

Imran files contempt plea
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has filed a contempt plea against the superintendent of Adiala Jail in the Islamabad High Court (IHC). As per details, the petition, filed through lawyer Faisal Chaudhry, alleged that the jail authorities failed to comply with a court order allowing a meeting with Bushra Bibi.



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Pakistan's economy ready to take off: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the country's economy was set to take off following a year of dedicated efforts by the government's economic team to restore stability. He highlighted that the financial sector had overcome significant challenges and was now on a path to sustained recovery and progress.

"Pakistan's journey from darkness to light in a year is the result of a collective effort," the prime minister said while addressing an event held here to celebrate Youm-e-Tameer-o-Taraqqi. He noted that the government successfully engaged with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to secure a \$7 billion, three-year program in September last year, which prevented the country from defaulting.

Although the nation faced challenges due to the IMF's tough conditions, he emphasized that the economy had now stabilized and was ready to move toward sustained progress and development. He said the salaried class had to suffer the most due to the IMF programme as it was now collectively paying Rs 300 billion taxes. He also paid special tribute to the salaried class for contributing such high taxes.

The prime minister stated that the inflation rate had been reduced from 40 percent to as low as 2.4 percent in January 2025, leading to a decline in the policy rate. He urged the business community to support the government's efforts to stabilize the econo-

my, emphasizing that their involvement was crucial. He assured that the government would fully engage the business community in the policy-making process, as economic growth could not be achieved without consulting the private sector.

He emphasized that the government was actively working to curb smuggling across the borders. "By legally exporting sugar to Afghanistan, the government secured \$211 million in foreign exchange," the prime minister said, adding that this valuable revenue would have otherwise ended up in the hands of smugglers. He acknowledged the dedicated and sincere efforts of the Pakistan Army and law enforcement agencies in helping to curb smuggling activities across the country.

Regarding the government's privatization policy, the prime minister stated, "We are now moving towards a massive privatization process, as the government has no role in business activities." The prime minister said that terrorism had almost been eliminated from the country in 2018, however, due to bad policies of the subsequent government, the menace had resurfaced in the country.

"Without uprooting terrorism, the country can not attain the targets of growth and development," he added. The country, he said needed peace, stability, unity, prosperity and economic growth for which people belonging to all segments of the society would have to work together. The prime minister said he wanted to leave behind a legacy that set the country on the path of sustainable

development.

He also expressed the confidence that the government's recently launched "Uraan Pakistan" programme would become successful and achieve all its set targets. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on the occasion stated that the incumbent government's prudent policies had successfully reduced the inflation rate from a steep 40 percent to 2.4 percent. Additionally, the policy rate was lowered to 12 percent, easing the government's debt servicing burden, he said and emphasized that for the first time in the country's history, the government was rigorously implementing structural reforms, right sizing and pension reforms.

In his welcome address, Planning Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan's economy lagged behind in the region due to lack of consistency and continuity of policies. He expressed his confidence that under Uraan Pakistan programme, the country would achieve the export target of \$100 billion in five years. He said to achieve this target, the export-led industry must have to work round the clock. He also proposed to exempt the export-led industry from national holidays.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the prime minister sacrificed his politics for the sake of the country. He said the business community always contributed and supported the government in the development journey of the country. President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Atif Ikram Sheikh also spoke on the occasion.

Imran highlights his tribulations in letter to COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Just days after his first letter, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former prime minister Imran Khan has written another missive to Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir.

In the letter, he highlighted that the country's biggest political party was being "targeted". "I wrote an open letter to the Army Chief (you) with sincere intentions for the betterment of the country and the nation, aiming to bridge the growing divide between the military and the public. However, the response was extremely irresponsible and unserious," Imran Khan said in the letter.

He said he was the former prime minister and the leader of the "country's most popular and largest political party", and he had dedicated his entire life to bringing global recognition to the nation. "My 55 years of public life since the 1970s and my 30 years of earnings are fully transparent. My life and death are solely tied to Pakistan," the missive read.

He described his concerns regarding the army's image and the possible effects of the growing rift between the public and the army which he cited as the reason of writing this letter. In the missive, he alleged that the government was brought by manipulating poll results through pre-poll rigging. "The authorities passed the 26th Constitutional Amendment through parliament to control the judiciary and Peca [Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act] to silence dissent," he said.

Imran noted that political instability and the "might is right" policy plunged the country's economy into chaos. Referring to his imprisonment, he claimed that he had been placed in solitary confinement and deprived of sunlight for 20 days.

Bannu police foil terror plans; Cops martyred in attack

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR, HANGU: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Police once again displayed exceptional courage and vigilance in the face of growing security threats, as they thwarted an attempted bombing in Hangu and engaged in a fierce gun battle with terrorists in Bannu, resulting in the martyrdom of two brave officers.

In Hangu, IED blast targeted the Daaaba Police Checkpost on Toraware Road. While details of the damage are still emerging, no major casualties have been reported. In another alarming incident, explosive materials were discovered near the DPO Office in Char Bagh Ground, an area that also houses the residences of the Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of Hangu. However, due to the swift response of the Hangu Police and bomb disposal unit, the explosives were safely defused, preventing a potential tragedy.

Meanwhile, in Bannu, terrorists launched a brutal

overnight attack on Police Post Fateh Khel (PS Mandan) using heavy weaponry.

The intense gunfight lasted for several hours as police forces fought valiantly to repel the assailants. Tragically, two police constables embraced martyrdom, while several others sustained injuries during the confrontation.

These incidents highlight the persistent security threats in KP, but they also underscore the resilience and bravery of the province's police force. The KP Police continue to serve on the frontlines, risking their lives to protect citizens and maintain peace in the region.

Their sacrifices and dedication remain a beacon of hope in the ongoing fight against terrorism. Authorities have launched investigations into these attacks, with security heightened across sensitive locations to prevent further incidents. The people of KP stand united in support of their police force, honoring the sacrifices of the fallen

heroes who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Meanwhile, the funeral was attended by the Regional Police Officer (RPO) Bannu Region, District Police Officer (DPO) Bannu, Deputy Commissioner, police officials, and the families of the martyrs. A smartly turned-out contingent of Bannu Police presented a salute to the martyrs, while floral wreaths were placed on their coffins as a mark of respect.

Speaking on the occasion, RPO Bannu Region Imran Shahid stated that the martyred police officers are national heroes who sacrificed their lives for the safety and stability of the country. He assured that their sacrifices would not go in vain.

He further emphasized that cowardly terrorist attacks cannot weaken their resolve. He reaffirmed that the morale of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police remains high and that they will crush the nefarious designs of terrorists with full force.

Gohar emphasises economic stability at Swabi rally

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Stressing the need to address economic challenges being faced by the country, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said on Saturday that Pakistan's economic stability is interlinked with political stability.

The PTI chairman made the remarks while addressing the party's power show in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Swabi. The former ruling party is observing a "Balck Day" today against alleged rigging in the general election last year. PTI claimed that their mandate was stolen during elections on the same day last year while the ruling coalition denies the allegations.

A number of PTI leaders and workers have been arrested in Multan, Muzaffarabad and other cities as the Imran Khan-founded party held rallies nationwide on the first anniversary of last year's controversial elections.

Addressing the Swabi Jalsa, Barrister Gohar reiterated his party's claim saying: "We had won elections in Punjab. Our mandate was stolen in the darkness of the night [during the polls]." Speaking on the occasion, the PTI chairman stressed the need for the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. He said: "There will be political stability if the judiciary is independent."

Moving on to the stalled talks between the PTI and the ruling coalition, he said

that the former ruling party entered the negotiation process in light of the direction of the incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan. "Imran Khan directed to initiate talks for the sake of the country," he added.

PTI backed out of the dialogue process last month as the government did not accept their key demands about setting up judicial commissions to probe the May 9, 2023 incidents and the Nov 26, 2024 police crackdown against its workers in Islamabad.

For his part, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's firebrand chief minister, Ali Amin Gandapur, warned that if his party decided to take revenge then the ruling coalition "won't be able to bear it".

Prince Karim's funeral held at Lisbon

LISBON: Funeral of Prince Karim al-Hussaini Aga Khan IV, the 49th hereditary Imam of the Ismaili community, was held at Lisbon on Saturday. He passed away at the age of 88. He will be buried in Aswan, Egypt, tomorrow. Pakistan is observing a national day of mourning on Saturday, with flags at half-mast.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb attended the funeral, conveying condolences from Pakistan's leadership. He also praised the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) for its contributions to Pakistan.

Following Prince Karim's passing, Prince Rahim al-Hussaini Aga Khan was named the 50th hereditary Imam of the Ismaili community. Born in Switzerland, Prince Karim grew up in Nairobi and graduated from Harvard with a degree in Islamic History. He became Imam at 20, succeeding his grandfather in 1957. Renowned for his welfare efforts in Asia and Africa through AKDN, he received 44 international awards, including Nishan-i-Imtiaz (1970) and Nishan-i-Pakistan (1983) for his contributions to Pakistan.

The late spiritual leader of the Ismaili community left behind three sons, Rahim Aga Khan, Aly Muhammad Aga Khan, and Hussain Aga Khan, and a daughter, Zahra Aga Khan. Karim was born in Switzerland and spent his childhood in Nairobi and graduated from Harvard University with a BA Honors Degree in Islamic History. — Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing a ceremony organized in connection with Youm-e-Tameer-o-Taraqqi.

Pakistan's progress unstoppable: Tarar

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture, Attaullah Tarar, stated that those who once prayed for Pakistan's economic default are now ashamed, as the public has completely rejected the politics of lies propagated by the "Tehrik-e-Inteshar."

Speaking at a public gathering in NA-127 on the "Day of Development and Progress," on Saturday, he emphasized that while these opponents will continue to complain, the government will persist in its journey of progress and public service. He highlighted that under Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif's leadership, the country's economy is on the path to recovery. He declared that the entire nation is celebrating progress and that no force can halt Pakistan's development.

The federal minister reiterated PML-N's commitment to public welfare, stating that all available resources are being utilized to improve the quality of life for the people. He recalled how, upon assuming power, the government promised to transform Pakistan into an economic powerhouse, and now, after one year in office, the nation is witnessing development and prosperity.

He criticized the previous government, asserting that due to the incompetence of

the "Instability Party," Pakistan was on the verge of default. However, the current government, without prioritizing political gains, took decisive steps to rescue the country from economic collapse. He credited PM Shehbaz Sharif's leadership for steering Pakistan away from default and towards development and economic stability.

He highlighted that international financial institutions have acknowledged Pakistan's economic recovery, with improvements such as an increase in exports compared to imports, a significant reduction in the trade deficit, and inflation dropping to its lowest level in 6.5 years.

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SWABI: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur addressing PTI public gathering.



LAHORE: Acting President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani addressing at the closing ceremony of 1st Joint CPA Asia & South-East Asia Regional Conference.

Even PTI MNAs, MPAs ignored protest call: Azma Bokhari

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that the Swabi rally was nothing more than a series of inflammatory speeches, as the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been subjected to nothing but turmoil and decline over the past 12 years.

Today, the people of Pakistan are celebrating progress and development, while a particular political faction is observing a "Black Day." This party has nothing left except lamentation. Despite ruling Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for years, they have not provided a single welfare project to the people—only corruption and inflation. She expressed these views during a press conference at DGPR. She remarked that in the past, conspiracies were hatched against state institutions, and political opponents were subjected to vendettas. However, today, under the leadership of Maryam Nawaz, Punjab's people are receiving genuine relief. Punjab's students have been given scholarships, discounts on electricity bills, the "Khidmat Card", and the "Minority Card" for religious minorities. Numerous public welfare projects have been launched in Punjab,

while a certain political party is only fixated on complaints and despair, spreading pessimism among the people, she added.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz will also provide scholarships to students from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, whereas a particular group recklessly used state resources for the Swabi rally, the minister said and highlighted the grand event at Gaddafi Stadium, emphasizing that children need healthy recreational activities—not petrol bombs. She stated that while Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz personally oversees security arrangements at the stadium, in the past, such venues were exploited for personal political gains. She stressed that sports fields should be active to provide young people with positive engagement opportunities.

Azma Bokhari further challenged Ali Amin Gandapur to disclose what "Tehreek-e-Fasad" has done for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The PML-N government seeks the development of all provinces, but some individuals are misusing provincial resources for personal gains. She reiterated that no one responded to

the PTI founder's call—not even their own MNAs and MPAs—because the public has no interest in their protests and sit-ins.

She also questioned how those who claim the national elections were rigged are accepting the results in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The truth is that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has accomplished in just one year what many governments fail to achieve in five. Under the "Nigebhan Ramzan Package," ten thousand rupees will be provided to deserving families, with the registration deadline set for February 15. This assistance will be delivered directly to the beneficiaries' homes. She clarified that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz formulates policies for all deserving individuals, not for any specific party. All arrangements with banks have been finalized, and payments can be cashed at any bank.

Azma Bokhari further stated that while global institutions confirm improvements in Pakistan's economy, certain elements are engaged in negative propaganda. When asked about the Governor of Punjab, she remarked that he is always disgruntled and declined further comment.

Road Safety Committee launches crackdown

F.P. Report

KARACHI: On the directives of Sindh Senior Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon, the Road Safety Committee continues its crackdown on traffic violations.

As part of the operation against overloading, speeding, and standard commercial vehicles, the committee inspected 33 vehicles, issued challans to 20, and took 4 into custody. A total fine of Rs. 101,400 was imposed on violators of road safety regulations.

Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that the committee is conducting surprise inspections across the province to curb traffic violations.

He emphasized that traffic law violations pose a significant threat to human lives, and the Sindh government is taking strict action against offenders.

He further stated that overloading, speeding, and unfit vehicles will not be tolerated on the roads. All commercial vehicles must comply with safety regulations, and violators will face strict legal action.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that operations will continue to regulate traffic, prevent accidents, and ensure strict enforcement of road safety laws.

Providing interest-free loans better than charity: Tessori

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori has emphasized that providing interest-free loans is a far better approach than giving charity, as it empowers individuals to break free from poverty.

According to a statement today, he asserted that we can eradicate poverty from our province and city through sustainable efforts. He expressed these views while addressing a fundraising event organized by Akhuwat at the Governor House. Governor Sindh praised the noble cause behind the event and lauded Akhuwat's administration for their selfless services to the needy.

He highlighted that Akhuwat is serving the community through interest-free loans, education, healthcare, and various other welfare projects, urging philanthropists to support this mission. He further stated that under Governor's Initiatives, 950,000 ration bags have been distributed among the underprivileged, and 50,000 students are receiving free advanced IT education at the Governor House.

Emphasizing the importance of religious and moral values, he remarked that helping others is a fundamental teaching of our faith and ethics. He acknowledged that the government alone cannot tackle all challenges, stressing that welfare organizations and philanthropists play a crucial role in societal progress.

24 arrested for kite flying

LAHORE (APP): Dolphin Squad's operations against kite flying, one-wheeling, and firing continued.

According to the Dolphin spokesperson, a total of 24 suspects were arrested from different areas of the provincial capital. One-wheelers were arrested from Defence, Mall Road, Jail Road, Band Road, Ferozepur Road, and other areas.

Gilani stresses regional cooperation at CPA conference

LAHORE (APP): Acting President of Pakistan Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani has emphasized the urgency of tackling climate change and fostering regional cooperation to ensure a sustainable and inclusive future.

Speaking at the closing session of the 2-day first joint regional conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Asia and Southeast Asia at the Punjab Assembly on Saturday, he highlighted the role of parliaments as engines of change in addressing global challenges.

Gilani underscored the importance of legislation in empowering individuals and strengthening societies, while access to quality healthcare and education remains fundamental to national prosperity. He pointed out that South and Southeast Asia continue to grapple with issues such as poverty and inequality, which necessitate regional collaboration and shared responsibility. He particularly stressed the need to strengthen local governments, arguing that decentralization enhances democracy, improves public service delivery, and ensures

better accountability.

Reflecting on his own political journey, Gilani noted that he is a product of the local government system, having held positions as Speaker of the National Assembly, Chairman of the Senate, Prime Minister, and now Acting President. He thanked CPA Secretary-General Stephen Twigg for organizing the conference and praised Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for their contributions to its success.

Gilani reiterated that the challenges of climate change, pollution, technological advancements, and inclusive socio-economic development transcend national borders and require joint strategies for effective solutions.

He also highlighted the impact of rapid technological changes, including artificial intelligence and social media, cautioning against risks like misinformation and cybersecurity threats. He called for responsible use of technology through legislative oversight and regional cooperation. Additionally, he reaffirmed the role of lawmakers in

bridging differences, fostering resilience, and ensuring sustainable governance that promotes equality and social justice.

The acting president expressed confidence that the "Lahore Declaration" would serve as a guiding principle for strengthening parliamentary collaboration and translating discussions into meaningful legislative actions. Concluding his address, he urged delegates to take forward the spirit of innovation and partnership, ensuring that parliaments continue to serve as pillars of progress and stability.

The conference saw participation from over 100 distinguished delegates, including 12 speakers, four deputy speakers, and representatives from 22 legislatures across Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. Discussions focused on pressing issues such as climate change, pollution, technological advancements, and inclusive socio-economic development.

Earlier, CPA Secretary-General Stephen Twigg welcomed the participants and commended Acting President Gilani for his leadership in fostering regional dialogue.

Solar system only solution to address energy crisis: Kundi



ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday emphasized that solar system was only solution to address the energy shortage in Pakistan and the country was going toward solarization in this regard.

