we must respect this fact, he said.

He said over the years, we have seen the judiciary, often overstepping its mandate, wasting valuable resources and energies on prolonged political matters, deciding them on the basis of personal preferences and became a tool of disruption to smooth governance. We believe that the 26th amendment has made the judiciary more independent than ever and has enhanced the accessibility of justice for ordinary citizens/litigants.

The subject letter incorrectly claims that the 26th amendment has made the executive "Master of the Rooster". It further falsely referred the Constitutional Bench as "executive-dominated" bench. The present composition of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) is by far, the finest formation, comprising of equal and balanced representation of the democratic, political (treasury and opposition) and legal minds.

Today's JCP ensures that each member is master of his or her own conscience. We have full confidence in the current composition of the JCP, the formation of Constitutional Benches, and its functioning.

We want to emphasize that the Constitutional Bench is fully operational and functioning at its highest capacity. Any matters related to the 26th amendment now fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Bench. No one should compel the Court to call a Full Court. Any such convening under political duress will have no relevance and shall not be accepted by the legal fraternity.

We strongly disapprove writing of such letters by few individuals as their viewpoints have already been rejected by the legal community. They should refrain from creating divisions within the legal community. Any future attempts to do so will be met with a firm response.

Ahsan chairs progress-review meeting on Jinnah Medical Complex

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday chaired a meeting to review progress on the Jinnah Medical Complex and Research Center project.

He directed Capital Development Authority (CDA) officials to ensure that the consultants' work should meet international standards, stressing that there should be no compromise on quality, a news release said.

The minister also directed that the design for the medical complex should be finalized at the earliest, ensuring the project was aligned with modern standards and emerged as a "state-of-the-art" facility.

Ahsan Iqbal highlighted that the Prime Minister has given clear instructions to include Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) in the project's

investment plan to maximize financial benefits.

He added that this initiative represented a revolutionary step in the health sector, aiming to provide top-notch medical facilities to the public while serving as a significant milestone in research and development.

Following the Prime Minister's instructions, the Minister for Planning, the Ministry of Finance, and the Chairman of CDA were tasked with consulting the Chairman of EOBI to explore the possibility of involving EOBI in the commercial aspect of the JMC project under mutually agreed terms and conditions.

During the meeting, a detailed briefing was provided regarding the implementation of directives issued in the previous meetings as well. It was informed that the master plan and PC-II for the project have already been approved.

The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination (MoNHSRC) has reported that an initial consultation with the Chairman of EOBI has taken place, where both parties mutually agreed to first conduct a feasibility study of the Jinnah Medical Complex (JMC) project.

Following the study, a proposal would be prepared for EOBI's consideration regarding investment in real estate and its involvement in the commercial aspect of JMC under mutually agreed terms and conditions. The Aga Khan University (AKU) consultants will assist the CDA in selecting local consultants for detailed design and construction supervision.

The CDA has already floated an Expression of Interest (EOI) for hiring local consultants, with the final submission underway.

Police Khidmat Centers facilitate 176,337 citizens

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police Khidmat centers facilitated 176,337 citizens during 2024 with different services relating to issuance of character certificate, registration of tenants and house servants, general police verification, report of missing persons and items, said a police spokesman.

He informed that Rawalpindi district police are taking all possible measures to provide maximum facilitate to the citizens.

13 Khidmat centers including state-of-the-art Khidmat center, Liaquat Bagh are functioning in Rawalpindi. Positive feedback from the citizens regarding the facilities of Khidmat centers was given

and the citizens appreciated the services.

61,704 people obtained police character certificates from Rawalpindi Khidmat centers in 2024 while 60,614 citizens availed general police verification facilities. The spokesman further said that 6,442 people obtained new driving licenses from Khidmat centers and 9,720 citizens obtained learner driving licenses from Khidmat centers of Rawalpindi.

8,932 people renewed learner driving licenses and 1600 citizens got copies of the FIRs while 745 people filed missing person reports. 633 citizens received their tenancy and employee registration certificates at different Marakaz and 177 people

got duplicate driving licenses, he said adding, 355 applicants got international driving licenses while 96 citizens got their licenses renewed which were issued from other districts.

According to the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Inspector General of Police, Punjab, the best facilities are being ensured from Khidmat centers for the convenience of the citizens, he said.

City Police Officer, Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani said that best service delivery is top priority of Rawalpindi district police and the authorities concerned have been directed to ensure provision of best possible facilities at Khidmat centers along with police stations.



ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt receiving flower bouquet from Members of National Assembly, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Malik Ibrar Ahmed and Anjum Aqeel Khan at PBM Head office. —APP Photo

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Two people die due to cold weather in Faryab

FARYAB (TOLONews): Local officials in Faryab confirmed that two people have died due to the cold weather in this province. According to officials, one of the bodies has been found, and efforts to locate the second body are still underway. Kohistan and Bandar are among the districts of Faryab that have recently experienced heavy snowfall. Shamsuddin Mohammadi, head of Information and Culture in Faryab, said regarding the victims: "One of the bodies has been found by officials and locals and handed over to the family. The other person is still trapped under the snow, and efforts by officials and locals to recover the body are ongoing." One of the deceased, named Khudadad, lost his life on Saturday night due to cold weather and a severe storm in the Tirband Turkistan area. Khudadad's uncle said that he was the sole breadwinner of his family, which now faces dire economic conditions. Safar Mohammad, Khudadad's uncle, added: "We ask the government to assist the orphans and wife of this man. He also has a debt of 400,000 afghani." According to Safar Mohammad, Khudadad had traveled to remote mountainous areas to sell raisins and other goods to gather the 400,000 afghani to pay off his debts. Qurban Shah, Khudadad's wife, is now worried about the future of her children after losing her husband. Mohibullah, a resident of Faryab, urged the Islamic Emirate: "I earnestly request the Islamic Emirate and government officials to help these Muslims. They have no place to live; the homeowner where they reside now tells them to leave every day." According to officials, the body of another resident of the province, who died due to the cold weather, has not yet been recovered, and efforts to locate it are still ongoing.

Iraqi company explores power plan investments



KABUL (BNA): A delegation from Iraqi companies expressed their interest in investing in Afghanistan's power projects during a meeting with the Director General of Sustainable Energy at the Ministry of Energy and Water. Mawlawi Abdulrahman Rahmani, the Director General of Sustainable Energy, met with officials from the Al Raji Group of Companies. They discussed potential investments in electricity generation projects from various sources. Mawlawi Rahmani welcomed the group's investment interest and urged them to coordinate with the ministry's technical team for project selection. The Iraqi company officials promised to soon share their financial and technical proposals with the relevant ministry officials.

Kandahar inaugurates \$3m poultry feed factory

KANDAHAR (TOLONews): A poultry feed production factory has been inaugurated in Kandahar province of at a cost of \$3 million. Sherbaz Kaminzada, head of the Kandahar Chamber of Industries and Mines, stated at the opening ceremony of this factory that by the end of the current solar year, the country's need for chicken meat and feed will be fully met domestically. He added that another oil production factory, with an investment of 400,000 US dollars, has also started operations in this province. "Afghanistan has achieved self-sufficiency in terms of animal feed and chicken meat. Previously, we had imports worth 1 million dollars, but this year, that figure will reach zero," Kaminzada said. Mohammad Salim Karimi, the official in charge of the production factory, said: "This factory was built with an investment of 3 million dollars over a period of one and a half years and has the capacity to produce 25 tons of feed per hour." This factory has created job opportunities for dozens of people. Workers at the factory urged other investors to invest within the country. Mohammad Eshaq, one of the workers, said: "Such investments are very important. If investments increase, youth migration to foreign countries will decrease."

Badakhshan medical faculty reopened

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban announced on Tuesday the reopening of the medical faculty at Badakhshan University in north-eastern Afghanistan, a department that had been closed for nearly two decades due to a lack of resources and infrastructure. According to a statement released by Taliban, the decision to reestablish the faculty was approved by their leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. The medical faculty at Badakhshan University was initially established in 1998 by then-President Burhanuddin Rabbani. It operated until 2004, when it was shut down due to insufficient academic staff, inadequate laboratory facilities, and a lack of access to standard hospitals for clinical training. Following its closure, students were transferred to Kabul University, leaving the province of Badakhshan without a dedicated medical faculty for nearly 20 years. The reopening comes amid increasing calls from local communities for its revival. In November 2022, participants in a ceremony honoring top university entrance exam performers in Badakhshan urged the Taliban to reactivate the faculty. The issue was subsequently discussed in a meeting of the Taliban's administrative commission in February 2024. The Taliban have stated that the reopening aims to "expand quality medical education in Badakhshan, provide better healthcare services to the province's residents, and address regional health challenges." However, the move comes against the backdrop of the Taliban's strict policies on women and girls' education, including a ban on women attending universities and training in medical fields. Critics have pointed out the inconsistency in reopening the medical faculty while excluding half the population from pursuing higher education. The reopening also coincides with the Taliban's controversial plan to subject university professors, particularly those in Islamic studies, to tests assessing their academic qualifications. The decision has drawn sharp criticism from Afghanistan's academic community. Fazal Hadi Wazin, a university professor, called the move an "insult" to the country's educators, arguing that the assessments are being administered by "military commanders and madrasa clerics with no academic experience." He warned that "history will record this disgrace." Other scholars have criticized the Taliban's narrow interpretation of Islamic teachings, accusing the group of reducing Islam and Sharia to the dogmas of Deobandi seminaries. This approach, they argue, clashes with more comprehensive and progressive Islamic perspectives.