Addressing the Knox mega mind-2025 ceremony as the chief guest, the governor lauded the efforts of Knox one of leading solar inventor company's management and organizers on arranging successful event here and appreciated the Knox for producing the standard product in a shape of inventors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that the country was confronting the energy crisis and the common man

could not afford the electricity high tariffs as a result, the people were involved in power pilferage. Solar energy was so cheap and affordable as compared to hydal one, he added.

Faisal Kundi said massive number of consumers were installing the solar system at their homes to use cheap solar energy till evening and reiterated the solarization was only solution to power shortfall in the country.

He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was rich with natural resources including oil, gas, minerals, and reservoirs as this province was one of biggest producer of oil as well. "The climate of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is more ideal for solar energy

production comparatively to Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)," he added.

He expressed the hope that Knox would be unveiled itself one of the best solar company in the country.

The governor welcomed the Chinese delegation who attended the ceremony here, stating that China was investing in energy sector and also wishing for peace, prosperous, and developed Pakistan.

On the occasion, Governor Gilgit Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah appreciated the Knox solar company and hoping that it would launch its product in GB as well.

Knox management had presented souvenirs to

Lanjar takes notice of citizen's death in police custody

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar has taken strict notice of the death of a citizen Waqas at Preedy Police Station's lockup.

According to a statement by Sindh Home Ministry today, Lanjar ordered an investigation into the incident and sought a detailed report from DIG South.

He said that an inquiry must be conducted to determine how the citizen died in police custody. He instructed the authorities to ensure transparent investigation along with furnishing reports. He said: "If anyone is found involved, the law will take its course. "Protecting the lives and property of citizens is the police's responsibility. The home minister warned that if any negligence by the police in discharging their duties is found, strict action will be taken.

Meanwhile, Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar has commended SSP Kandhkot-Kashmore and his team for their successful operation in the Katcha area of Karampur, which led to the safe recovery of two hostages. Acknowledging the team's dedication and efficient efforts, the minister appreciated their performance and congratulated them for the operation's success.

11,236 proclaimed criminals arrested in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): In line with Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's Safe Punjab Vision and on the directions of Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, Punjab Police is continuing its crackdown against dangerous criminals and proclaimed criminals.

Giving details, the Punjab police spokesperson said that 11,236 proclaimed criminals wanted in serious incidents were arrested in Lahore, Punjab, during the current year. The arrested proclaimed criminals include 3,442 in Category A and 7,794 in Category B. Punjab Police also arrested 4677 court absconders. The arrested criminals include 918 of category A and 3759 of category B. During the operations, 2724 target offenders (habitual criminals) were also arrested, including 1044 of category A, 1680 of category B, and 6 declared criminals wanted for serious crimes were arrested from abroad and transferred to Pakistan. The spokesperson of Punjab Police further said that 2373 proclaimed offenders were arrested in the provincial capital Lahore in one month. These include 1914 court absconders and 1036 target offenders (habitual criminals).

Entry of dumpers has been banned in Karachi during day

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to impose a ban on the entry of dumpers into Karachi during the daytime. As per the announcement, dumpers will only be allowed to enter the city between 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM. This decision aims to reduce the increasing number of road accidents caused by heavy vehicles and improve traffic flow in the city.

Following the directives of Chief Minister Sindh, Chief Secretary Sindh Asif Hyder Shah convened an emergency meeting to discuss traffic-related issues. The meeting was attended by Inspector General Sindh Police, Commissioner Karachi, Additional IG Karachi, Secretary Transport, DIG Traffic, and other officials. During the meeting, it was decided that all large vehicles and their drivers will undergo physical verification to ensure compliance with safety regulations. Additionally, all vehicles operating in Karachi must obtain a QR Code-certified certificate from the Transport Department.

The Sindh Solid Waste Management Board has been instructed to shift its operations to nighttime within three months. Furthermore, the Chief Secretary directed secretary transport to inspect all Karachi Water and Sewerage Board water tankers within a month to ensure their safety and compliance with traffic laws. Chief Secretary Sindh also emphasized the importance of road safety for motorcyclists, instructing traffic police to strictly enforce helmet-wearing rules.

He directed the Department of Information to launch an extensive media awareness campaign on traffic regulations. In light of increasing traffic accidents, the Chief Secretary stressed that strict enforcement of traffic laws is now a necessity. He also ordered that

with safety regulations. Additionally, all vehicles operating in Karachi must obtain a QR Code-certified certificate from the Transport Department.

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reckless drivers should not only be fined but also face FIRs to ensure accountability. Highlighting the major causes of accidents, he stated that the primary reason is the lack of enforcement of laws regarding heavy traffic.

To address this, the Sindh government has decided to launch a Vehicle Inspection and Certification System (VICS) across the province. The Chief Secretary instructed the Transport Department to expedite the implementation of this system. During the meeting, it was revealed that 65% of vehicles in Karachi are motorcycles, and 55% of all road accidents involve motorcyclists.

In response, the Chief Secretary directed the DIG Traffic to improve the traffic situation within a month and ensure the strict implementation of road safety regulations. Additionally, he instructed that traffic fines should be increased fourfold to deter violations and enhance road discipline.

CM leading vision for improving environmental sustainability

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is leading the province's vision for combating climate change and advancing environmental sustainability.

Addressing a panel discussion on Climate Change and Sustainable Cities: Legislative Action for Clean Air and Resilient Urban Living at the CPA regional conference held at the Punjab Assembly on Saturday, she urged col-

lective efforts to protect human lives and ensure a sustainable future.

The senior minister expressed gratitude to all national and international delegates for their participation and congratulated the Speaker of the Punjab Assembly for organizing the conference. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif initiated work on the environmental legal framework, carbon credit, Green Punjab Program, climate change resilience, modern

green technology, and green mechanisms soon after assuming office.

The government's efforts marks a paradigm shift in environmental policy, and following successful implementations in two districts, comprehensive solid waste management planning is now being extended to all districts. Environmental policymaking was a challenge, but under CM Maryam Nawaz's leadership, a climate change resilience policy was formulated within a year.

Sherry stresses importance of climate awareness

KARACHI (APP): Veteran politician and climate advocate Sherry Rehman stressed the immediate need for national and provincial harmony to address the growing challenges posed by climate change.

Speaking at the 16th Karachi Literature Festival session on "Creating Resilience through Climate Change Education" here Saturday, Sherry Rehman highlighted the significance of understanding the climate crisis from both domestic and international perspectives.

Referring to the devastating floods that affected 33 million people and submerged one-third of the country, she called for innovative solutions with a special focus on engaging youth in these efforts.

"Climate change is accelerating rapidly, with rising temperatures posing unprecedented challenges," she warned. "The flood crisis has impacted not just rural areas but urban centers, as well, leaving millions vulnerable and creat-

ing a dire need for strategic intervention."

She emphasized that while climate change and environmental issues are closely related, they are distinct and should be addressed accordingly.

Additionally, she expressed concern over the ongoing degradation of agricultural lands as they are consumed by the encroaching sea, which is leading to severe environmental damage and threatening the livelihoods of many.

Sherry Rehman also highlighted the lack of Urdu-language educational resources as a significant barrier to understanding and addressing these critical issues. "It is imperative that we provide essential learning materials in Urdu to ensure that these concepts are accessible to everyone, especially in rural and underserved communities," she said.

In a separate session, A Journey of Friendship and Political Activism, Sherry Rehman was joined by

renowned historian Victoria Schofield for an engaging conversation about her life and career. Reflecting on her transition from journalism to politics, Sherry Rehman stated, "I never thought I would move from journalism to politics in this way. Even now, I still love writing."

She fondly recalled her relationship with the late Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, saying, "I was the one who introduced Benazir to blueberries, while Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari introduced me to the iPhone. Benazir was always eager to learn and constantly striving for knowledge."

She paid rich tributes to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's unwavering resolve, quoting him: "I will not compromise." She explained how Benazir Bhutto embraced this principle, inspiring others to follow in her footsteps. "Her life teaches us that we must step out of our comfort zones to grow and make a difference," she added.

KATI shocked over loss of lives in traffic accidents

KARACHI (PPI): The President of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Junaid Naqi, has expressed deep concern over the increasing number of fatal accidents caused by dumpers and other heavy vehicles in Karachi, particularly near Korangi Crossing. He stated that the unchecked movement of heavy traffic in the city has become a persistent threat to citizens, yet the relevant authorities have failed to address the issue effectively.

According to a statement by KATI today, referring to a tragic accident near Korangi Crossing, in which three people lost their lives after being hit by a dumper, Naqi stated that such incidents are not mere accidents but rather the

result of gross negligence by the responsible authorities. He urged Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Transport Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, and Inspector General of Sindh Police Ghulam Nabi Memon to take immediate notice of the situation and implement stringent measures to regulate the movement of heavy vehicles.

"We are witnessing these incidents almost every day, where dumpers, trucks, and other heavy vehicles recklessly take innocent lives. The government must designate specific timings and routes for heavy traffic to prevent such tragedies," Naqi demanded.

Highlighting the alarming frequency of such accidents, he pointed out that 33 people have already lost

their lives to heavy vehicles this year alone, yet the authorities remain silent spectators. He criticized the traffic police and other relevant departments for their negligence, warning that if immediate measures are not taken, the number of such incidents will only rise.

Naqi emphasized that the Korangi Industrial Area is the backbone of Karachi's economy, yet there are no effective safety measures in place on its roads. "We have repeatedly called for a comprehensive policy to regulate heavy traffic in Karachi, but our concerns continue to be ignored," he said. He warned that if the government and concerned institutions fail to address the issue promptly, the business community will be left with no choice but to protest.



World Cancer Day observed at KTH

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Oncology Department at Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH), Peshawar, on Saturday marked World Cancer Day with a special event highlighting the importance of patient-centered care.

This year's theme, "United by Unique," emphasized by the World Health Organization (WHO), underscores the uniqueness of each cancer patient's journey and the need for tailored treatment approaches.

Established in February 2022, the Oncology Department at KTH has made remarkable progress in just three years.

The department has provided outpatient services to

over 15,000 patients and admitted more than 2,000 for specialized care. Additionally, more than 5,000 chemotherapy sessions have been administered free of cost, ensuring access to essential cancer treatments for financially struggling patients.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Muhammad Tariq, Head of the Oncology Department, highlighted the department's achievements. "KTH Oncology is the only postgraduate training center in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) dedicated to preparing future oncologists and cancer specialists. We serve as a major referral center for both hematological and solid organ malignancies," he said.

Dr. Tariq further noted that KTH Oncology has been a pioneer in introducing modern cancer treatments, including immunotherapy and targeted therapies.

The department is actively engaged in research, with four ongoing clinical trials, and has gained international recognition, with Dr. Tariq himself receiving four international travel grants for his contributions to oncology research.

A key aspect of the department's work has been the emphasis on multidisciplinary collaboration. Since its inception, KTH Oncology has conducted 185 multidisciplinary tumor board meetings, the highest number in KP, to ensure

comprehensive and evidence-based cancer care.

While celebrating these achievements, Dr. Tariq urged the government to extend the Sehat Card program to the Oncology Department at KTH.

"The financial burden of cancer treatment is overwhelming for many patients. Inclusion of oncology services in the Sehat Card program would be a significant step toward ensuring equitable healthcare access for all," he emphasized.

World Cancer Day at KTH served as a reminder of the ongoing battle against cancer and the need for continued support, research, and policy reforms to enhance patient care in the region.



PESHAWAR: Workers of Pakistan Muslim League hold Youm-e-Tashakur at Qila Bala Hisar.

PHC approached against hike in toll taxes on motorways

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A writ petition has been filed in the Peshawar High Court against the recent increase in toll taxes on the Motorway.

The petition was filed by lawyers Asif Ali Shah and Syed Bilal Jan, along with other lawyers, naming the federal government, Ministry of Communications, and National Highway

Authority as respondents.

In the petition, the petitioners stated that they are residents of Charsadda and practicing lawyers in Peshawar. They commute daily to the Peshawar High Court for court cases.

The petitioners argued that the toll tax for Charsadda Motorway was increased from Rs30 to Rs40 last year, and again from Rs40 to Rs60 this year.

Furthermore, the respondents issued a notification on January 31, increasing the tax by 100% for vehicles without an M-tag, making the tax exceed Rs110.

The petitioners contended that this action is unconstitutional and against public interest. They argued that the increase in toll tax is a violation of citizens' right to free movement. Additionally, the petitioners stated that the

respondents did not consult the public before increasing the toll tax, making the increase illegal.

The petitioners requested the court to restrain the respondents from collecting the increased toll tax until a final decision is made on the petition. They also requested the court to declare the increase in toll tax as unconstitutional and against public interest.



PESHAWAR: Peoples standing in a hotel after cylinder blast near Khyber Teaching Hospital.

12 injured in gas cylinder blast

PESHAWAR (APP): A gas cylinder explosion at a hotel near Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH) here left 12 people injured on Saturday.

Rescue 1122 officials stated that as soon as they received information about the blast, ambulances and fire vehicles were dispatched to the scene to carry out rescue operations.

Rescue 1122 further confirmed that firefighters quickly brought the fire under control.

Hospital sources said the injured are being provided medical treatment.

40 baggers held during crackdown

PESHAWAR (APP): District Administration has arrested forty more baggers from various areas of the city during ongoing crackdown here on Saturday.

The arrested baggers include 17 women, seven men and 16 children. All the arrested baggers have been shifted to Zamung Kor where there are being provided free assistance and help.

The crackdown has been supervised by Commissioner Peshawar Division and its ambit has been extended suburban areas of provincial metropolis.

FG's one year performance highly lauded

PESHAWAR (APP): People from cross section of society here Saturday highly lauded the one year performance of the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Govt that put the economy back on track of speedy progress and development.

Ikhtair Wali, PMLN KP Information Secretary said the Govt has saved the country from an imminent economic default and bring stability to the economy by significantly reducing the current account deficit, increasing exports to 30.64billion dollars from 27.72billion dollars and record remittances sent by overseas Pakistanis that showed their overwhelming confidence in the Prime Minister's leadership.

He said Uran Pakistan mega project was launched for socioeconomic empowerment of youth besides universal health coverage and new Gwadar airport was inaugurated.

Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem of Swabi University said that saving Rs238 billion after suspension of the expansive agreement with IPPs and improvement of credit rating of Pakistan was big

achievement of the Govt. He said Pakistan was facing challenge of energy shortfall since long and conversion of 27000 tubewells on solar energy would help increase per acres agriculture production besides save power energy immensely.

Dr Naeem said that bringing inflation down to record below three percent and increase in stock exchange and BISP stipend to Rs13500 this year will benefit millions of Pakistanis.

Former Ambassador Manzoorul Haq praised the foreign policy of Shehbaz Sharif Govt that successfully organized the SCO conference at Islamabad.

He said Kashmir dispute was boldly highlighted by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at UNGA and restored confidence of investors.

Retired Information Officer Misal Khan, senior economist Sumbal Riaz, ex PST teacher Riazul Haq and property dealer Nasir Khan besides Mazim Bahadar Khan highly appreciated the one year performance of the Govt that raised stature of the country high.

MPA file writ petition

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Member Provincial Assembly and ANP leader Nisar Baaz, has filed a writ petition in the Peshawar High Court (PHC) against the provincial government for discriminatory treatment in the allocation of funds.

In the petition, filed through Sultan Muhammad Khan advocate, the provincial government and other relevant departments have been made parties. The petition argues that opposition parties have already filed a writ petition challenging the unfair distribution of funds, which is currently pending in the Peshawar High Court.

Therefore, the petitioner requests that they also be made a party to this petition, as they are an elected MPA from constituency 22, Bajaur, and are affiliated with the opposition. The provincial government is allegedly discriminating against the petitioner in the allocation of funds in Bajaur, which is equivalent to discriminatory treatment against the people of this constituency.

TikToker found dead

PESHAWAR (APP): A female TikToker, identified as Seema Gul aka Psycho Arbab, was found dead in a residential flat on Warsak Road here Saturday.

Police said, the body of TikToker Psycho Arbab, a resident of Kohat, was discovered in her apartment here and was immediately shifted to the hospital for a post-mortem examination.

The police have registered a case based on a complaint filed by the deceased's brother and have launched an investigation into the cause of death.

Initial reports suggest that the TikToker may have died due to drug use or natural causes. However, further investigations are ongoing to determine the exact cause of her death.

PESHAWAR (APP): In a significant crackdown on cruelty against animal, Peshawar Police arrested three individuals involved in the illegal and inhumane practice of ear cropping of dog puppies for business purposes. The arrests were made during raids in the Gul Bahar area following public complaints and social media reports about the cruel practice.

The suspects identified as Niaz Ali, his son Imtiaz Ali, and his son-in-law Badal, were taken into custody for allegedly chopping off the ears of newly born puppies.

The operation was conducted under the directives of SP City, Syed Talal Ali Shah, who acted swiftly after getting notice of public complaints.

The arrests have been widely praised by animal lovers and rights activists, who hope this action will deter others involved in such heinous acts.

Dr. Ayeza Haider, Focal Person of the Pakistan Animal Rights Advocacy Group, commended SP Peshawar and the raiding team for their efforts.

Dr. Haider revealed that she had raised concerns about this practice nearly a

year ago, reaching out to the Peshawar District Administration and the Deputy Commissioner.

She also shared evidence, including photos and videos, with the District Director of Livestock, highlighting the brutal treatment of puppies. "This practice is not only cruel but also a violation of the colonial-era 'Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act', 1890," Dr. Haider stated. She further expressed alarm over reports that sick or unsold puppies are often discarded in drainage canals to die.

A local source, who requested anonymity for

fear of retaliation, explained that ear cropping is used to deceive buyers.