PM leads cabinet meeting

KABUL (BNA): A Cabinet meeting of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, chaired by Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hasan Akhund held on Tuesday. According to a statement from the Office of the General Administration of Affairs, the meeting discussed important economic, social, and cultural issues in the country, and necessary decisions were made. Additionally, several topics were referred to specific committees, with the task of finalizing related matters and presenting their reports at the next Cabinet session. Furthermore, the Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, as well as Water and Energy, were tasked with providing necessary facilities for the public in the agriculture sector. In the meeting, all Cabinet members were advised to treat their staff and ordinary citizens with respect and to address the problems and needs of the suffering population in an effective manner.

Daesh revived in Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): Michael McCall, the chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee said over the weekend that the US is witnessing a resurgence of Daesh in the Afghanistan region. In a discussion with America's ABC television, McCall said one thing he was "worried about, is with the fall of Afghanistan and the debacle,... we are seeing a resurgence of ISIS and ISIS-K (Daesh) in the Khorasan region between Afghanistan and Pakistan that concerns me greatly." McCall added that eight people with ties to Daesh recently entered the United States. "We know that eight ISIS individuals have entered the United States.... So you really have two types of threats. "One is operational; the other one is inspired attacks, radicalized over the internet. They're both equally lethal, and they need to be focused on to stop it," he said. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has however repeatedly said that Daesh has been eliminated in Afghanistan.

WFP expresses concerns over economic crisis

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Food Programme (WFP) in Afghanistan has expressed deep concern over the country's worsening economic crisis as temperatures drop, highlighting that millions are in urgent need of aid. In a statement posted on its X page on Tuesday, WFP stated that Afghan families are forced to choose between feeding their children and keeping them warm during the harsh winter. The organization emphasized the need for immediate humanitarian assistance as the cold season sets in, exacerbating the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. This comes as several international aid organizations have issued warnings about rising poverty and the growing need for humanitarian support in Afghanistan during the winter months. Earlier, WFP reported that due to a funding shortfall, it cannot provide food assistance to millions of people in Afghanistan during the winter. According to WFP, it can only support six million people this winter, while an estimated 15 million Afghans will require humanitarian aid to survive. Simultaneously, the United Nations OCHA reported that in 2025, approximately 22.9 million Afghans — nearly half the country's population — will require life-saving humanitarian assistance.

Economic Commission session discusses energy and power projects

KABUL (BNA): The regular meeting of the Technical Committee of the Economic Commission was held at the Marmarin Palace, where various agenda items were discussed. The Economic Deputy Office announced on its X page that the session covered topics including the maintenance and monitoring of water and power dams in the country, the power purchase agreement between Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat and Chalik Company, the next phases of the TAPI project, and the establishment of a second administrative unit under the name of the Badakhshan Power Energy Directorate. After detailed discussions, it was assigned to committees composed of representatives from relevant ministries and agencies to conduct a comprehensive technical evaluation of the mentioned topics and share their reports with the Technical Committee of the Economic Commission.



Afghanistan awards major mining contracts worth 213 billion afs

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum has informed TOLONews that since the beginning of the current solar year, it has awarded contracts for nine major mines to domestic and international companies. According to Homayoun Afghan, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, the value of these contracts amounts to 213 billion afghani. The major mines contracted this solar year include various minerals such as cement, salt, ruby, barite, and other resources. The spokesperson told TOLONews: "From the beginning of 1403 (solar year) to date, nine large-scale mining contracts have been awarded by the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum to domestic and foreign companies, with investments in these projects valued at 213 billion afghani." Afghan further stated that during this period, 18 contracts for small-scale mines have also been signed, with a value of 1.8 billion afghani. Homayoun Afghan added: "Approximately 18 contracts for small-scale mines have been awarded to domestic companies, with investment in these small-scale projects amounting to 1.8 billion afghani." Some experts view the extraction, exploration, and processing of the country's mines as beneficial for Afghanistan's economic growth and emphasize providing more facilities to domestic and foreign investors. "If a country wants to stand on its own feet, its economy must also stand strong. When a country's economy improves, the country progresses. Afghanistan's mines are also vital for economic growth, provided they are processed domestically," said Ismail Zadran, an economic analyst. Previously, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan had stated that interest among investors from various countries, including China, Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, India, and Russia, in Afghanistan's mining sector has increased.

Islamic Emirate focuses on mining amid aid cuts: Report

KABUL (TOLONews): The New York Times (NYT), in a report, has stated that the interim government of Afghanistan, following a sharp decline in international aid and the ban on poppy cultivation, has turned to the country's mineral resources and precious stones. The report notes that the interim government now generates revenue through weekly emerald auctions in Panjshir province. However, challenges such as weak infrastructure and a lack of skilled labor persist. According to the report, since the Islamic Emirate's return to power in 2021, it has launched extensive plans for the extraction of Afghanistan's natural resources, including emeralds, rubies, gold, copper, and other rare minerals. The NYT added: "The US government estimates that at least \$1 trillion in mineral deposits lie beneath Afghanistan's rugged landscape. The country is rich in copper, gold, zinc, chromite, cobalt, lithium, and industrial minerals, as well as in precious and semiprecious gemstones like emeralds, rubies, sapphires, garnets, and lapis lazuli. Such elements are used in an array of modern technology, like mobile phones, laptops, and electric vehicles." "Mining plays a crucial role in the country's economic development. It acts as a primary driver of employment, raises the national gross domestic product, and creates investment opportunities in the mining sector, which can serve as a foundation for long-term economic growth, increase national income, and transition Afghanistan from dependency to self-sufficiency," said Abdul Rahman Habib, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy. Panjshir province, with its rich emerald reserves, is one of the most significant regions for implementing these plans. The NYT noted that the interim government imposes a 10% tax on emerald auctions held weekly, controlling sales and allowing both domestic and foreign investors to participate in this industry. "Afghanistan's mines are the nation's assets and must be protected properly. Especially in mining, it is essential to ensure standardized and proper extraction and processing, which can lead to sustainable economic growth and stability," said Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, Deputy Head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines. Inactive mines, infrastructure challenges, the lack of skilled labor, the shortage of engineers, and specialists remain significant obstacles to Afghanistan's mining sector. However, officials of the Islamic Emirate have emphasized the need for foreign experts' collaboration and training domestic forces to advance the mining sector. "Instead of outsourcing our mines to other countries, allowing them to process the minerals abroad and sell the finished products back to us at high prices, it is better for us to process these resources within Afghanistan," said Zabihiullah Aslami, an economic expert.

PVPV enforcers arrest 9 in Kabul

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban's promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice (PVPV) enforcers, the Taliban's morality police, arrested nine individuals in Kabul on charges of "moral corruption and gambling." According to a statement from the Taliban's PVPV ministry, the arrests took place in Kabul's third and fifth police districts. The ministry stated that the detainees were held temporarily and later released "on bail." The arrests in Kabul are part of a broader trend. Over the past month, Taliban enforcers have detained 44 individuals, including six women, across various provinces, according to data obtained by Amu, a local media outlet. The charges ranged from "moral corruption" and gambling to witchcraft, illicit relationships, and violations of Islamic law. The provinces with the highest number of reported arrests included Kandahar, Paktia, Khost, Ghazni, Kabul, Parwan, and Nangarhar. Residents say the arrests represent a growing encroachment on personal freedoms and privacy under the guise of enforcing religious law. The recent arrests coincide with the enforcement of a controversial new law, the morality law, introduced by the Taliban in August, which grants the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice sweeping powers to detain and punish individuals. Among its most contentious provisions is the prohibition of women's voices being audible in public spaces, a rule that has drawn widespread domestic and international criticism. Under Article 13 of the law, women are required to cover their entire bodies, including their faces, to prevent what the Taliban describe as "seduction." The article also declares a woman's voice—for instance, singing, reciting poetry, or reading aloud in public—a form of "immodesty." The law further mandates that any woman leaving her home for essential purposes must conceal her voice, face, and body. Male enforcers are empowered to detain and punish women who fail to comply. Public and global reactions Critics, including Afghan citizens and international observers, argue that the new law undermines basic human rights and imposes severe restrictions on women's autonomy. Many have accused the Taliban of using religious edicts to suppress freedoms and enforce their conservative ideology. "The Taliban's virtue enforcement is less about religion and more about control," said one Kabul resident, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. "They are dismantling the fundamental rights of every individual, particularly women, under the pretext of morality."