Stray puppies are taken from their mothers, fed for a few days, and then subjected to ear cropping to pass them off as the highly sought-after Kuchi breed from Afghanistan.

The Kuchi breed, known for its aggressive nature and fighting prowess, is in high demand among dog enthusiasts and those involved in illegal dog fighting. Dealers often post images of cropped puppies on social media to attract potential buyers.

A visit to the Changar Abad area near Gulbahar revealed a thriving underground trade in animals. Small kennels housing dogs of various breeds, from mature adults to puppies, were found within cramped residential spaces. For a mere Rs. 500 per puppy, dealers offer ear cropping services on demand.

"The arrests have brought a sense of relief to animal lovers, who hope this marks the beginning of a broader crackdown on such practices. The police action has been hailed as a significant step toward protecting innocent animals and enforcing laws against cruelty.

As the investigation continues, authorities are urged to take further measures to eradicate this brutal trade and hold all perpetrators accountable.



PESHAWAR: Principal City Girls College Rabia Sikandar presenting a shield to PTT's MNA Shandana Gulzar.

Snowless winter increases risks of drought, early summer

PESHAWAR (APP): A drastic shortage of winter rains and snowfalls has raised deep concerns over the increasing risk of desertification and drought in Pakistan, experts warn.

As the country grapples with changing weather patterns including early rise of temperature, urgent action such as large-scale plantations is being suggested by environmental experts as a viable solution to combat this climate change-induced challenges.

Pakistan, ranking among the top 10 most vulnerable nations to the effects of climate change, has experienced a significant reduction in rainfall and snowfall in recent years. This decline is attributed to deforestation and global warming, leading to changes in the country's weather cycle.

Afsar Khan, Deputy Director of the Department of Climate Change, Forest and Environment, told APP that recent weather patterns indicated a shift in the timing of seasonal rains in Pakistan.

"In the past, winter rains and snowfalls would begin by the end of December," he said. "However, in 2024,

the rain cycle altered, with the first winter rains arriving only in January. As of now, this year's winter rains have yet to fully commence in Pakistan. This delay significantly raises the risk of drought and desertification, particularly in southern Pakistan, which is highly dependent on glacier-fed water from the Indus River.

While the northern and mountainous regions of Pakistan have received some sporadic rainfall and snowfall this winter, the plains, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Punjab, have faced a substantial shortfall.

According to the Met Office, the country has experienced a 40 percent decrease in rainfall compared to its 30-year historical average, with particularly dry conditions in the Pothar region.

The absence of adequate snowfall and rainfall last year in areas such as Malakand, Hazara, and northern Punjab led to unusually intense sun heat during February and March, exacerbating the situation. "The lack of winter precipitation is now

threatening food security, making it imperative to undertake massive plantation initiatives to counter the growing environmental challenges," Afsar Khan emphasized.

Gulzar Rehman, a former Conservator of Forests, echoed these concerns, noting that the absence of winter snow could lead to greater desertification, land degradation, and drought (DDLD). If left unaddressed, these issues could result in economic losses amounting to \$42 billion annually, while an estimated six million hectares of productive land could be lost to DDLD each year worldwide.

"DDLD poses a significant threat to agricultural land in arid and semi-arid regions, with Pakistan being no exception," Gulzar Rehman said, adding approximately two-thirds of the country's agricultural land and 80 percent of its arid and semi-arid areas are vulnerable to DDLD, exacerbated by reduced rainfall, snowfalls, and illegal deforestation practices.

The National Forests Policy reveals that Pakistan loses about 27,000 hectares

of forest annually, particularly in community-managed forests in KP and Gilgit Baltistan.

To tackle these pressing issues, the government has taken solid steps such as the Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP), launched by the Nawaz Sharif government in 2014. The project initially focused on rehabilitating over 12,000 hectares of degraded rangeland in nine dryland districts. Over the course of its first phase, the project expanded to include measures for sustainable agriculture and water conservation across an additional 8,000 hectares.

Following the success of SLMP Phase-I, the government launched Phase-II to extend efforts to 14 districts prone to desertification. These districts included regions in Punjab, Sindh, KP, and Balochistan—specifically targeting high-risk areas like Chakwal, Bhakkar, Tharparkar, and Omakot.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, initiatives like the "REDD+" (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) strategy and the Green Growth

Initiative (GGI) are part of broader efforts to address deforestation and promote sustainable development.

Under the Billion Trees Afforestation Project (BTAP), 10 new forest reserves have been established in KP, increasing the province's forest coverage from 20 percent in 2017 to 26.7 percent today.

Ibrahim Khan, Deputy Director of the Forest Department, confirmed that the provincial government has invested approximately Rs. 675 billion in forest protection and promotion since 2017.

These investments aim to enhance the resilience of the region's ecosystems, improve water retention, and ultimately prevent further land degradation.

The experts urged the government to expand and accelerate large-scale afforestation and sustainable land management projects to safeguard Pakistan's environment.

The continued shortage of rainfall and snowfalls demands an urgent response to avoid further environmental and economic losses as the country faces the escalating threats

VC distribute cheques among students



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Vice Chancellor of University of Agriculture Peshawar, Prof. Emeritus Dr. Jehan Bakht distributed cheques among two students who received scholarships under the Friends Scholarship Program. This program provides scholarships every

year to take a prominent position in the field of Veterinary Medicine and to support intelligent students.

For the first time, two students of University of Agriculture Peshawar have won these scholarships. In this regard, in a simple ceremony at the Vice Chancellor's Secretariat, Vice Chancellor Prof.

Emeritus Dr. Jehan Bakht congratulated Sana Gul, 3rd semester and Khair Ali, 10th semester student of DVM, while giving scholarships the Vice Chancellor said that our students have a lot of talent. They need the right guidance. Scholarship administrator Dr. Ibadullah Jan was also present at the event.



In brief

Man shot dead

PATTOKI (INP): A man was shot dead for demanding return of his money he lent to a friend in Pattoki. In the FIR, deceased Tariq's wife stated that she, her husband and their son went to the house of Jawwad to collect the money but a hot exchange of words erupted after which they decided to return to their home. She further stated that she and her husband stopped at a pharmacy located on Chuniar Road where Jawwad and his colleagues were turned up. Jawwad asked her husband to accompany him as he is going to return his money. But that also led to a tiff between them, during which Jawwad asked his friends not to spare Tariq this time and shot bullets at him, killing him on the spot. Soon after the firing accused Jawwad and his colleagues escaped from the murder scene. Saddar Police Station registered a first information report (FIR) against three known and three unknown accused and started investigation.

One arrested

ARIFWALA (INP): Punjab police have stepped up action against kite manufacturers ahead of Basant to be celebrated across Punjab during the current month as announced by many kite flying associations of the province. Police in a raid on a kite making factory seized kites, rolls of twine, kite material and machinery. A man was also arrested during the raid. Further investigation was under way. In Minchinabad, old enmity claimed life of a man. Police were investigating. The man was returning home from work when his rivals shot him dead. Police were called to the crime scene, who started investigation. In Rawalpindi, Jatli police have arrested three persons for poisoning a 20-year old girl to death. The suspects after killing the girl buried her body to conceal their crime, but police resolved the murder mystery by arresting them. Further investigation was underway.

Motorcycles stolen

NAUSHEHARO FEROZE (PPI): Robbers and thieves took away three motorcycles from Nausahro Feroze district on Saturday, police said. In the Bharia Road Police Station jurisdiction, three armed robbers stormed into the house of Anwar Mehar in Jhalal Mehr village, holding the family hostage. The culprits looted Rs50,000 in cash, valuable items, and a motorcycle before fleeing the scene. In another incident within the New Jatoli Police Station limits, a thief stole a motorcycle from the shop of Muhammad Yaseen Chandio, a deep freezer mechanic. Similarly, in Moro Police Station's jurisdiction on Gachero Road, a thief stole a motorcycle from an agricultural seed shop. Police said that investigations into all incidents were underway.

PTI hold rally

F.P. Report

BANNU: Pakistan Tehreek Insaf workers arranged protest rally while sloganeering against the federal government, those who looted public rights will be held accountable with public power. The biased attitude of the rulers towards PTI and the inhuman treatment of women workers including leadership will always be a part of history, on Saturday. These views were expressed by PTI leader Imran Ullah Awan while addressing the protest rally organized by the PTI. The PTI rally was taken out from Ghorivala, which passed through various markets and ended in Shamshikhel.

Community starts re-building of damaged bridge

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Awami National Party Lower Dir activist, Malik Aftab Iqbal handed a cheque of Rs 1 million to local community for reconstruction of the Khall Japanese Bridge over the Panjkora River which was partially washed away by flash floods in Aug, 2022. Work on the project began here the other day.



The residents living on both sides of the river have been demanding the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and local lawmakers to rebuild the damaged bridge for the last three years but to no avail. The residents used to cross the river through a dangerous chairlift.

Disappointed by the local lawmakers and the government, the residents,

at last, decided to reconstruct the bridge on their own with the help of local philanthropists and overseas Pakistanis. The project was formally inaugurated by the Commandant Dir Scouts Brigadier Sanaullah during a function held at the site here the other day. A large number of residents, social activists and area elders attended the function. The local commu-

nity has formed a supervisory committee headed by Akhunzada Fazil Syed to ensure quality of work and collect donations. Talking to local journalists, Akhunzada Fazil Syed claimed the project would be completed in four months. He said the project would cost about Rs 150 million which would be collected from local wealthy persons and over-

seas Pakistanis. The committee head pointed out that Rs 50 million had been collected so far and he was sure the required amount would be reached soon. The elder said that heavy machinery had been brought to the site and the project would be completed as per. He said that overseas Pakistanis had begun sending their donations for reconstruction of the bridge. He thanked the ANP activist Aftab Iqbal for his generosity and said that other wealthy people should also follow him.

Akhunzada Sikandar Hazrat, a local elder and political activist, told local journalists that the PTI, PML-N and PPP leadership had failed to rebuild the damaged Japanese Bridge at Khall.

He lauded the efforts of Akhunzada Fazil Syed and said that he was the second Abdul Sattar Edhi of Dir who started efforts to complete the project with the help of local community. Sikandar Hazrat said that several lawmakers and ministers had visited the area and promised to get funds from the government to rebuild the bridge but their promises proved as mere political scoring.

Prince Kareem services for humanity commended

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: The Ismaili community in Sujawal district is nostalgically reminiscing about Prince Karim Aga Khan's historic and pivotal visit to Sujawal town on December 24, 1964. This momentous occasion facilitated a profound and enduring connection between Prince Karim Aga Khan and his devoted followers in the region.

Nawaz Ali, nearing his 70th birthday, enthusiastically shared his exhilaration and fond memories about encountering Prince Karim Aga Khan during his inaugural visit to Sujawal in 1964. "We were all electrified to meet our revered spiritual leader, and eventually, the moment arrived when he graced the dock Banglow ground of Sujawal, where thousands of his ardent followers eagerly awaited," Nawaz Ali poignantly recalled. He further elaborated that people from nearby villages, such as Tarr Khawaja, Tar Ali Pur, and Jati, embarked on ox carts, horses, and by foot to catch a glimpse of their beloved leader.

Ghulam Ali Chagla, who is poised to witness the accession ceremony of the 50th Spiritual leader of the community, articulated that the visit of Prince Karim Aga Khan to Sujawal was a watershed moment in the history of Thatta district. It paved the way for numerous projects subsequently launched by him for the local communities, culminating in educational and

social uplift of the local Ismaili community and inspiring other sister communities.

Prince Karim Aga Khan traversed various parts of the country to engage with his followers residing in remote areas from 1958 to 1964. During this period, he visited Buhara, Mirpur Sakro, Tando Bago, Tando Muhammad Khan, Sujawal, and Muhammad Abad villages of district Thatta and Badin. He addressed large gatherings of his followers, accentuating the importance of education, unity, agricultural development, and the formation of cooperative societies.

Barkat Ali Ahmed Ali, a key leader of the local Ismaili community, noted that in the aftermath of the visit, local community members, led by Advocate Natho Khan, converged to devise strategies for a brighter future. He further observed that a decade after the visit, the local community witnessed an unprecedented surge in literacy rates, with youth seeking admissions in various schools and colleges, and parents, despite facing destitution, endeavoring to educate their children.

Piyar Ali Hajani, a local social activist, added that the institutes established by Prince Karim Aga Khan, primarily the Aga Khan Social Welfare Board and the Economic Planning Board, enlightened local growers about modern methods of land cultivation. The Aga Khan Health centers were inaugurated in remote areas of Thatta district and

Sujawal districts. The first-ever Aga Khan School in district Thatta was renovated in 1970, and teachers from Aga Khan School Tarr Khawaja were selected during Muhammad Khan Junejo's government to train teachers of public-sector schools.

Dr. Aijaz Rahi, a representative of the World Health Organization, acknowledged the significant advancements in the health sector under the leadership of the Late Aga Khan. The local Ismaili community has made substantial contributions to the development of Sujawal district, establishing the first-ever cooperative society and housing society of Thatta district. The community boasts the highest literacy ratio and has inspired numerous fellow communities to engage in voluntary service in the fields of education and health.

Notable individuals from the community, including Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana, Dr. Mansoor Ali, Dr. Wazir Ali, Dr. Nasir, Der Umeed Ali, Ashiq Ali Karimi, Imam Dino Khawaja, Natho Khan, and Amir Ali Khawaja, have served as high-ranking officers in education, health, and revenue departments of district Thatta. Following subsequent guidelines from the spiritual leader, libraries, community centers, vocational training centers, and youth organizations were established to support the government in uplifting local communities and providing assistance during crises.



ABBOTTABAD: DIG Police, Nasir Mehmood Satti inquiring health of an injured cop of Karak attack at Ayub Teaching Hospital.

Man arrested under PECA Act

F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: A case has been registered under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) in Mansehra, leading to the arrest of a local citizen.

Police said on Saturday that the case was filed at City Police Station on behalf of the police, alleging that local Jamaat-e-Islami leader Shabbir Ahmad Khan used inappropriate language against the government and state institutions during his speech on Kashmir Solidarity Day three days ago.

The case details stated that the accused incited people through a loudspeaker, made speeches against the government, state institutions, and officials, and attempted to defame them. Shabbir Ahmad Khan is set to be presented before the Anti-Terrorism Court in Abbottabad.

JI observes Black Day

F.P. Report

WANA: The office bearers of Jamaat-e-Islami held a press conference at the District Press Club Wana, declaring February 8, 2024—the day of the general elections—as a Black Day, on Saturday.

Addressing the press conference, Emir Lower Waziristan Asadullah Baheer, Deputy General Secretary Saifur Rahman Tayyab, Youth Wing President Salahuddin, Al-Khidmat Foundation's General Secretary Bilal, Hamad-ul-Haq, and Naveed Khan stated that although general elections were held in the country on February 8, 2024, the establishment orchestrated the victory of parties that had minimal public support, and the elections were marred by massive rigging. The speakers criticizing the Pakistan Peoples Party, they alleged that Jamaat-e-Islami had secured all seats in Karachi's local government elections, but a business-driven group, in collusion with state institutions, manipulated the results and stole their mandate.

Aqeel Malik slams PTI for lack of commitment

F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Legal Affairs Barrister Aqeel Malik Saturday lambasted the opposition party PTI for shirking negotiations and displaying a lackadaisical attitude, emphasizing the government's genuine interest in talks for the country's progress.

He expressed disappointment and frustration with the opposition party's evasive tactics and lack of seriousness in negotiations aimed at promoting nation-

al stability. He stated that the government has repeatedly extended an offer for talks without any preconditions, only to be met with chaos. Aqeel Malik slammed PTI for their stubborn attitude and disregard for Pakistan's interests.

He noted that by ignoring calls for talks, PTI has shown a worrying lack of commitment to finding solutions that benefit the country. Responding to a query, Aqeel Malik said the PML-N government played a crucial role in res-

cuing Pakistan from default and improving its economic outlook.

During their tenure, foreign reserves increased, exports grew and GDP showed significant improvement, he highlighted. Aqeel Malik emphasized that the opposition must play a constructive role in the country's progress, rather than merely criticizing the government. He stressed that a collaborative approach is essential for addressing Pakistan's challenges and achieving stability.

PTI to show its strength against rigged polls in 2024

F.P. Report

BUNER: Former Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Buner president Riaz Khan claimed that the people had expressed confidence in PTI in the last general elections, alleged the mandate was stolen and instead of form 45, governments founded on form 47 in the Center and

provinces other than Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Saturday.

This he claimed while addressing party's workers on way to Swabi for participation in Jalsa (gathering/assembly) after completion of a year of the general election. Pointing to the big convoys of PTI, he appreciated the spirit of elders, young youth and young

workers and claimed that PTI's black day is distrust of central and other provincial governments.

PTI president said in a determined tone that whatever decision the leadership takes to return the PTI mandate and Khan's release, the workers are ready to sacrifice and PTI and Khan will win and to be winner.

Italian tourists' team reaches Mohenjo-Daro

F.P. Report

LARKANA: A delegation of 15 tourists from Italy reached Mohenjo-daro to visit the ancient Indus civilization ruins located in Sindh. The security arrangements for the foreign delegation were made very tight.

On this occasion, the foreign delegation visited the ancient monuments of Mohenjo-daro, including the DK Area, HR Stopia, Great Bath, Museum and various other ancient monuments and enjoyed them. Upon their arrival, the foreign delegation was welcomed by the in-charge of Mohenjo-daro, Zaheer Ahmed Jokhio, while the tour guide assigned to Mohenjo-

daro, Irshad Solangi, gave them a detailed briefing about the archaeological sites.