The Taliban, however, remain steadfast in their defense of the law. Officials have repeatedly emphasized its implementation as essential to their vision of governance, despite growing backlash from human rights groups and the international community. Since returning to power in August 2021, the Taliban have introduced a raft of policies that critics say disproportionately target women and curtail individual freedoms. These measures, including bans on women's education and employment in many sectors, have isolated Afghanistan diplomatically and exacerbated the country's humanitarian crisis.

Meeting decides to introduce Electric Vehicle Policy in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur here Tuesday chaired a meeting to discuss measures needed to combat air pollution and improve quality of air.

The meeting among others was attended by cabinet members including Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif and Pir Musawir Shah, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Ikramullah Khan, relevant administrative secretaries and other senior officials.

The meeting comprehensively deliberated on issues related to air quality and took numerous important decisions to control air pollution. Participants decided to introduce an Electric Vehicle Policy in the province to address air pollution challenges and finalizing an action plan aimed at improving the Air Quality Index (AQI) and controlling the smog in Peshawar and adjacent districts.

It was said that proposed action plan would be presented to the provincial cabinet for final approval and a task force would be established to ensure its effective implementation. The meeting also agreed to form a committee under headship of Additional Chief Secretary Planning & Development to oversee the measures and efforts of all relevant departments and institutions.

It was decided to establish a modern control room for real-time monitoring of Air Quality in Peshawar and surrounding districts. The meeting also decided to install an Emission Monitoring System to regularly monitor industrial emissions and develop a mechanism for emission testing of vehicles at entry and exit points of Peshawar.

The process of issuing vehicle fitness certificates would be digitized, and brick kilns across the province will be registered and shifted to Zigzag Technology in phased manner. Relevant authorities were also directed to strictly enforce the decision to close illegal crushing plants in the province and take strict action against industrial units causing air pollution. Similarly, it was agreed to take action

against petrol pumps selling substandard fuel and to establish Air Quality Monitoring Stations at all divisional headquarters.

Moreover, air purification Towers would be installed in Peshawar and steps would be taken to enhance the capacity of Environmental Protection Agency. To reduce smog and air pollution, effective and meaningful collaboration would be established between relevant departments, academia and donor agencies, meeting concurred.

A public awareness campaign would also be launched to educate people about the negative effects of air pollution and environment-friendly trees would be planted on a large scale during the upcoming plantation campaign. The meeting was informed about current air quality in Peshawar, factors harming the air quality and other related issues. It was noted that the largest contributor to air pollution is the transport sector that is responsible for 58% of air pollution followed by road side dust which contributes 17%.

Addressing the meeting, the Chief Minister said that air pollution is a critical issue and immediate measures are necessary to prevent it from becoming a more serious problem, adding that government was committed to effectively addressing this challenge. "Identifying the contributing factors accurately and devising a comprehensive and practical strategy to address them is the need of the hour", he remarked and assured that the government would prioritize providing the necessary resources for the implementation of the action plan.

The Chief Minister directed that timelines be set for the implementation of proposed measures to ensure better outcomes and developing an effective coordination system among all relevant departments and institutions. He emphasized special attention to tree planting and green belts in government offices, roadsides and other public places besides regular cleaning of roads in urban areas. He directed educational institutions to take special initiatives to raise awareness among children about air pollution.

PTI appeals at JAC against mly court's convictions

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Insaf Lawyer Forum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Qazi Anwar advocate and member Good Governance Committee stated that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has filed appeals in the Judge Advocate General at General Headquarters (GHQ) against the sentences of civilians in military courts, on Tuesday.

This he said while talking to media personnel at PHC and denied meeting with Bushra Bibi and stated that she did not interfere with the work of Insaf Lawyers Forum. The General Secretary of Insaf Lawyers Forum, Ali Zeman was removed from his post for using abusive language against Qazi Anwar advocate.

The Good Governance Committee summoned Provincial Minister Qasim Ali Shah and Advisor Health to provide written explanations for complaints against their departments. The committee gave them a deadline of January 31 to respond.

The committee also summoned Provincial Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru and another minister to provide explanations for complaints against their departments. Qazi Anwar Advocate stated that the Good Governance Committee has decided that no 20-grade officer will work under a 19-grade or lower-grade officer. The committee will address these issues and seek explanations from the relevant ministers if necessary.

Blome calls on Bilawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The outgoing ambassador of the United States, Donald Blome, called on the Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at Zardari House Islamabad.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, appreciated Ambassador Blome's diplomatic services. Chairman during conversation with Ambassador Blome, expressed his desire to further strengthen the relations between the two countries.

Bilawal also acknowledged the importance of collaboration between the two nations and emphasized the need for continued cooperation. During the meeting, they discussed ways to promote mutual understanding and forge a stronger partnership between Pakistan and the United States.

NK launches new missile

SEOUL: North Korea has carried out the successful test launch of a new intermediate-range hypersonic missile and will accelerate the development of nuclear and missile capabilities, state media report.

The hypersonic missile was fired from the outskirts of Pyongyang on Monday. It flew about 1,500km (932 miles) at 12 times the speed of sound, reaching an altitude of nearly 100km (62 miles) before descending to a "second peak" of 42.5km (26.4 miles) and manoeuvring to hit a target in waters off the country's east coast, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported on Tuesday.

New carbon fibre composite materials were used in the missile's engine section, KCNA said, adding that it can "effectively penetrate any dense defence barrier and inflict a serious military blow on the opponent". Carbon fibre is lighter and stronger than other aerospace materials such as aluminium, but is more difficult to manufacture. South Korea's military said the KCNA report was most likely exaggerated, estimating the range the missile flew to be about 1,100km (683 miles) and saying no second peak was detected. Achieving a "second peak" would imply the North Korean missile was capable of changing course and maintaining altitude rather than directly descending on a ballistic trajectory.

Analysts said the new missile launch was concerning because it included technology few nations have access to. "What's so alarming about this missile is that this technology is currently possessed only by Russia, China, and the United States," said Yang Moo-jin, a president of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. — Aljazeera



BEIJING: Rescuers transfer injured people in the village of Zhacun, Dingri County, Tibet, China.

Provisional government for post-war Gaza UAE in talks with US, Israel

DUBAI (Reuters): The United Arab Emirates has discussed with Israel and the United States participating in a provisional administration of post-war Gaza until a reformed Palestinian Authority is able to take charge, according to people familiar with the talks.

The behind-the-scenes discussions, reported by Reuters for the first time, included the possibility of the UAE and the United States, along with other nations, temporarily overseeing the governance, security and reconstruction of Gaza after the Israeli military withdraws and until a Palestinian administration is able to take over, a dozen foreign diplomats and Western officials told Reuters.

The UAE is a close security partner of the US and, unlike most Arab governments, has diplomatic ties with Israel. The diplomats and officials said this provides the Gulf state with some leverage over Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government. After more than a year of war, Israel remains reluctant to outline its own vision for Gaza and the international community has struggled to formulate a viable plan, said the sources, who asked not to be identified because the conversations were private.

The diplomats and officials stressed the ideas that had emerged from the UAE talks lacked detail and had not been distilled into a formal, written plan nor adopted by any government. In the behind-the-scenes talks, Abu Dhabi is advocating for a reformed Palestinian Authority (PA) to govern Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem under an independent Palestinian state, the sources said – something that Israel has publicly opposed.

"The UAE will not participate in any plan that fails to include significant reform of the Palestinian

Authority, its empowerment, and the establishment of a credible roadmap toward a Palestinian state," a UAE official told Reuters, in response to questions about the discussions. "These elements – which are currently lacking – are essential for the success of any post-Gaza plan."

The PA was established three decades ago under the 1993-1995 Oslo Accords, signed by Israel and Palestinians, and given limited authority over the West Bank and Gaza. It still exercises some governance in the Israeli-occupied West Bank but was run out of Gaza in 2007 by Hamas after a brief civil war. A US State Department spokesperson told Reuters there had been talks with several partners, including the UAE, on options for governance, security and reconstruction, and that various draft proposals, plans and ideas had been put forward by partners.