TDA hold seminar on 'Diseases in Crops': A seminar was organized by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Sukkur officers in Larkana to review the export potential of olives from the areas of Larkana Division.

Representatives from Sindh Agriculture Department, Guava Research Institute, Sindh Abadgar Board, Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, District Administration and Larkana Chambers of Commerce Industry participated in the seminar and discussed in detail various issues and chal-

lenges of olive crop including olive production.

The Vice President of Sindh Abadgar Board expressed his concern over the lack of modern research and development (R&D) to improve and innovate the varieties that are in demand in other international markets as fresh fruit or in processed products.

The President of Sindh Chambers of Agriculture, Larkana, further said that the lack of SMN of olive pulp and olive squash juice also affects the production, while the high residue levels of pesticides and the different shelf life of the products hinder the export of olives.

Judicial seniority under scrutiny

Asad Ullah Yousafzai

THE judiciary, one of the most essential pillars of the state, has been a subject of debate since the inception of Pakistan. It has sometimes been criticized for aiding influential sectors in derailing democracy. In contrast, at other times, it has been seen as a symbol of resistance-gaining public and political sympathy when military dictators removed judges. The legal fraternity, politicians, and citizens once stood up to restore a deposed Chief Justice. Ironically, the same Chief Justice, who returned to office through public support, later became a symbol of judicial activism, drawing criticism from all segments of society.

This era of judicial activism eventually led to significant interventions in governance, with courts disqualifying an elected prime minister and frequently exercising suo motu powers. As the judiciary expanded its influence, powerful institutions saw it as a growing threat. In response, attempts were made to curtail judicial overreach, with one Chief Justice playing a key role in limiting its scope. However, con-

cerns arose after his departure that judicial power might expand again. The Government introduced the 26th Constitutional Amendment to prevent this, bringing significant changes to the judicial structure.

One of the most consequential changes was altering the automatic elevation of the senior puisne Judge to Chief Justice. Instead of seniority alone determining the next Chief Justice of Pakistan, the appointment is made from among the top three judges. A similar mechanism was introduced for high courts, where chief justices are now selected from the top three judges rather than the most senior ones.

With the time approaching to elevate High Court judges to the Supreme Court, a new concern emerged: Who will be the next Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court? The Government appeared uncertain. This uncertainty led to the invocation of Article 200 of the Constitution, which empowers the President to transfer High Court judges. Under this provision, three judges from the Lahore, Sindh, and Balochistan High Courts were transferred to the Islamabad High Court. Among them, a judge from the Lahore

High Court, who ranked 15th in seniority there, has become the senior puisne Judge of the Islamabad High Court-making him eligible for both elevation to the Supreme Court and appointment as Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court.

This move was met with strong resistance from the sitting judges of the Islamabad High Court, who wrote a letter to the Chief Justice of Pakistan and the Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court. They objected to the transfer and urged that the newly transferred Judge not be appointed Chief Justice.

The central issue raised by the judges is seniority. They argue that when a judge is transferred to a new High Court, he must take a fresh oath of office, and his seniority should be counted from the date of that oath. Consequently, upon taking his new oath at the Islamabad High Court, the transferred Judge from the Lahore High Court would become a junior Judge there-making him ineligible for elevation as Chief Justice. The judges cited a judgment of the Supreme Court, reported as PLD 2019 SC 509 (Justice Muhammad Farukh Irfan Khan V. Federation of Pakistan), that explicitly states that a judge's

seniority is determined from the date he takes an oath, not from his original appointment date.

Since Pakistan does not have a centralized judicial system, judges are appointed to specific High Courts and must take an oath accordingly. A new oath is mandatory when a judge is transferred to a different High Court. Given that the Supreme Court has settled this matter, the Islamabad High Court judges argue that ignoring this precedent would violate established judicial principles.

While Article 200 of the Constitution grants the President the authority to transfer judges, this power must be exercised in the public interest not as a tool to maneuver judicial appointments in favor of the Government. A similar provision exists in Article 222 of the Indian Constitution, which allows judicial transfers. However, during parliamentary debates in India at the time of adopting Article 222, The Chairman of the Drafting Committee, B R Ambedkar, was keenly aware that this power, like any other, was open to abuse and sought to provide a safeguard against its abuse: "We also took into account the fact that this power of transfer

of Judges from one High Court to another may be abused. A Provincial Government might like to transfer a particular Judge from its High Court because that Judge had become very inconvenient to the Provincial Government because of the particular attitude that he had taken with regard to certain judicial matters or that he had made a nuisance of himself by giving decisions which the Provincial Government did not like. We have taken care that in effecting these transfers no such considerations ought to prevail. Transfers ought to take place only on the ground of convenience of the general administration. Consequently, we have introduced the provision that such transfers shall take place in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, who can be trusted to advise the Government in a manner not affected by local or personal prejudices." (Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol XI, P 580.)

In this case, a judge who ranked 15th in seniority at the Lahore High Court has now become the senior puisne Judge of the Islamabad High Court-making him eligible for eleva-

tion to the Supreme Court and appointment as Chief Justice. However, this goes against established legal principles, as "what cannot be done directly under the law should not be achieved indirectly." This move undermines judicial independence and sets a dangerous precedent where executive influence can manipulate judicial seniority.

At a time when Pakistan's judiciary ranks among the lowest globally, decisions like these further weaken public confidence in the system. The judiciary's credibility is already fragile, and such actions only deepen the concerns of citizens who rely on the courts for justice.

As this issue unfolds, all eyes are on the Chief Justice of Pakistan to see whether he will address the concerns raised by the Islamabad High Court judges. Will the seniority of Islamabad's judges be reconsidered, or will this set a new precedent for judicial appointments?

The Chief Justice must uphold judicial seniority to maintain the judiciary's credibility. The government, too, must ensure transparency in judicial appointments instead of exploiting constitutional provisions for political gain.



Zelensky says North Korean troops back on front line

KYIV (BBC): Ukraine’s president says North Korean forces have returned to the front line in Russia’s western Kursk region, after reports they were withdrawn last month due to heavy casualties. In a video address, Volodymyr Zelensky said the Russian army had “brought back in North Korean soldiers” who were carrying out “new assaults” in the region partially occupied by Ukraine.

He added “hundreds of Russian and North Korean military” personnel had been “destroyed”. In January, Western officials told the BBC they believed at least 1,000 of the 11,000 troops sent from North Korea had been killed in the past three months. North Korea and Russia have not commented. Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The fighting has led to heavy losses on both sides.

Last week, Ukrainian special forces fighting in Kursk told the BBC they had not seen any North Korean troops there for the past 21 days. A spokesman said it was probable they had been pulled out after suffering heavy combat losses. The spokesman added that he was only referring to areas where his forces were fighting, without giving any details about how long that front line was. Recent reports attributed to South Korean intelligence have suggested the North Koreans soldiers are unprepared for modern warfare, and are especially vulnerable to Ukrainian drones. Military experts say the reports of North Korean casualties, if they continue at this pace, are unsustainable.

The soldiers were deployed after Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un deep-

ened bilateral ties in recent months, including signing a security and defence treaty. Pyongyang’s assistance to Moscow now also extends to large amounts of ammunition and weapons. The troops were also seen to have been sent to boost Russia’s fighting forces who have seen significant losses.

Russia’s military has not publicly revealed its battlefield casualties since September 2022, when it said 5,937 soldiers had been killed. But Ukraine’s president said this week up to 350,000 Russian soldiers had been killed, and other reports suggest that number could be significantly higher. Zelensky put Ukraine’s military casualties at 45,100 - but a number of military experts in both Ukraine and the West believe the losses are much higher.

Ukrainian troops launched a lightning offensive in Kursk six months ago, seizing more than 1,000 sq km (386 sq miles) of Russian territory. Since then, Russian forces have managed to retake a sizeable chunk of the region. However, Zelensky told Reuters news agency that Ukraine had launched a new offensive in Kursk, advancing 2.5km (1.5 miles).

Russia’s military said the Ukrainian attacks had been repelled. The claims by the warring sides have not been independently verified. In other key developments: Russia’s military said its forces captured a key town of Toretsk in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk region - but a Ukrainian military spokesman said fighting was continuing in the industrial hub US President Donald Trump said he would “probably be meeting President Zelensky next week, and I will probably be talking to President Putin. I’d like to see that war end”.

UK expels Russian diplomat after spying row

LONDON (BBC): A Russian diplomat has been expelled from the UK in the latest escalation of a tit-for-tat spat after Moscow threw out a British official last year. Foreign Secretary David Lammy said action had been taken “following Russia’s recent expulsion of a British diplomat” in November.

Moscow accused the diplomat of giving false information and spying as grounds for asking him to leave. The government said the UK “will not stand for intimidation of our staff in this way” and that “any further action taken by Russia will be considered an escalation and responded to accordingly”.

Russia’s ambassador to the UK Andrey Kelin, who has been in post since 2019, was summoned to the Foreign Office to be informed one of his diplomats was having their accreditation revoked.

An accreditation is a recognition by a government of a diplomat’s status, and gives them certain immunities depending on rank. “We are unapologetic about protecting our national

interests,” Lammy said. “My message to Russia is clear - if you take action against us, we will respond.”

The Russian Foreign Ministry said it intended to retaliate to the expulsion, in a statement given to the state-owned Tass news agency. Moscow revoked the British diplomat’s accreditation in November, accusing them of spying and ordering the individual to leave the country within two weeks. Russian state-run news agencies reported that the country’s security service FSB had accused the diplomat of providing false information on his documents and carrying out espionage activities.

His photo and name was also shared on Russian TV bulletins. At the time, the Foreign Office dismissed Russia’s accusations as “baseless” and said it was considering a response.

Russia previously said it planned to take further action should the UK respond to its own expulsion. Diplomatic relations between the UK and Russia have worsened since the latter’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Since then, expulsions of diplomats have become increasingly common.

In September last year, Russia announced that the accreditation of six British diplomats in Moscow had been revoked, requiring them to leave the country. And in May, British diplomat Capt Adrian Coghill was given a week to leave Russia, days after the Russian defence attaché was expelled from London for alleged espionage as an “undeclared military intelligence officer”.

A number of British politicians and members of the press have also been barred from entering Russia since the war began, including senior government officials and journalists from the BBC, Sky News and Channel 4. Most recently, 30 more people, including Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner and other Labour cabinet members, were added to Russia’s “stop list”. Lammy and Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer were added to the list in 2022, as was now-Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch.

US service member, three contractors killed in plane crash

MANILA (AP): One US service member and three defense contractors were killed when a plane contracted by the US military crashed in a rice field in the southern Philippines, US Indo-Pacific Command said.

The aircraft was conducting a routine mission “providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support at the request of our Philippine allies,” the command said in a statement. It said the cause of the crash was under investigation. The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines also con-

firmed the crash of a light plane in Maguindanao del Sur province. It did not immediately provide other details.

The bodies of the four people were retrieved from the wreckage in Ampatuan town, said Ameer Jehad Tim Amboldito, a safety officer of Maguindanao del Sur. Indo-Pacific Command said the names of the crew were being withheld pending family notifications. Windy Beaty, a provincial disaster-mitigation officer, told The Associated Press that she received reports that residents saw smoke coming

Slovakia protesters call on Fico to resign

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia (AP): Huge crowds gathered in dozens of cities and towns across Slovakia to mount vocal protests against the pro-Russian policies of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico.

The latest wave of anti-government rallies was fueled by Fico’s recent trip to Moscow for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a rare visit to the Kremlin by a European Union leader since Moscow’s all-out invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24, 2022. Fico’s recent remarks that Slovakia’s foreign policy orientation could involve leaving the European Union and NATO contributed to the anger of protesters. “Resign, resign,” was the clear message to the premier. “Slovakia is Europe,” they chanted.

The latest rallies took place in 41 locations in Slovakia, up from 28 two weeks ago, and in another 13 cities abroad, organizers said. They are biggest demonstrations since major street protests in 2018 prompted by the slayings of an investigative reporter and his fiancée. The ensuing political crisis led to the collapse of Fico’s previous government. Fico, who survived an assassination attempt in May 2024, has escalated the tension in the country by accusing protest organizers of being in contact with foreigners who organized recent anti-government protests in Georgia and are under control of Ukraine’s authorities who, he said, are working toward engineering a coup in Slovakia. Government officials have failed to provide evidence for the claim, which has been dismissed by the Peace for Ukraine organization. Fico’s views on Russia have sharply differed from the European mainstream. He returned to power last year after his leftist party Smer (Direction) won a parliamentary election on a pro-Russia and anti-American platform.

Russia says US needs to formulate its stance

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Russian Foreign Ministry said that the United States needed to formulate its policy on ending the conflict in Ukraine and that Moscow could then base its own position on specific US action.

US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin have not spoken by phone since Trump’s inauguration, according to public statements from officials on both sides. Russia’s RIA state news agency quoted a senior lawmaker as saying that preparations for a meeting between Putin and Trump were at an “advanced stage” however.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said separately that Moscow had heard many words and statements from Washington on Ukraine, but that for now there was no clarity on what exactly the US envisaged when it came to trying to strike a deal to end the conflict there. “As for the role or possible role of the United States in resolving the crisis around Ukraine, once again: everything will depend on concrete actions and on the plans of the new administration embodied in those actions,” Zakharova told a news briefing in Moscow.



BRATISLAVA: People of Slovakia gathered to oppose policies of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico.

Russia claims it’s taken another eastern Ukraine town

KYIV (AP): Russia’s Defense Ministry claimed that its forces had captured the coal mining town of Toretsk in their latest breakthrough in eastern Ukraine’s Donetsk region, where Ukrainian defenses are creaking.

Ukrainian officials did not immediately make any comments on the Russian claim. A Ukrainian officer in a brigade on the outskirts of Toretsk cast doubt on the Russian statement. Yevhen Alkhimov, the press officer of the 28th Brigade, told The Associated Press by phone that his unit had not been moved from its position, which he said likely would have happened if Toretsk had fallen. Russia’s much larger army has conducted a sustained yearlong campaign along the eastern front, gradually loosening the short-handed and weary Ukrainian forces’ grip on its strongholds as the war approaches its fourth year later this month.

The losses coincide with uncertainty over whether the United States will keep providing vital military aid. US President Donald Trump, who says he is making American interests his priority, has said he wants to end the war, although his plans for securing peace are unclear. Alkhimov, the 28th Brigade officer, told AP his unit continued to hold its ground. He

added: “Intense (Russian) assault operations are ongoing.”

DeepState, an open-source Ukrainian map widely used by the military and analysts, showed that Ukrainian troops were on the northwest edge of Toretsk and still had some soldiers inside the town itself. The Russian Defense Ministry said the Ukrainian military has heavily fortified Toretsk and developed a network of underground communications, turning practically every building into a well-protected firing position. The Ukrainian forces also have used coal mines and waste heaps in Toretsk’s western and northern parts as defenses, it said in a statement.

Russia’s claimed fall of Toretsk, if confirmed, would advance its sweep across the Donetsk, which has cost Moscow heavily in troops and armor but has paid dividends for the Kremlin. In the offensive, Russian forces crush settlements with the brute force of 3,000-pound (1,300-kilo) glide bombs, artillery, missiles and drones, then send in infantry units to attack the exposed defenders. So far this year, Kurakhove was the first significant town to capitulate under Russia’s onslaught, after Russian forces captured Avdiivka and Vuhledar last year. Russian forces last month also took Velyka Novosilka, in

the same area.

The towns were part of a belt of Ukrainian defenses in the east. Russia’s other targets are the key logistics hub of Pokrovsk and the strategically important city of Chasiv Yar. Russia seeks to take control of all parts of Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk, which together make up Ukraine’s Donbas industrial region.

Russia accelerated its destruction of Ukraine’s front-line cities in 2024 to a scale previously unseen in the war, using the glide bombs and an expanding network of airstrips, according to an Associated Press analysis last year of drone footage, satellite imagery, Ukrainian documents and Russian photos. Meanwhile, the head of the UN atomic watchdog met in Moscow with the chief of Russia’s state-owned nuclear energy provider Rosatom to discuss security around southern Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi said the situation around Europe’s biggest nuclear plant was “unprecedented” because it is “in the middle of an active combat zone.” In Kyiv, Grossi said there were “a few occasions where we had close calls” with regard to the plant, which is under Russian occupation.

Judge rules Georgia railroad can seize land

ATLANTA (AP): A judge has ruled that a Georgia railroad can buy land against the will of property owners to build a track, rebuffing a challenge that a libertarian group hoped could make it harder to use eminent domain to take property.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Craig Schwall Sr. ruled that the Sandersville Railroad could condemn a 200-foot (60-meter) wide strip of property running 4.5 miles (7.3 kilometers) to build a rail line serving a rock quarry and other users.

Landowners fighting the railroad had appealed a Georgia Public Service Commission ruling allowing the land taking. Schwall kept a freeze on construction for now, with landowners saying they would appeal to the Georgia Supreme Court.

The case matters because private entities need to condemn private land for railroads and facilities including pipelines and electric transmission lines. The Sandersville Railroad, owned by an influential Georgia family, wants to connect the quarry to the CSX railroad at Sparta, allowing products to be shipped widely. Sparta is a

mostly Black rural town about 85 miles (135 kilometers) southeast of Atlanta in one of Georgia’s poorest counties.

Sandersville has agreements to buy some of the 18 parcels it needs. But other owners say losing a strip of property would spoil land they treasure, and that some families have owned for a century. “Every day that Sandersville isn’t coming out on our land and starting to build is a good day,” Diane Smith, one of the owners, said in a statement. “But we won’t rest easy until we know for sure that they’ll never be able to take our land from us.”