"These have been deliberative discussions that continue, as we seek the best way forward," the spokesperson said, declining to comment further on "private diplomatic conversations". The Israeli prime minister's office declined comment for this story. The Palestinian Authority did not respond to Reuters' questions.

In addition to reforming the PA, four of the diplomats and Western officials said that Emirati officials had suggested the use of private military contractors as part of a post-war peacekeeping force in Gaza. The other sources confirmed they were briefed on what they described as Emirati post-war proposals, which included the possible use of such forces. The diplomats and Western officials said any deployment of such contractors would spark concerns among Western nations. Private military contractors, hired by the United States and other governments, have faced accusations of torture, human

rights abuses, and use of excessive force, among other allegations, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. The UAE official did not respond to questions about the use of military contractors.

Rebuilding Gaza, including its political institutions, is expected to take years and cost tens of billions of dollars, requiring substantial international support, following 15 months of Israel's devastating military campaign. While the UAE has criticised the conduct of Israel's military and Netanyahu himself, Israel still wants the oil-rich nation involved in post-war Gaza, according to two former Israeli officials, who declined to be identified.

Like Israel, the Gulf state opposes Hamas, a US-designated terrorist group that led the Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel that sparked the war. Abu Dhabi views Hamas and other Islamist groups as destabilizing forces. UAE officials have also expressed concern publicly over the war's impact on stability in the Middle East and on efforts towards greater regional integration and economic development.

Asked whether Hamas was aware of proposals discussed by the UAE, Basem Naim, one of the organization's senior officials, told Reuters that after the war, Gaza must be "distinctly Palestinian" and without "foreign interventions". Washington is pushing, alongside mediators Egypt and Qatar, for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Israel and Hamas traded blame in late December for delays in reaching a ceasefire – which both sides had said appeared to be close last month. On Monday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington wanted to see a ceasefire deal concluded in the next two weeks.

Ukraine conducting combat operations in Kursk

KYIV (AFP): Ukraine said Tuesday its forces struck a Russian military "command post" in Russia's Kursk region during "combat operations," while backtracking on a claim it had launched a fresh offensive in the border area.

Russia's army said over the weekend that Kyiv was mounting a "counter-attack" in the region, where Ukraine's forces have held onto a swathe of territory since a shock incursion last August. In an English-language statement, Kyiv's army said it had launched a "high precision" strike near the village of Belaya — south-east of Kyiv-controlled territory — without saying if it had used Western long-range weapons.

An original version of the statement, published by the Ukrainian General Staff on its Telegram account,

said Ukraine had launched "new offensive operations" in the Kursk region. The post was then edited and the reference to a "new offensive" removed.

"This strike is an integral part of the combat operations of units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces, which conduct combat operations" in the Kursk region, the updated statement said. Pro-Kremlin military bloggers have reported a powerful new Ukrainian offensive, but Kyiv had not commented on those reports, only saying in regular daily briefings that fighting in the region was ongoing.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had on Monday also alluded to fighting in the Kursk region in his evening address, stating that Kyiv was "maintaining a buffer zone on Russian territory" and "actively

Pak's HC calls on Maldives President

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's High Commissioner Vice Admiral (R) Faisal Rasul Lodhi on Tuesday called on President of Maldives, Dr. Mohamed Muizzu and presented his credentials to the President.

The President of the Maldives stressed the importance of deep brotherly relations between the two countries and expressed his best wishes. The High Commissioner of Pakistan, Vice Admiral (R) Faisal Rasul Lodhi, presented his credentials to the President of the Republic of Maldives in a traditional and dignified ceremony.

The ceremony was held this morning at the Maldives Headquarters. The High Commissioner was escorted to the Headquarters by the Cultural Band of the Maldives National Defence Force. The Deputy Head of Staff, Zulfarnain Ahmed also accompanied the High Commissioner.

FIA Director sacked

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Director of Counter Terrorism Wing Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Islamabad, Humayun Masood Sandhu, has been removed from his post due to some serious allegations of harassment and misuse of authority.

Humayun Masood Sandhu is facing charges of rape from a female subordinate who claimed that he repeatedly committed the crime and also sent her obscene video messages. The victim has lodged an official complaint at the Federal Ombudsman against Humayun Masood Sandhu, alleging that he multiple times committed her rape.