Brian Brodrick, a lawyer for the railroad, urged opposed property owners in a statement “to return to the negotiating table so we can bring new opportunities and channels of trade to all the citizens of Hancock County and the region.” He said the spur would have “minimal impacts” on neighbors. Some people in the rural neighborhood think the railroad would enable expansion at a quarry owned by Heidelberg Materials, a publicly traded German firm. They dislike the quarry because it generates noise, dust and truck

Iran inaugurates its first drone-carrier warship

TEHRAN (AP): Iran has inaugurated its first drone-carrier warship, saying the vessel is capable of operating in oceans far from its mainland, the official IRNA news agency reported.

The report said the vessel, manned by the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard’s navy, can carry several squadrons of drones as well as helicopters and cruise missiles. Named Shahid Bagheri, it’s capable of launching cruise missiles, IRNA said. With a 180-meter-long runway for drones, the vessel can travel up to 22,000 nautical miles without needing to refuel in ports. The report said it was converted from a commercial ship and would increase Iran’s power of deterrence.

Footage broadcast by state TV on the inauguration showed at least four helicopters and three drones on the warship’s runway. Chief of the Guard, Gen. Hossein Salami, said at the ceremony that the warship can travel “independently” in seas for up to one year. Iran needs to increase its deterrence capacity to prevent war, he said, stressing that Iran doesn’t wish to wage war with any country. “Iran is not considered a threat to any country, but we do not bow before threat by any power,” Salami said.

Ukraine wants partner countries to join in postwar development worth billions

KYIV (AP): Ukraine wants to collaborate with partner countries on postwar projects worth billions of dollars not just in mining rare earth elements, but also in energy and construction sectors to help rebuild the country, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said.

Sybiha responded to comments by President Donald Trump who said that he wanted to gain access to Ukraine’s valuable rare earth materials as a condition for continuing support for its war against Russia. Ukrainian officials have said Russia wants to get its hands on Ukraine’s vast natural resources.

Kyiv intends to offer “guarantees of the presence of major businesses in Ukraine and the vested interests of our closest allies — the United States — in developing these (rare earth) deposits and ensuring their protection,” the foreign minister said. But cooperation should not be limited to rare earth materials, Sybiha said in a news conference alongside visiting U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy.

Ukraine has “huge potential” to become a guarantor of energy security in Europe by buying liquefied natural gas from the United States and storing it in its massive underground tanks for later distribution, he said. Sybiha also said there was “joint interest” from Ukrainian and American businesses in the postwar reconstruction of Ukraine, estimated to cost more than \$400 billion. “This will be one of the largest projects of this century and, accordingly, one of the largest opportunities for our allies.”

Meanwhile, Zelenskyy said in an interview broadcast that the war has killed 45,100 Ukrainian troops. The fighting also has injured close to 390,000 troops, he told Piers Morgan Uncensored on YouTube. On Dec. 8, he said Ukraine had lost some 43,000 soldiers on the battlefield and 370,000 wounded. Russia hasn’t given its number of killed since September 2022, seven months after its all-out invasion.

If the US stops sending vital military aid, that could also jeopardize

European support, Zelenskyy said in the interview. “Without a doubt, we cannot do without this kind of (Western) support,” he said. Zelenskyy said that the United States must be part of any Western troop deployment to safeguard a peace deal with Russia and shield against another invasion. Sending only European troops would not be enough, he said.

“Because this is not just a matter of numbers, it is about sharing responsibility and ensuring security guarantees. This cannot be done without the United States of America,” he said at a news conference with Lammy. Ukrainian forces are slowly losing ground, especially in eastern areas, where they are being pushed backward by their bigger foe.

Russia’s Defense Ministry claimed that Russian troops had captured the villages of Baranivka in the eastern Donetsk region and Novomylnsk in the northeastern Kharkiv region. Baranivka’s capture is part of Russia’s effort to envelop

Pokrovsk, a key road and rail hub whose loss would compromise a wider area of defense, while the seizure of Novomylnsk is part of Russia’s onslaught toward Kupiansk, another important train junction.

Ukraine keeps hitting the Russian military’s rear areas and supply lines in an effort to disrupt the creeping advance. Ukraine’s Army General staff claimed that Ukrainian forces struck an oil refinery in the Krasnodar region of Russia overnight, setting it on fire. According to the General Staff, the oil refinery and petroleum product manufacturing plant supplies gasoline and diesel to the Russian army.

The governor of the Krasnodar region, Veniamin Kondratyev, claimed that fragments of a downed Ukrainian drone hit an oil tank at an oil depot in the village of Novomylnskaya, sparking a fire. The fire was put out shortly after and there were no injuries, emergency officials said.

Meanwhile, Russia is set to widen

its power to retaliate for Western asset seizures with new legislation that could allow it to confiscate the frozen funds of foreign companies and investors, two sources familiar with the draft law told Reuters.

Around \$300 billion of Russian financial assets, such as major currencies and government bonds, were frozen overseas shortly after Moscow despatched troops to Ukraine in February 2022, and Western countries have been debating how best to exploit those assets. A draft bill outlining the procedure for Russia to confiscate foreign property in response to similar actions by other states with Russian assets was approved by the government’s legislative activity commission this week, paving the way for it to be debated in the State Duma, Russia’s lower house of parliament.

The bill, developed by the justice ministry, follows on from a decree signed by President Vladimir Putin in May 2024 concerning the US property and securities Russia could identify as compensation for any

losses sustained by the seizure of frozen Russian assets in the United States. The new law would widen that out to all so-called unfriendly states, those that have imposed sanctions against Russia over its actions in Ukraine, the sources said.

Decisions would be enforced through lawsuits filed at arbitration court by state bodies such as the central bank, General Prosecutor’s office and government agencies. Defendants will be foreign states that have seized Russian assets. A source familiar with discussions around the bill said type-C accounts, access to which is blocked unless Moscow grants a waiver, may end up being targeted.

That could spell trouble for the many foreign investors, including both individuals and major US investment funds, with billions of dollars of funds trapped in those accounts. Reuters reported in May last year that Russia may go after private investors’ cash as its ability to mete out like-for-like retaliation has been eroded by dwindling foreign investment.

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Trump's Gaza takeover proposal

IN a proposal that has sent shockwaves across the globe, President Donald Trump's suggestion that the US "take over" the Gaza Strip and turn it into a "Riviera of the Middle East" has faced fierce criticism from legal experts and human rights activists. Trump's controversial plan came during a joint news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, where he said the US "will take over the Gaza Strip," and proposed the permanent resettlement of Palestinians. Secretary of State Marco Rubio later clarified Trump's remarks, describing the plan as a "generous" offer aimed at rebuilding the war-ravaged enclave, adding that "people can move back in" after reconstruction.

According to Michael Lynk, who served as the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories from 2016 to 2022, Trump's plan "clearly" violates international law. "Under international law, it's clearly illegal," Lynk, currently an associate professor at the University of Western Ontario, told Anadolu. "Just talking about the forced displacement of Palestinians — the ethnic cleansing of the 2.2 million Palestinians in Gaza — that would be a serious violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which both the United States and Israel have signed on to."

Lynk also pointed out the legal repercussions of such an action under the 1998 Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC). "It would also be a crime against humanity," he added, noting that the ICC has jurisdiction over Gaza, even though neither the US nor Israel are signatories of the Rome Statute. "Their leaders could be criminally liable for initiating forced displacement of the Palestinians."

As the world watches closely, the UN Security Council has already addressed Israel's war on Gaza, which has killed nearly 62,000 people, having added thousands who are missing in the rubble, since a cross-border attack by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023, according to Gaza's authorities. In June 2024, the Security Council adopted resolution 2735, calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire in Gaza and rejecting any attempts at "demographic or territorial change" in the Gaza Strip.

"We have both these strong legal and diplomatic guardrails that would be opposed to this," Lynk said, referring to the both Rome Statute and the June 2024 Security Council resolution. Jonathan Kuttub, an international human rights lawyer and Executive Director of the Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA), a movement of Palestinian Christians, also voiced strong criticism of Trump's controversial Gaza plan. Describing the proposal as "shocking on many levels," Kuttub said that it "totally disregards international law."

"You can't just go and take another piece of territory and own it," he told Anadolu. "It's a war crime. It's clearly a war crime." Kuttub also pointed to the moral dimensions of the plan, calling it "totally immoral." He questioned how it was even conceivable to displace over 2 million people in the Gaza Strip from their homes, likening this to an attempt at ethnic cleansing.

"He (Trump) is saying it in the presence of Netanyahu, who's smirking because he's the one who destroyed Gaza," Kuttub noted. "It's totally unacceptable. It's also anachronistic." Kuttub added that the proposal's underlying motive was both ideological and practical.

"The ideological aspect is to get people to start thinking in terms of accepting the idea that Palestinians can be removed from Palestine permanently," he said. "The practical thing is to allow Netanyahu's government to survive ... The government will collapse unless you resume the war, or unless you do something to get rid of the people in Gaza. So Trump is willing to do the work for Netanyahu." Lynk also indicated that if the US, with the support of Israel, forcibly removes Palestinians from Gaza and forces them either to Egypt or Jordan, the ICC would have the ability to issue arrest warrants for Trump, Netanyahu, and others involved in such a plan.

The implications of Trump's proposal extend beyond legal concerns. The international community, particularly in the Arab and Muslim world, have strongly rejected such a move. Everyone in the region and beyond remembers the long history of Palestinian displacement, including the 1948 Nakba, when over 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes, never to be able to go back. "No Arab or Muslim leader in the region could ever support the forced displacement of Palestinians," Lynk said.

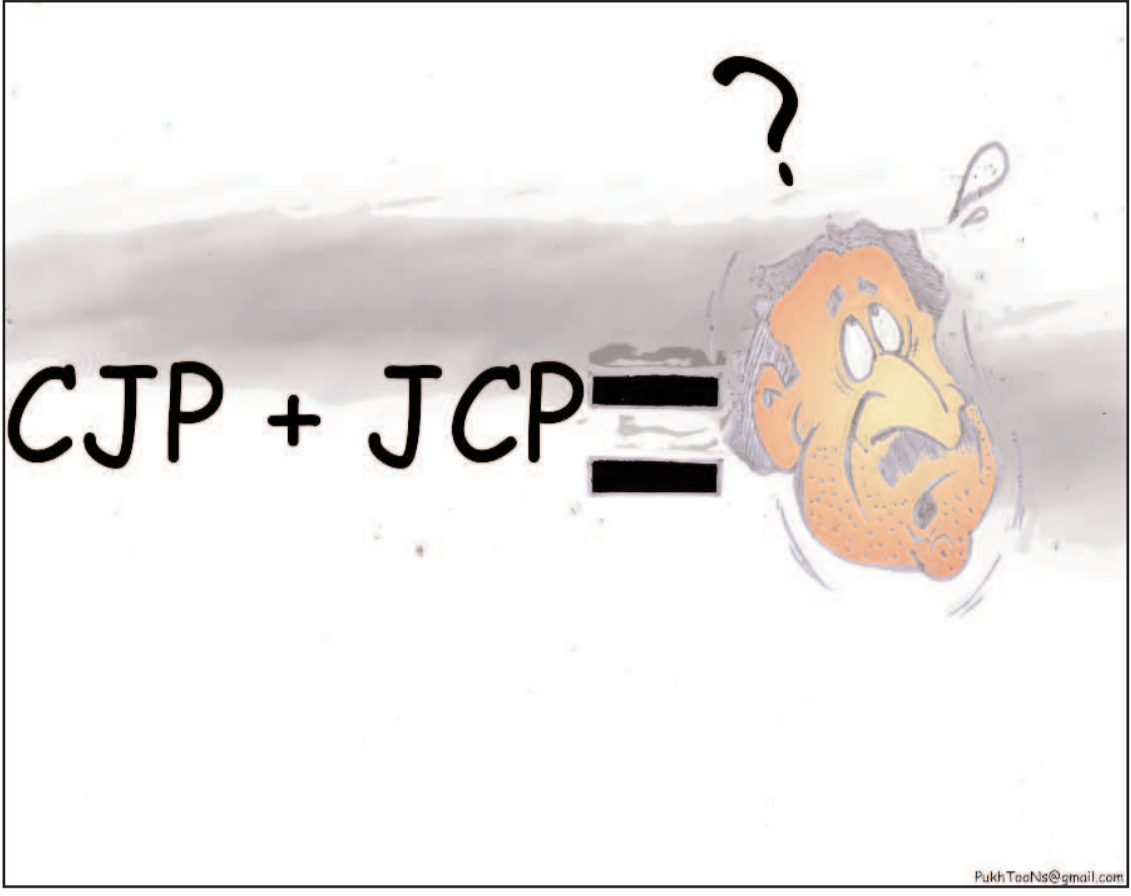
"If Palestinians have to leave Gaza in order for the rubble to be removed from the war that Israel inflicted on Gaza and to remove the 30,000 unexploded munitions in Gaza, then ... the appropriate place for them to move to would be Israel itself," he suggested. This, Lynk argued, would fulfill the right of return as enshrined in UN Resolution 194, which guarantees Palestinians this right to go back to their homes that Israel forced them to leave. "That would seem to be the path that is most consistent with international law and with a rights-based approach."

The implications of Trump's proposal could reach beyond the borders of Gaza. Lynk expressed concern that the plan could pave the way for further Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Trump has already reversed Biden-era policies regarding the West Bank by removing sanctions on Israeli settlers and groups.

Lynk and Kuttub agree that Trump's plan would be dead on arrival, given the unified rejection it would face from the Arab and Muslim world. However, Kuttub warned that if Trump attempts to follow through, it would severely undermine the international order. "The Security Council, of course, will do nothing, because there is the veto power there, but national countries have the right under international law — in fact, the obligation to do something," he continued. "We don't have to wait for the Hauge to act ... Every country has local courts that can carry out and implement international law, because crimes against humanity and war crimes have universal jurisdiction," he stressed.

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Beyond the smoke and mirrors of Trump-Netanyahu meeting

Dr. Sami Al-Arian

THE infamous 19th-century imperialist and racial supremacist, Cecil Rhodes, once remarked: "It is our duty to seize every opportunity to acquire more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race." He then added: "Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings, what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence."

More than a century later, US President Donald Trump expressed similar attitudes during his meeting on Feb. 4, with the Israeli prime minister and indicted war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu, when he said: "We will take over the Gaza Strip, will own it long-term and will redevelop it ... I do see a long-term ownership position." In a settler-colonialist spirit, Trump callously continued, "I don't think people should be going back to Gaza. I think that Gaza is not a place for people to be living." He neglected to mention, of course, the exception for Jewish settlers in prime real estate along the Gaza beach. He then added, "They're living in hell," without any hint of irony, considering the 15-month US-sponsored genocide, supported by funds, bombs, and diplomatic protection.

There were many items on the agenda between Trump and Netanyahu, including Iran's nuclear program, the future of Gaza and the West Bank, and normalization with Saudi Arabia. To be sure, Trump was not an unknown quantity. In his first term, he demonstrated total hostility towards the Palestinians and embraced the most radical positions espoused by extremist Zionists. These included recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocating the US Embassy there, the annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights (occupied by Israel since 1967), the closure of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) office in Washington, DC, ending all humanitarian aid to the Palestinians through the UN refugee agency (UNRWA) or US agencies, and integrating Israel with-

in US Central Command (CENTCOM), the US military command responsible for a region stretching from Egypt to Afghanistan.

Furthermore, throughout his presidency Trump completely disregarded the so-called two-state solution — a long-touted US goal — in favor of Netanyahu's approach of normalizing relations with Washington's Arab client regimes while pursuing an aggressive settlement expansion policy intended to establish a de facto Greater Israel. In effect, it appears that "Trump 2.0" is trying, in his own way, to fulfill his promises of securing a greater Israel for his right-wing Zionist donors [1], benefactors [2] and appointees [3]. The proposal to forcefully remove over 2 million Palestinians from Gaza does not appear serious or achievable, since the Palestinians will never cooperate in their own displacement, nor would neighboring countries be

outrageous proposal rather than through military pressure. If that is the case, this would be Trump's way of handing Netanyahu the fig leaf he needs to silence his hard right critics and conclude the second stage of the ceasefire deal.

On Iran, Trump has doubled down on his policy of applying extreme pressure through economic sanctions in order to get the Iranians to negotiate a deal on their nuclear program. In return, the Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has called [5] for "maximum wisdom" to be applied to relations between Washington and Tehran, instead of the "maximum pressure" policy Trump has espoused. Since these are the early stages of diplomatic maneuverings, it's very doubtful that Netanyahu received a green light from Trump to use military strikes against Iran in the near term.

On the West Bank, the

It would appear that Trump wants to achieve this goal using political means through his outrageous proposal rather than through military pressure. If that is the case, this would be Trump's way of handing Netanyahu the fig leaf he needs to silence his hard right critics and conclude the second stage of the ceasefire deal.

willing to support a dangerous plan that would destabilize the region. In the past, Trump proposed similar hyperbolic ideas that failed to materialize, including his calls [4] for constructing a Riviera on the beaches of North Korea.

Netanyahu came to the White House with several objectives in mind. He sought Trump's support to continue his war of extermination in Gaza after freeing many Israeli captives at the end of the first stage of the ceasefire deal.

His political allies pressured him to resume the war in order to achieve his elusive objective of dislodging Hamas and eradicating the resistance — an aim he has not accomplished during the 15-month onslaught. It would appear that Trump wants to achieve this goal using political means through his

Zionist regime has been escalating its aggressive settlement policy as well as its unprecedented attacks on several Palestinian cities, particularly against refugee camps in Jenin, Nablus, Tobas and Tulkarem.

In the past, Trump and many of his administration officials, such as the new US ambassador to the Zionist regime, Mike Huckabee, have endorsed the expansion of Israeli settlements and the calls for annexing large parts of the West Bank. But backing such a policy now will certainly impede the central piece of Trump's main objective in the region, which is to conclude a normalization deal with Saudi Arabia.

To negotiate a deal with the Saudis, Trump must rein in Netanyahu and his extremist allies by promising them what they desire

most: a Gaza free not only of Hamas' rule but also of Palestinians, as well as the annexation of a large part of the West Bank, in exchange for a normalization deal with the Saudis and possibly beyond.

The Israelis certainly know that they will not get the Palestinians to leave voluntarily when they could not compel them to do that through their genocidal war. They recognize that they cannot unilaterally annex parts of the West Bank before the normalization deal with the Saudis is concluded. They also know that Trump has a very long agenda, both domestically and internationally, particularly with regard to the Ukraine war and China, and will not allow a devastating war with Iran to disrupt his agenda. Once the fog of the visit clears, it will become apparent that Trump's primary policy in the Middle East is to cement a Saudi-Israeli agreement, one that cannot be finalized without putting a hold on other contentious issues such as a military escalation with Iran, West Bank annexation, or the resumption of the Gaza genocide. But that does not mean that the Zionist regime and its supporters within the Trump administration will not push hard to achieve all their objectives in Gaza, the West Bank and against Iran. Regardless, the Palestinians and their supporters worldwide must be vigilant to resist and defeat all their nefarious plans, particularly in Gaza, the West Bank, as well as any plans to integrate a genocidal regime in the region.

People across the Middle East have witnessed the true colors of the Zionist regime. Achieving a normalization deal with the Saudis or any other party would require nothing less than the total erasure of their collective memory. It would appear that the main lesson of the Oct. 7 attacks has not been learned.

They took place at a time when regional and international actors had all but buried the Palestinian cause and ignored the plight of the Palestinians in pursuit of their own interests. Not only will none of the policies advanced by Trump address these issues, but they will exacerbate them. And thus, like his forgotten deal of the century, these policies are doomed to fail.

Europe's rejection of Russian gas historic

Joshua R. Kroeker

THE end of Russian natural gas transit through Ukraine as the clock turned to 2025, marks a milestone in Europe's energy history. It symbolizes efforts to sever ties with Russian fossil fuels amidst the geopolitical upheaval caused by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

But that could change amid news that Europe is weighing up whether resuming gas transit through Ukraine should form part of peace negotiations with Russia. Beyond the symbolism, the halt in gas flows via Ukraine may have a less lasting impact than anticipated. Economic pragmatism, structural energy challenges and the convenience of existing infrastructure suggest that a partial resumption of Russian gas exports to Europe could be on the horizon despite the prevailing rhetoric of energy independence and the lessons of Russian energy blackmail.

For decades, Russian natural gas was central to Europe's energy strategy. The Ukraine transit route, originating in the Soviet era, carried the lion's share of these supplies, helping maintain economic stability — especially by providing Germany with the cheap energy it needed to become an industrial powerhouse.

However, this also gave Moscow significant leverage over European decision-making. This came to a head in 2022, as Russia threatened the European Union over its support for Ukraine following the invasion and sanctions regime. That year, the bloc shifted away from dependence on Russian gas as the war exposed the dangers of reliance on an aggressive state actor. The EU implemented ambitious policies to diversify its energy mix, expanding LNG imports and strengthening renewable infrastructure. By the time the transit agreement expired, volumes had already dwindled and European countries were relatively well prepared.

The resulting disruption was limited, at least immediately. In anticipation of the cutoff, European nations diversified their sources, investing in LNG infrastructure and securing alternative supplies from Norway, the United States and the Middle East. Despite temporary price volatility, markets remained stable and there were sufficient reserves to meet winter demand.

However, structural challenges remain. Though less vital than in the days when Europe bought Russian gas without a second thought, the Ukraine transit route still accounted for a portion of the westward supply in 2024. Without it, Europe faces higher costs to secure alternatives, particularly as global LNG markets tighten. Central and Eastern European nations such as Slovakia and Austria are especially vulnerable given their historical dependence on Russian pipeline gas and reluctance to diversify. Even in Germany, far-right and left-wing parties, such as the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance, have pushed for a return to cheaper imports.

While Europe has made strides to seek new energy sources, the transition has come at a significant cost. Prices remain higher than in the United States and Asia, eroding the competitiveness of energy-intensive industries. LNG, though viable, is more expensive due to the costs of transportation and turning the gas into a liquid and back again. This price

disparity will persist thanks to global shipping risks and the inherent costs of importing LNG from further afield.

These high costs could reignite interest in Russian gas in the future. Existing pipeline infrastructure, including Nord Stream and other routes, remains largely intact, offering a cost-effective way to alleviate Europe's energy burden. A partial resumption of flows, particularly through Ukraine, could provide economic relief while offering Ukraine much-needed revenues to fund reconstruction. This could even become a point of negotiation between Russia and the West as countries aim to end the war.

Europe's energy policies are shaped by more than just regional economics. The decision to phase out Russian gas was motivated by the desire to cut Moscow's war chest off from a vital source of revenue. Nonetheless, the unanimity requirement for EU sanctions makes a complete embargo unlikely. Countries like Hungary continue to receive supplies via Turkey, highlighting the difficulty of achieving a unified stance.

A potential peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine could change the calculus. If the war ends with a negotiated settlement, restoring transit could emerge as a pragmatic solution — and a Russian demand. Such an arrangement could ultimately benefit Ukraine, which relies on transit fees, and Europe, which would gain access to lower-cost energy. However, it also risks replenishing Moscow's war chest for the future.

While some argue that offering a return to Russian gas could incentivize Moscow to negotiate an end to the war, others warn that any such move would undermine Ukraine and embolden the Kremlin, creating long-term strategic vulnerabilities for the West.

The political fallout from these discussions further highlights the fragmented nature of Europe's energy policy. While Western European nations weigh the economic benefits of lower-cost imports, Eastern European states, many of whom have borne the brunt of Russian aggression, remain vehemently opposed. The proposed restrictions on Russian LNG, expected to be included in the EU's next sanctions package, reflect ongoing efforts to close these very loopholes in energy dependence. However, as long as divisions persist within the EU, achieving a coherent, long-term strategy that balances economic imperatives with security considerations will remain a formidable challenge.

The end of Russian gas transit through Ukraine is a symbolic victory for Europe's energy independence. But it is unlikely to be the final chapter in the continent's relationship with Russian energy. The challenge as Europe revisits this question will be ensuring that any future engagement with Moscow aligns with Europe's broader goals of sustainability, security, and sovereignty — as well as an understanding of Russia's past actions. The question of Russian gas is not just an economic issue but a test of Europe's resolve to confront authoritarian aggression while safeguarding its future. European policymakers should be cautious about repeating the mistakes made in the decade before Russia weaponized international energy security.

America First means everyone else is last

Samuel Doveri Vesterbye

NEWLY elected US President Donald Trump spells uncertainty for Europe. Across Europe's right-wing, many parties applaud Trump's "anti-woke" stance, business-friendly attitude, and strict migration policies. On the left-wing, most parties criticize President Trump's threats of tariffs, fear of China, and anti-Palestinian policies.

Many wonder if the new US administration will support Ukraine and NATO, especially as American fossil fuel exports remain expensive, unhealthy, and unsustainable. Both sides of the European political spectrum, however, agree on one point: America First means "everyone else is last."

Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni and Elon Musk might be friends, but that won't change the fact that tariffs imposed by Trump on Europe will damage Italian companies and jobs. Tariffs will not stop migrato-

ry pressure in the Mediterranean, which is largely a consequence of unregulated access to the internet combined with "US endless wars." Other leaders on the European right are equally unconvinced: "Trump is going to put his own interests first and there will be inconveniences for the EU and France. We remain tempered in our enthusiasm," said a skeptical Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's far-right National Rally (RN) group in the French assembly, after Donald Trump won the US presidential election back in November.

Trump has also promised to "end all wars," a promise welcomed by many in Europe. But an isolationist America does not necessarily mean a peaceful world. Trump's personal relations with Netanyahu will favor continued Palestinian displacement and war by proxy. In Ukraine, many questions remain unanswered, but it is

certain that for Europeans in the East, North, Baltic and Caucasus, the centuries-long threat of Russia will not magically disappear because of Trump's hyperbolic promises. What we can expect is an "America First" world, where Washington disengages and stops paying any bills, while allowing for more regional arms races, competition and proxy conflicts. Such instability always benefits a geographically isolated but disproportionately dominant America. Simply put, Washington will tell others around the world, including Europe, to spend more on defense, but always buy American. Washington will urge its partners to stop mining in China and to import the expensive American East Coast gas. Furthermore, it may halt regulations on the US digital space, giving tech billionaires free rein.

A similar approach is expected for everyone, albeit

with varying levels of reward. Trump will favor anyone who's anti-China, including India, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Egypt and Saudi Arabia will likely play an important role in Washington due to Trump's pro-fossil-fuel policies, personal business relations, and his son-in-law's role in advancing the Abraham Accords. Without speculating too much, it is safe to say Saudi Arabia could soon benefit from nuclear and defense technology, as well as heightened security and intelligence coordination.

Across Eurasia, the US will try to destabilize strategic gas-for-defense relations between Beijing and Moscow. The first step includes a tentative meeting between Trump and Putin in early 2025. Whether such initiatives will prove successful remains difficult to predict. For Europe, however, being anti-China is harder than it is

for Washington. A country like Türkiye is geographically positioned as a key hub for transit trade with Asia, while Germany and Poland are deeply intertwined in Beijing's supply chains.

After the costly Ukraine war, in which German industry suffered from heightened energy prices, it is natural that neither Berlin nor Warsaw welcomed Trump's hawkish China policies. There are risks for Türkiye as well. Peace between Russia and Ukraine would stabilize the region, but also increase the chances of a revived Moscow. The dynamics of Trump's second term will force Europe to recalibrate its strategy towards the US. A new focus on autonomous energy, including nuclear, is increasingly resonating across most political parties and countries. In order to navigate these new challenges in trade, security, and global leadership, the deepening of integration, especially across domains like intra-military

cooperation, is inevitably speeding up. The recent appointment of a European defense commissioner in charge of Europe's military-industrial policy is a clear sign of the direction that Europe is taking. The Weimar Triangle Alliance between Germany, France, and Poland further underlines the importance of Europe developing autonomous defense, industrial, and energy policies.

Strengthening ties between Türkiye, the Euro-Mediterranean region, and Eastern allies in the Caucasus and Central Asia will be equally important for the European Union. In an increasingly chaotic environment with America in retreat, Europe is rethinking its enlargement strategy and regional partnerships to ensure improved security, supply chain, and energy cooperation. As the saying goes: "If your neighbor's house is on fire, you'd better help unless you want your roof to burn as well."

Türkiye’s growing footprint in European defense

Federico Borsari

SOMETHING remarkable is happening in European defense, and it's not coming from the usual suspects in Paris, London, Rome, or Berlin. Turkish defense companies are orchestrating a quiet revolution, transforming themselves from ordinary equipment suppliers into architects of Europe's future defense landscape. And they are achieving this transformation with a level of sophistication that few would have predicted even five years ago.

When Baykar – the producer of the ultra-popular Bayraktar TB2 combat drone – acquired [1] Italy's Piaggio Aerospace in December 2024, it wasn't just another bilateral defense industrial deal – it was a statement of intent that signaled a fundamental shift in how Turkish defense companies see their role in Europe. The numbers tell part of the story: Turkish defense exports surged to \$7.2 billion in 2024 [2], but the real transformation lies in how Turkish companies are fundamentally reimagining their role in European defense.

While Turkish drones have captured headlines worldwide, something more profound is taking shape within the Turkish defense ecosystem. The emerging partnership [3] between Italy's Leonardo and Baykar is not just about integrating European electronics into Turkish drones – it is about establishing a new model of defense cooperation in which Turkish and European capabilities complement each other in unprecedented ways.

Multiple recent developments can help us better grasp this evolution. First, Spain's memorandum of understanding on Dec. 20, 2024 [4], to procure 24 Hürjet advanced trainers from Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI), with Spanish industrial participation in the program, marks a sig-

nificant shift in European attitudes toward Turkish aerospace capabilities. Second, TAI's collaboration [5] with European defense companies on advanced airborne systems underscores the growing technological synergy between Turkish and European defense industries.

Third, Türkiye's potential involvement in F-35 component manufacturing through Piaggio, a former sub-tier supplier for the program, could open new avenues for cooperation and highlight the strategic value of this acquisition.

The first driver is Türkiye's evolving approach to the defense ecosystem, which has progressively transformed over the past decade. Turkish companies aren't just selling products anymore – they're securing a strategic foothold within the core of Europe's defense infrastructure. When Italy's Industry Minister Adolfo Urso described Piaggio Aerospace as a "strategic asset" [6] while approving its sale to Baykar, signaling a fundamental shift in how European governments perceive Turkish defense companies.

In other words, this isn't just about market access – it's about becoming an integral part of Europe's defense industrial base. Turkish companies are now expanding across multiple European markets [7], from Italy to Spain and Portugal, creating a web of industrial relationships that appears structural in nature and will be difficult to unwind.

Second, the old model of technology transfer from Europe to Türkiye is a thing of the past. In its place, we're seeing something more interesting: closer technological partnership. Leonardo's CEO Roberto Cingolani defined [8] the agreement with Baykar as an example of "extraordinary complementarity,"

acknowledging what many in the industry have come to recognize – Turkish companies can now bring unique capabilities and added value to the table. This is particularly evident in the unmanned systems sector, where Turkish expertise is increasingly seen as world-leading. But it's not just about drones. TAI's work on sixth-generation fighter technology demonstrates [9] how Turkish companies are pushing the boundaries of aerospace innovation. While some of these work strands and projects are still in their infancy, they are a testament to Türkiye's ambition in the defense sector.

Third, it is worth noting that the implications of this transformation extend far beyond individual companies or programs. Türkiye's potential participation [10] in European Union (EU) defense initiatives like Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) could help bridge the longstanding gap between NATO and EU defense efforts while also expanding the range of capabilities and technologies available to NATO allies.

The transformation of Turkish-European defense cooperation is occurring at a critical moment for European defense. With Europe still heavily dependent on external defense suppliers, Turkish companies are positioning themselves as a strategic alternative to traditional dependencies.

Notwithstanding its positive effects, this integration is not without challenges. Recent EU analyses indicate that while bilateral cooperation is expanding, broader integration continues to face significant challenges. Yet the strategic benefits are becoming increasingly clear. The EU's latest defense initiatives emphasize [11] reducing fragmentation and strengthening industrial cooperation

– precisely the areas where Turkish companies are making their mark.

The path forward is clear: Turkish defense companies are no longer content to be mere suppliers to Europe – they're becoming architects of a new European defense industrial base and are increasingly seen as valuable partners in addressing Europe's longstanding challenges with defense industrial fragmentation [12]. Recent deals like Spain's procurement of TAI's Hürjet trainers and the Leonardo-Baykar collaboration on advanced electronics demonstrate how Turkish companies are becoming essential partners in the European defense ecosystem.

While more comprehensive industrial partnerships are unlikely in the short term, ad-hoc bilateral collaboration and the inclusion of Turkish companies in European defense programs could spark deeper cooperation in the long term. Furthermore, it can pave the way for a more robust economic partnership, making involved parties more reluctant to pursue painful diplomatic and political ruptures if these entail significant economic losses.

Against this backdrop, implications for European defense are profound. As traditional boundaries between Turkish and European defense industries blur, we are likely to witness the emergence of a more integrated, more capable European defense industrial base. This isn't just good news for Turkish companies – it's a potentially transformative force for European defense capabilities at a time when they're needed most. From advanced trainer aircraft to next-generation unmanned systems, Turkish-European cooperation is creating new possibilities for defense innovation and industrial collaboration that were unimaginable just a few years ago.

Washington has given up fight against Kleptocrats

Casey Michel

ON Feb. 6, new US Attorney General Pam Bondi issued a series of new directives from President Donald Trump's administration outlining her office's priorities. Taken together, they represent not just a shocking move away from Washington's previous efforts to target kleptocrats and oligarchs, but represent the single-worst day ever seen in the history of US anti-corruption efforts, standing to benefit every oligarch and kleptocrat around the world, especially in places like Russia.

The directives effectively gut some of the US's most effective counter-kleptocracy tools and resources. They open the door to the kinds of crooked oligarchic networks that previous administrations had made headway against. Moreover, they make sanctions enforcement, especially against Russians, far more difficult.

While many of the directives are bogged down in legalese, it is worth going through some of them to get a sense of just how little the Trump administration is now prioritizing the fight against kleptocracy.

First, Bondi announced that her office would effectively gut the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) regulations that bring transparency to the US's foreign lobbying sector. While Bondi said that she would focus on targeting lobbying crimes "similar to more traditional espionage," this completely leaves out acts like lobbying for image management or lifting sanctions — two of the primary areas where foreign oligarchs have hired lobbyists. Indeed, the move risks making FARA effectively toothless against kleptocrats, leaving all of us in the dark about what these figures are hiring American lobbyists for.

Similarly, Bondi announced that she would eliminate the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force. While this body was relatively new, it was the only one in the US specifically dedicated to unearthing the kinds of influence and infiltration schemes launched by the Kremlin and other malign regimes. A direct outgrowth of Russia's efforts to interfere with the 2016 election, the body had already made significant headway in uprooting these influence networks in Washington and beyond. Now, it is gone.