PHC grants protective bails to four PTI's leaders

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Fahim Wali has approved the protective bail applications of four Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders including Faisal Javeed and MPA Iftikhar Mashwani while directed the federal government to provide details of the cases registered, on Tuesday.

The counsel, Alam Khan Adenzai advocate informed the court that 48 FIRs had been registered against the petitioner, but the details of the FIRs had not been provided to him.

Meanwhile, PHC granted transit bail to two more PTI's workers named Chaudary Bilal and Bani Gala caretaker Rizwan till 28th January. Justice S.M. Attiq Shah observed that

the Chief Justice's court had ordered that those who were from outside the province would approach the relevant court, and asked the counsel whether his clients would appear in the relevant court. The counsel replied that they would appear in the relevant court, but those who were in danger would take precautions.

In the meantime, Justice S.M. Attiq Shah remarked that those who were in danger would not leave the Chief Minister's House anyway. The court approved the protective bail application of Senator Faisal Javed and directed him to appear in the relevant court.

Moreover, PHC sought a response from the federal government and other relevant parties regarding the cases registered against Pakistan PTI Member Provincial Assembly

(MPA) Iftikhar Mashwani. The counsel Ali Zaman advocate, informed the court that the petitioner is a MPA and that cases had been registered against him, but they had not been provided with any information. The counsel requested the court to direct the parties to provide details of the cases registered against the petitioner. The court, after hearing the arguments, granted protective bail to Iftikhar Mashwani until January 28 and sought a report on the cases registered against him.

Senator Faisal Javed, while talking to the media, said that we all meet in court as scattered individuals, and Pakistan has set a world record for political revenge. He said that the founder chairman has been booked in multiple cases, and he will be acquitted in all cases.

PHC stops recruitment on 28 vacant posts at KTH

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Fahim Wali has stopped final decision regarding interview process scheduled for 28 vacant positions of Trainee Registrar and Registrar at the Khyber Teaching Hospital as well as restrained respondents from any adverse actions against the petitioners, on Tuesday.

The court issued the stay order in response to a writ petition filed by 28 doctors, including Dr. Sakhiwat Shah, who are currently working as Trainee Registrars and Experimental Registrars at the MTI.

The petitioners' counsel

Barrister Amir Javed argued that the petitioners were appointed as Trainee Registrars and Experimental Registrars at the MTI for a period of two years in 2021, and have been performing their duties satisfactorily.

The counsel stated that the Board of Governors (BOG) had amended the rules to extend the period of appointment from two years to three years, but later reverted to the original two-year period, by the Chairman Nowsherwan Barki which is a clear violation of the petitioners' rights.

The counsel argued that the BOG's decision to re-advertise the positions was illegal and would result in the termination of the petitioners' services, which would cause them irrepara-

ble harm.

The counsel further argued that the BOG's decision was motivated by the desire to accommodate a favorite candidate, and that the decision was taken without following the proper procedure.

The petitioners have requested the court to declare the BOG's decision to re-advertise the positions as null and void, and to restrain the respondents from taking any adverse action against them.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice S.M. Attique Shah and Justice Fahim Wali, issued a stay order against the interview process and restrained the respondents, including the Secretary Health and the BOG, from taking any adverse action against the petitioners.

Three tribal elders arrested

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: The Kurram district administration has taken decisive action against three prominent tribal elders, who failed to sign the peace agreement.

The administration has arrested the elders and vowed to take all necessary steps to maintain peace and order in the region. The tribal leaders Syed Rahman, Saifullah, and Karim Khan have not yet signed the peace agreement.

They emphasised their commitment to ensuring

the implementation of the decisions made by the Apex Committee and the provincial government. Additionally, cases have been registered against those involved in blocking roads by staging a sit-in outside the Parachinar Press Club. The administration further confirmed that all routes will be cleared to ensure smooth transportation. Earlier, two militants involved in the attack on Deputy Commissioner Kurram were arrested.

According to sources, the police officials said that the militants were apprehended during a crackdown

in Kurram. Sources revealed that the arrested militants have also been nominated in the FIR of the firing incident on the DC.

Earlier, the Additional Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued a notification imposing Section 144 in Kurram district for a period of two months. The decision comes amid concerns over attempts by terrorists to disrupt the peace agreement in the area.

According to the notification, authorities will launch a crackdown against those responsible for destabilising peace in Kurram.