Bondi also pronounced that the US would effectively gut two other key pieces of legislation aimed at stamping

out foreign corruption. The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), passed in the 1970s, blocked US businessmen from bribing foreign officials. The more recent Foreign Extortion Prevention Act (FEPA) served as a companion of sorts, making it illegal for any foreign officials to demand bribes from US businesses. Both pieces of legislation served as the bedrock of the American anti-corruption regime. Now, the US will apparently focus only on cases related to "smuggling" or the "trafficking of narcotics and firearms," not on cases where dictatorships and their proxies cozy up with crooked American businessmen.

That is not all. In perhaps the most dreadful move, Bondi announced that her office would completely eliminate anything that targets kleptocrats writ large. As one of her memos outlined, the Trump administration will dissolve bodies like Task Force KleptoCapture, which has investigated and seized assets linked to Russian oligarchs (among others), as well as the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, which helped repatriate those looted assets.

These two bodies have always faced an uphill battle. There was never any illusion that they would ever be able to identify or freeze every asset related to those regimes that steal from their own people, or successfully send that money back to those suffering on the ground. However, the US succeeded in seizing and repatriating billions of dollars, putting oligarchic forces around the world on notice that none of their assets were safe. Now, with the flick of her pen, Bondi has undone all of this and eliminated one of the most effective tools in the US's counter-kleptocracy arsenal. These moves are, all told, breathtaking. In a single day, the US has eliminated or kneecapped its most successful and most prominent counter-kleptocracy tools. Years of progress have suddenly been undone, hobbling ongoing efforts to hold the crooked and the corrupt to account.

Still, it is worth noting that none of these moves are especially surprising. As a former lobbyist for the Qatari dictator, Bondi could hardly be a fan of foreign lobbying regulations. Trump himself had previously described the FCPA — the decades-old law that launched the US's efforts to target corruption — as "horrible." Trump has long

been cozy with those aiding the Kremlin, not least former campaign manager Paul Manafort or former National Security Advisor Mike Flynn. These moves from the new administration are part of broader efforts to dismantle efforts to target white-collar crime that could have been anticipated.

But it is one thing to anticipate them and another to watch them play out in practice. Suddenly, whatever pretense the US had of being an anti-corruption crusader has been decimated. Whatever concerns Russian oligarchs — and related figures elsewhere — might have had about being targeted and prosecuted by US officials have gone up in smoke.

If there is a silver lining to these moves, it is that they could all be reversed by a future administration. The legislation behind FCPA and FARA has not been eliminated, meaning that they remain the law of the land, even if they will be largely unenforced. Given how the moves have made the likelihood of massive, sprawling foreign influence campaigns much likelier, it is entirely possible that a future scandal will spur reforms and even the return of the FBI's foreign influence task force and other kleptocracy initiatives. This is, what happened in both the 1970s (when Watergate helped spark anti-corruption reforms like the FCPA) and the 2010s, when Trump's first election prompted prosecutors to start enforcing FARA.

That, though, is small comfort to those watching the US's anti-kleptocracy efforts dissolve in real-time. Other democratic countries can, and should, try to pick up the slack. Places like the European Union should finally pass legislation bringing transparency to foreign lobbyists. Countries like the U.K. and Canada should beef up their prosecutorial teams as much as possible to target oligarchs. Democratic countries around the world should be talking, right now, about creating their own task forces to tackle kleptocracy and putting those plans into action.

But for years the US led the charge, both in terms of prosecutions and assets returned. Now, there is a gigantic hole in the middle of the world's counter-kleptocracy efforts. The only ones rubbing their hands in glee as a result are the kleptocrats, oligarchs, and dictators suddenly watching the field open up in front of them, knowing that they will never be caught.

The Moscow Times

Lethal fantasies of driving people from their land haunt Middle East

Jonathan Freedland

THE shock and awe continues and it only gets more shocking and more awful. These past few days, Americans have watched an unelected tech billionaire destroy large chunks of the federal government – Elon Musk bragged that he was feeding the life-saving USAid international development agency "into the wood chipper" – and yet that was not even the most outrageous event of the week.

That honour went instead to Donald Trump and his proposal to "just clean out" the Gaza Strip, by removing its people, bulldozing it and then redeveloping it as "the Riviera of the Middle East" under permanent US ownership. It was so staggering that it succeeded in dominating attention, at home and abroad, for several days rather than, as has become the norm in the less than three weeks since Trump returned to the White House, a meagre few hours before some new shocker took its place.

Initial reaction inside the US confirms how the US political classes, and what passes for the opposition, have been left numbed and punch drunk by the speed of events since 20 January and how far Trump has widened what was once quaintly referred to as the Overton window. He's not just opened that window, but smashed the glass, knocked out the frame and taken out the wall that used to hold it. Now everything is thinkable and, therefore, permissible.

So domestic criticism of Trump's Gaza plan focused largely on his suggestion that US troops be deployed on the ground in Gaza to

enforce US ownership. Bad idea, said the Democrats and Republican senator Lindsey Graham: that would put Americans in harm's way, recalling the 241 US marines who were sent to Beirut by Ronald Reagan, only to be killed in 1983 by a Hezbollah bomb.

Rahm Emanuel, who served as Barack Obama's White House chief of staff, told me this week that to have the US seize Gaza would be to repeat both the Beirut calamity and the "hubris" of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, "the worst foreign policy mistake ever in United States history". Indeed, it would be "Iraq and Lebanon on steroids". Trump was meant to pull Americans out of Middle East wars, not plunge them into the oldest and bitterest of them all.

Others have faulted Trump for his timing. Just as negotiations were meant to begin on the second phase of the fragile ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel, the US president has not so much destabilised the process as upended it. Israeli families waiting for loved ones held captive in Gaza for nearly 500 days now fear that Hamas has lost all incentive to continue releasing hostages or observing the ceasefire. Why would they stick with a deal brokered by a US whose ultimate plan is to empty Gaza of its population and turn it into a US-owned beach resort?

Plenty offer the now familiar advice that it's unwise to take Trump too literally. This, they hope, is nothing more than a classic Trump negotiation tactic. You

threaten the other party with a fate so awful they happily accede to the more modest request that was your true objective. So you threaten Canada with annexation as the 51st state, or 25% tariffs, and then get the trade or border concessions you actually want.

Such a move would leave international law in tatters, with the law of the jungle in its place. That prospect delights Trump, which is why he announced sanctions on the international criminal court on Thursday. He relishes a world in which might is right, because the US has might.

Listen to David Friedman, Trump's ambassador to Israel during his first term, who was asked who would live in Gaza after the envisaged 15-year rebuild is complete. It would be a "market-driven process," he told the New York Times. "I know I'm sounding like a real estate guy," he added, but just imagine the possibilities presented by "25 miles of sunset-facing beachfront".

Trump said he had to empty Gaza of its people because the Strip had become uninhabitable. No one could possibly live there until it had been levelled and rebuilt. It was "hell," "a demolition site", every building flattened or at risk of collapse. Next to him sat a smirking Benjamin Netanyahu, the same Netanyahu who for 15 months insisted his bombardment of Gaza was targeted and discriminate.

Looking down on them both was the portrait, restored by Trump

to the Oval Office, of one of his favourite predecessors, Andrew Jackson, the man who signed the Indian Removal Act of 1830, an act of ethnic cleansing that expelled tens of thousands of native Americans from their ancestral homelands and left thousands dead.

Trump says Palestinians in Gaza will be delighted by the prospect of being "relocated" to another country and perhaps some, driven to despair by Israeli airstrikes and nearly two decades of Hamas oppression, will grab the chance to get out. But many won't. They have an attachment to the land that will not be bought off by the promise of a condo far away.

And you know who should understand that better than most? Jews. They too were offered various alternatives back in the day, from Uganda to Madagascar to Alaska to a corner of Russia, but none ever gained serious traction, because there was only one place Jews ever regarded as their ancestral homeland. It is the same, small piece of land the Palestinians see exactly the same way. That is the tragedy of both peoples.

Each may fantasise about the land empty of the other, so they can have all of it to themselves, from the river to the sea. But those are dangerous fantasies, and a US president has no business fuelling them. Instead, both peoples are fated to share that land, one way or the other. Even the most powerful man in the world cannot wish them away.

The Guardian

Schools across Russia open Ukraine war museums

Angelina Trefilova

I am confident that the Special Operation Museum opened today at the school will provide our younger generation with a true example of courage, patriotism and love for their Motherland," a Belgorod city deputy said as he inaugurated the museum at School No. 34.

Among the museum's first exhibits include a military banner and the personal belongings of a school graduate who died in the war. The banner, school administrators said, was blessed by Russian Orthodox Church leader Patriarch Kirill. Russian schools have been significantly impacted by the country's three-year war in Ukraine, with patriotic and military lessons added to the curriculum and memorial plaques installed on facades in honor of fallen graduates.

But over the past year, entire museums dedicated to the Kremlin's "special military operation" have become increasingly widespread in Russian schools as the state seeks to indoctrinate all generations with its wartime narrative. Meanwhile in Ukraine, hundreds of schools have been damaged or destroyed in Russia's war. "Earlier [at the beginning of the full-scale war], [these museums were] a local initiative — someone pushed for it, someone took Putin's speech too literally. But now we are seeing a wider trend," independent educator Dima Zitzer told The Moscow Times.

School war museums are being opened in both the capital Moscow and in regions that have been most affected by mobilization. In Ulan-Ude, the capital of the eastern Siberian republic of Buryatia, an exhibition about the war in Ukraine was opened in a children's art school. "Museums like these will

allow us to convey the truth, the real truth," the mayor of Ulan-Ude said at the opening ceremony.

Vladislav Staf, a historian and researcher of memorial culture, said exhibitions of war memorabilia in schools are an attempt by the authorities to justify the three-year conflict. "There is still no simple answer as to why the war is being fought," Staf told The Moscow Times. "The most unexpected explanations have been given — one even claimed it was 'against global homosexuality.' It sounds comical, but nevertheless, it shows that a single, clear answer still does not exist."

In a rural school in the republic of Bashkortostan, a museum was created with the support of the ruling United Russia party to honor local men who died in the war. Among its exhibits are portraits of the fallen, a map of the front line, helmets and even a packet of wet wipes supplied to soldiers. "My son volunteered as soon as the Bashkir battalions began forming. Six months later, he was gone. It was very frightening," said the mother of one of the fallen soldiers during the opening ceremony.

This museum includes a separate exhibition dedicated to World War II, reinforcing the Kremlin's propaganda narrative that Russia is fighting the same war against fascism today that it was when it fought Nazi Germany. "Putin and his inner circle use rhetoric that portrays the war in Ukraine as yet another sacred war against fascism. And such a war, by definition, cannot be considered criminal," Staf said.

Sometimes, exhibitions about the war in Ukraine are organized both inside and outside schools. In the fall of 2024, a checkpoint "just like

on the front lines" was installed in the yard of a school in Simferopol, annexed Crimea, named after the 85th Artillery Regiment. Inside a military headquarters built on the school grounds are bunk beds resembling army barracks. The school administration now plans to open a shooting range for firearms training.

"The name was chosen by the students themselves. Our students and those from Gymnasium No. 122 in Donetsk, with whom we created this museum, have formed a friendship," said the director of the Moscow school. In addition to shells, bullets and a large portrait of President Vladimir Putin, the museum features an interactive touchscreen panel where visitors can listen to stories from children in Donetsk.

Late last year, the Association of Special Operation Veterans won a grant from the Moscow Mayor's Office to create more museums dedicated to the "heroes and events" of the war in Ukraine. Five more of these museums will open in schools across the capital this year, with up to 5 million rubles (\$50,000) allocated for their installation.

At one St. Petersburg school, a military museum was opened in December with the support of the Española military unit, which includes men with openly neo-Nazi views. Among the exhibits are shell fragments, downed drones and children's drawings that Russian soldiers kept with them at the front lines. "Victory will be ours in any case. Odesa, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv are ahead. We will liberate all Russian [lands], our historically Russian

lands from fascism because, as our veterans say, we didn't quite finish the job." Española fighter Alexander German said at the opening ceremony.

"How do you construct the image of an enemy? You need to call them a fascist. Since everyone remembers from childhood that fascism is absolute evil, there is no need to question who they are — brothers, neighbors — it doesn't matter. If they are fascists, that immediately legitimizes the fight," said Staf. In the Ryazan region, a school military museum combines exhibits from World War II and the war in Ukraine.

"A special place in the trophy corner is occupied by a fragment of a HIMARS multiple rocket launcher system shell," a local newspaper reported. One of the exhibits in the museum features a photograph of Maxim Khygin, a conscript soldier who was killed in Ukraine on the first day of the full-scale war. His mother was officially notified of his death via WhatsApp. "I could never have imagined that a conscript would be sent there [to Ukraine] to fight. He had only held a rifle twice — when posing for photos. What kind of war was he supposed to fight?" the fallen soldier's mother said during an interview.

Despite their current spread across the country, Staf said these school museums could fade into oblivion once the war ends. "The authorities will likely use narratives similar to those they employ when removing ... memorial plaques dedicated to victims of political repression," he said. "Something along the lines of: 'Don't turn schools or homes into cemeteries. We should be happy that the war is over, not mourn'."



SCCI wants joint initiatives to cope with climate change issues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fazal Moqeem Khan said that January of the current year had remained very hot, which is a major indication of rising impacts of climate change and urged joint initiatives and plantations to cope with the global warming challenges.

Otherwise, he warned the situation would be uncontrollable if weather can get further hot in the next coming years, resultantly, electricity consumption would increase where the country is already confronted with an energy crisis that has adversely affected business, industries and

people from different segments of the society.

Fazal Moqeem said in a statement here on Saturday that business of warm clothes was affected owing to hot weather in January this year, whereas the climate change has also damaged various crops, orchards and other sectors miserably.

For the last several decades, the weather had remained very cold in January but this year January has remained hot, which is challenging and a sign of danger, and this hazard would only be tackled by maximum plantation to reduce the growing impacts of climate change, SCCI chief remarked.

Moqeem expressed

grave concern over growing deforestation, which has become a major cause of climate change issues.

In the prevailing circumstances, the SCCI president stated that the country is confronted with an energy shortfall and electricity consumption will increase in wake of rising temperature, especially gap between demand and supply of electricity would further affect business, industries, general public and various sectors.

Moqeem urged government, relevant authorities and people from different walks of life to play their role to overcome growing climate change issues and grow maximum plants and avoid cutting trees that

would not help to keep the environment clean but also tackle increasing impacts of hazards of global warming in the next many years.

The SCCI chief sought pragmatic steps to carbon market financing, special incentives for electric vehicles, along with conversion of urban transport/vehicles from petrol and diesel into CNG and an uplift to the green energy sector.

He also urged the district administration to launch a tree plantation campaign as a mass contact drive and need to take priority-based steps for preservation of the national ECOSystem and keep focus on paperless economy in the prevailing scenario.

Suzuki Co. hold ‘Clean-up the World Campaign’



F.P. Report

KARACHI:

The ‘Clean-up the World Campaign’ by Suzuki Motor Corporation, Japan, took a significant step in promoting environmental awareness through the Beach Cleaning Campaign organized by Pak Suzuki Motor Co. on Saturday at Seaview Clifton. This initiative, as

part of the company’s Corporate Social Responsibility, aimed to highlight the critical need for environmental protection and marine life conservation.

Employees of Pak Suzuki, along with their families, as well as dealers and vendors, participated in the campaign, contributing to a cleaner beach and raising awareness of the need for sustainable environ-

mental practices.

While addressing the media, Mr. Hiroshi Kawamura, MD & CEO of Pak Suzuki said, it is a matter of concern that increasing environmental pollution in sea and at beaches has become a serious issue that is not only destroying the natural beauty of our beaches but also impacting fatal and adverse effects on the precious marine life & humans & also, negatively impact on tourism & crucial economic activities. Beach cleaning is a critical environmental endeavor that requires collective effort to sustain a clean and healthy environment as a whole.

He concluded his message with a call to action ‘‘Together, we can make a difference. Let’s work for a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future’’.

Gold prices dip by Rs1,046 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs1,046 and was sold at Rs299,000 on Saturday against its sale at Rs300,046 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs897 to Rs256,344 from Rs257,241 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat came down to Rs234,990 from Rs235,812.

The prices of per tola silver decreased by Rs48 to Rs3,330 whereas that of ten gram went down by Rs42 to Rs2,854.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$8 to \$2,861 from \$2,869, the Association reported.

OMODA & JAECCOO cooperation with NexGen Auto

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chery Group and NexGen Auto Forge Strategic Partnership to Bring Omoda and Jaecoo New Energy Vehicles to Pakistan.

Chery Group, a global leader in the automotive industry, and NexGen Auto, a prominent automotive distributor, are proud to announce their strategic partnership to introduce Omoda and Jaecoo-branded New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) in Pakistan.

This collaboration signifies a shared vision to drive innovation, sustainability, and advanced mobility solutions in one of South Asia’s most dynamic markets.

With a commitment to redefining automotive standards, this partnership will bring cutting-edge NEVs equipped with state-

of-the-art technology and eco-friendly powertrains. The Omoda and Jaecoo brands are renowned for their contemporary designs, superior performance, and dedication to delivering a sustainable driving experience.

Speaking about the partnership, Chen Chunging, Executive vice president of Chery International, stated: ‘‘Chery Group is thrilled to collaborate with NexGen Auto to enter the Pakistani market.

This partnership is a testament to our mission of providing intelligent, sustainable, and premium mobility options to customers globally.

We are confident that Omoda and Jaecoo will set a new benchmark for New Energy Vehicles in Pakistan.’’

Farrukh Ifzal, Senior Management Represent-

ative of Nexgen Auto, expressed enthusiasm about the alliance, saying: ‘‘NexGen Auto’s vision aligns seamlessly with Chery Group’s innovative approach to automotive technology. Together, we aim to transform the Pakistani automotive landscape by introducing vehicles that not only meet international standards but also cater to the evolving preferences of local consumers.’’

The introduction of Omoda and Jaecoo NEVs is expected to contribute significantly to Pakistan’s transition towards a greener and more sustainable transportation future. The vehicles will be available through NexGen Auto’s dealership network, ensuring widespread accessibility and exceptional customer service.

Further details about product launches, speci-

fications, and pricing will be announced in the coming months.

About Chery Group: Chery Group is a globally recognized automotive manufacturer with a strong presence in over 80 countries, known for its commitment to innovation. Chery specializes in the production of high-quality vehicles that combine advanced technology, exceptional design, and environmental responsibility.

About NexGen Auto: NexGen Auto is a newly established company in Pakistan’s automotive sector. Dedicated to delivering premium vehicles and exceptional after-sales services, NexGen Auto is committed to innovation and aims to make a significant impact on the nation’s automotive industry.



JEDDAH: Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan taking to media on strengthening Pakistan-Saudi trade ties after ‘Made in Pakistan’ Exhibition.

Saudi businesses eye stronger ties with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan’s Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, engaged in a series of high-profile meetings in Jeddah, focusing on enhancing trade and investment partnerships between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The discussions, held during the first-ever ‘‘Made in Pakistan’’ exhibition, centered on business collaborations, investment opportunities, and Saudi brands entering the Pakistani market, said a press release issued here on Saturday.

In a key meeting with prominent Saudi businessmen, the Minister invited them to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan across energy, agriculture, IT, healthcare, infrastructure, and consumer goods.

He highlighted Pakistan’s 22% export growth to Saudi Arabia, reaching \$700 million, and assured Saudi investors of a business-friendly environment with tax exemptions, investor protection laws, and access to a 240-million-strong consumer market.

Saudi business leaders expressed keen interest in

collaborating with Pakistani counterparts, particularly in construction materials, textiles, and food industries. Several proposals were discussed to enhance trade partnerships and industrial investment, with the Minister extending an invitation for them to visit Pakistan and participate in trade exhibitions like TEXPO, Food-AG, and the Healthcare & Mineral Show.

The discussions also touched on Pakistan’s recent ease-of-doing-business initiatives, including Pakistan Single Window (PSW) and the National Compliance Centre, aimed at streamlining trade regulations and enhancing export standards.

A major highlight of the visit was Minister Jam Kamal Khan’s meeting with Albaik owner Rami Abu Ghazala. The Minister was given a tour of Albaik’s operations, where he met Pakistani employees working at the fast-food giant.

During the discussions, Albaik confirmed its expansion into Pakistan, stating that the process is in its final stages following

the signing of an MOU. The first Albaik branches in Pakistan are expected to open soon, creating new job opportunities and strengthening economic ties between the two nations.

The Minister appreciated the contributions of Pakistani workers within Saudi businesses like Albaik and welcomed the brand’s entry into Pakistan, highlighting its potential to enhance the country’s fast-food industry and consumer market.

In another significant meeting, the Minister met with Pakistani investors and business leaders based in Jeddah, recognizing their decades-long contributions to Saudi Arabia’s economic landscape. He acknowledged that 1.7 million Pakistanis traveled to Saudi Arabia in the past five years, making it the top destination for Pakistani emigrants.

The Minister also highlighted the \$7.4 billion in remittances sent from Saudi Arabia last fiscal year, emphasizing the strong financial link between the two countries. He noted

that the Pakistan Investor Forum, recently established in Jeddah, is playing a key role in guiding new market entrants and fostering Pakistani-Saudi business collaborations.

He also encouraged Pakistani investors to leverage the country’s Revised Visa Policy, which allows GCC citizens to enter Pakistan visa-free for up to 90 days, making business travel more convenient.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan’s engagements in Jeddah reinforced Pakistan’s commitment to strengthening trade ties with Saudi Arabia. From Saudi business leaders showing confidence in Pakistan’s economy to Albaik’s upcoming expansion, the visit marked a major step forward in deepening economic and trade relations between the two nations.

With growing Saudi interest in Pakistani industries, increasing trade volumes, and new business partnerships, the Pakistan-Saudi economic corridor is set to expand further, opening exciting opportunities for both countries.

Saudi firms continue to raise funding

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia’s startup ecosystem continues to gain momentum ahead of the Kingdom’s flagship technology conference, LEAP 2025, fintech, artificial intelligence, and industrial technology companies securing major funding rounds.

Key investments include Saudi-based peer-to-peer lending platform Forus securing a \$60 million credit facility from Fasanara Capital. The funding will enable Forus to provide over \$150 million in working capital loans to Saudi small and medium-sized enterprises.

Founded in 2019 by Nosaibah Al-Rajhi, Forus has facilitated more than \$390 million in working capital financing for over 400 Saudi SMEs.

The company aims to address financing gaps for businesses that struggle

with access to traditional banking services.

Vminds.ai raises six-figure pre-seed investment

Saudi-based AI startup vminds.ai has closed a six-figure pre-seed funding round from undisclosed angel investors. The company plans to use the funds to support its platform’s official launch for individuals and its enterprise rollout in the third quarter of 2025.

Founded by Ahmed Al-Mashhadi, vminds.ai is an intelligent, self-learning platform that integrates more than 150 AI tools from global companies into a unified system. The startup aims to simplify AI adoption by businesses and individuals in the region.

Khazna closes \$16m pre-series B round

Egyptian fintech Khazna has secured a \$16 million pre-series B funding round, with participation from new

and existing investors, including SANAD Fund for MSME, anb Seed Fund, and Aljazira Capital, as well as Khwarizmi Ventures, Nclude, ICU Ventures, and Quona, Speedinvest, and Disruptech Ventures.

Launched in 2020 by Omar Saleh, Ahmed Wagueeh, and Fatimah El-Shenawy, Khazna focuses on serving Egypt’s underbanked population by providing access to financial services such as general-purpose credit, buy now, pay later, and bill payments.

The company plans to use the fresh funding to apply for a digital banking license in Egypt and expand into the Saudi market.

Simplex secures \$13m to build CNC factory in Riyadh

Egypt-based CNC machine manufacturer Simplex has raised \$13 million in funding, led by

Saudi Arabia’s National Industrial Development Center.

The investment will be used to establish a factory in Riyadh dedicated to producing advanced CNC machines.

Founded in 2013 by Ahmed Shaaban, Mohamed Mansour, and Amr Mahmoud, Simplex provides industrial manufacturing solutions across various sectors.

The company’s expansion into Saudi Arabia aligns with the Kingdom’s efforts to localize industrial production.

Myne raises \$2m pre-seed round

UAE-based fintech startup Myne has secured a \$2 million pre-seed funding round led by Scene Holding, with participation from Raz Holding, Plus VC, Annex Investments, and angel investors.

LEAP 2025: Saudia’s tech ambitions take center stage

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia is set to host its flagship technology event, LEAP 2025, in Riyadh from Feb. 9, bringing together visionaries, innovators, and investors from around the world. The latest edition follows last year’s record-breaking LEAP 2024, which saw \$13.4 billion in investments and project commitments.

Under the theme ‘‘Into New Worlds,’’ LEAP 2025 aims to expand business networking and investment opportunities in the tech sector. The event plays a critical role in Saudi Arabia’s ambition to become a global technology hub, aligning with its Vision 2030 plan to diversify the economy. As part of this initiative, the Kingdom has pledged \$100 billion toward advancing its technology sector.

This comes as a World Economic Forum report projected that investment in research, development, and innovation will add \$16 billion to Saudi Arabia’s GDP by 2030. The government has committed to investing 2.5 percent of the nation’s annual GDP in the sector by

2040.

LEAP 2025 is co-organized by Tahaluf and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, in partnership with Informa PLC, the Saudi Federation for Cybersecurity, Programming and Drones, and the Events Investment Fund.

According to the event’s website, this year’s LEAP is expected to host more than 680 tech startups, 1,100 speakers, 1,800 technology brands, and over 170,000 visitors.

Driving tech aspirations Industry leaders view LEAP as a catalyst for Saudi Arabia’s technological ambitions.

‘‘The future of technology is being shaped by ecosystems that blend digital innovation with real-world transformation. Saudi Arabia’s journey, highlighted at LEAP, showcases how technology is driving giga-projects such as NEOM, Red Sea Global, and Qiddiya,’’ said Mamdouh Al-Doubayan, managing director of Globant in the Middle East and North Africa.

‘‘These initiatives demon-

strate that building a knowledge-based economy is not just about deploying cutting-edge tools — it’s about fostering environments where innovation solves tangible challenges and drives societal progress,’’ he added.

Globant is among the companies supporting the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 through tech-driven collaboration. In December, Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah Al-Swaha underscored the conference’s role in realizing the Kingdom’s economic transformation.

‘‘The decision to move to a ticketed format this year makes LEAP more of an exclusive experience for attendees and relevant to today’s global technology elite,’’ Al-Swaha said.

‘‘LEAP 2025 will showcase exceptional technology innovations, business opportunities, and content — ensuring Saudi Arabia becomes the world’s undisputed technology aggregator,’’ he added.

Thibault Werle, managing director and partner at Boston Consulting Group,

emphasized LEAP’s role in positioning Saudi Arabia as a regional tech leader.

‘‘In only three years, LEAP has become a flagship event uniting tech leaders, investors, and entrepreneurs, cementing the Kingdom’s role as a hub for transformative technologies shaping industries and economies alike,’’ Werle said.

Werle added that Saudi Arabia is not merely adopting technology but actively reshaping its future by building a dynamic ecosystem that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship.

Programs and speakers LEAP 2025 will feature the return of DeepFest, the region’s leading forum on artificial intelligence, as well as new segments such as the SportsTech Track and Tech Arena.

The SportsTech Track will highlight cutting-edge innovations in sports technology, featuring live demos, industry announcements, and insights from leading figures. Notable speakers include Patrice Evra, former Manchester United forward; Mathieu Flamini, co-founder of GF

Biochemicals and former French international; and Iker Casillas, ex-Real Madrid and Spain goalkeeper.

Tech Arena, another new addition, will offer hands-on experiences with prototypes and live product demonstrations. The Startup Stage will serve as a platform for emerging entrepreneurs to pitch groundbreaking ideas in the technology sector.

LEAP 2025 will kick off with an opening address by Al-Swaha, followed by keynote speeches from Charbel Aoun, smart city lead at NVIDIA for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and Arvind Krishna, chairman and CEO of IBM.

Other prominent speakers include Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan Al-Saud, chairman of the Saudi Esports Federation; Alison Wagonfeld, chief marketing officer of Google Cloud; Kam Ghaffarian, executive chairman of Axiom Space; and Javier Tebas, president of La Liga.

Industry heavyweights such as Saudi Aramco, PepsiCo, Logitech, Lucid, NEOM, and the Royal

Commission of AIUla will be among the key participants.

‘‘We are thrilled to join LEAP 2025, a pivotal event that provides a unique platform highlighting the latest advancements in technology and innovation. We look forward to engaging with industry leaders, exploring new partnerships, and showcasing our innovations that empower users to create, collaborate, and bring their creative visions to life,’’ said Rocky Tang, general manager of enterprise development at Wondershare.

Håkan Cervell, vice president and head of Saudi Arabia at Ericsson Middle East and Africa, said the company’s presence at LEAP reflects its commitment to supporting Vision 2030.

‘‘Like every year, we are truly excited to showcase Ericsson’s innovative technologies at LEAP 2025 and how they are empowering a sustainable, connected future for Saudi Arabia and beyond,’’ Cervell said.

Expanding opportunities Beyond panel discussions and keynotes, LEAP 2025 will provide a wide range of

networking and investment opportunities. The conference will include investor matchmaking programs, exclusive networking lounges, and specialized workshops tailored to startups and enterprises looking to scale in Saudi Arabia’s burgeoning tech ecosystem.

Another highlight of this year’s event is the Future Mobility Pavilion, where companies specializing in electric vehicles, autonomous driving, and smart transportation solutions will showcase their latest developments. Industry leaders from Tesla, Lucid Motors, and Saudi Public Transport Company are expected to participate in discussions about the future of mobility in the Kingdom.

LEAP 2025 will also emphasize advancements in cybersecurity and blockchain technology, with dedicated panels on data privacy, digital identity, and decentralized finance. Experts from Microsoft, IBM, and Saudi Arabia’s National Cybersecurity Authority will provide insights into emerging threats and strategies for safeguarding digital assets.

Additionally, the conference will serve as a platform for universities, research institutions, and tech incubators to showcase cutting-edge research and development projects. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage with scientists and developers leading breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and quantum computing.

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Civil Judge V/laqa Qazi Buner at Daggar/Suit No 309/1.Institution 12/12/ 2024. Date of hearing, 19/2/2025. Karm Khan VS Ghani Rehman.Notice to No.1,Ghani Rehman s/o Abdul Khaliq resident of Jangdara Torwarsak thesel Daggar district Buner.Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 19/2/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

Ilyas Ali wins gold at Asian Cycling 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's cyclist Ilyas Ali Jawaid has bagged a historic gold medal in the Individual Time Trial at the Asian Road and Para Cycling Championship 2025 in Thailand. Competing against top cyclists from Asia, Ilyas Ali clinched first place with an impressive time of 26:30.556 minutes, averaging a speed of 48.41 km/h over a challenging 21.4 km race. President of the Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF), Syed Azhar Ali Shah, expressed immense pride in the achievement, saying, "This is a moment of great honor for Pakistan's cycling community. Ilyas Ali's outstanding performance at the continental level showcases Pakistan's growing potential in international cycling. The PCF remains committed to providing maximum opportunities for our athletes to excel on global platforms." The silver and bronze medals in the category were won by Narongdat Sangchai (Thailand) and Thura Kit Boonratanathanakorn (Thailand), respectively. The Asian Road & Para Cycling Championship 2025 is a UCI-sanctioned event, featuring elite cyclists from across the continent. Pakistan's participation and success in such events highlight the nation's rising status in competitive cycling.

Sri Lanka stare at defeat in second Australia Test

GALLE (AFP/APP): Sri Lanka were reeling at 98-4 at tea on day three in Galle on Saturday and staring at their second loss in the two-Test series against a dominant Australia. The hosts still require a further 60 runs to avoid an innings defeat, with survival looking improbable. With the picturesque Galle Fort providing a natural grandstand, hundreds of Australian supporters perched themselves atop the historic ramparts to enjoy a commanding performance from their side. The fans celebrated as off-spinner Nathan Lyon became only the third Australian to claim 550 Test wickets, joining the exalted company of Shane Warne (708) and Glenn McGrath (563). Fittingly, Lyon's Test career began at Galle in 2011 and he celebrated the milestone in style, tightening the screws on Sri Lanka. Despite Australia losing seven wickets in the morning session to be bowled out for 414, their first-innings lead of 157 put them well ahead. Alex Carey turned entertainer-in-chief with a swashbuckling 156 -- his career-best knock and the highest score by an Australian wicket-keeper in Asia. Prabath Jayasuriya, Sri Lanka's spin spearhead, claimed his 11th five-wicket haul, but it was only a consolation with the visitors remaining firmly in control. Sri Lanka's reply got off to a shaky start, with left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann making early inroads. Dimuth Karunaratne, playing in his final Test innings, walked off to a standing ovation after he fell to Kuhnemann for 14, with even the Australian players acknowledging his stellar career. The veteran opener, who became only the seventh Sri Lankan to play 100 Tests, bows out as the nation's fourth-highest run-scorer and their most prolific opener. Lyon's landmark wicket was straight out of a coaching manual. With long-off and long-on left vacant, he dangled the carrot for Dinesh Chandimal, who attempted an ambitious lofted shot.



Inzamam, Misbah formally inducted to PCB Hall of Fame

LAHORE (APP): PCB Hall of Famers Inzamam ul Haq and Misbah ul Haq were formally inducted to the Hall of Fame when PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi presented them with commemorative caps and specially-designed plaques at the Gaddafi stadium on Saturday evening.

The ceremony was held during the dinner break of the opening match of the tri-nation series between Pakistan and New Zealand. The quartet of Inzamam, Misbah, Saeed Anwar and all-rounder Mushtaq Mohammad were inducted to the PCB Hall of Fame last month and they were to be decorated later. Saeed Anwar and all-rounder Mushtaq Mohammad will be formally inducted at some later stage.

The illustrious list of PCB Hall of Famers includes Inzamam-ul-Haq, Misbah-ul-Haq, Mushtaq Mohammad, Saeed Anwar, Abdul Qadir, AH Kardar, Fazal Mahmood, Hanif Mohammad, Imran Khan, Javed Miandad, Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Younis Khan and Zaheer Abbas. PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi said "On behalf of the Pakistan Cricket Board, I extend heartfelt congratulations to these four cricketing legends on their well-deserved inductions into the PCB Hall of Fame. This honour represents a tribute to their outstanding contributions to Pakistan cricket and to the global game."

"Mushtaq Mohammad is regarded as one of Pakistan's finest captains, known for his astute leadership and inspiring style. Inzamam-ul-Haq's immense talent and match-winning ability have left an indelible mark on the sport. Misbah-ul-Haq took charge of the Pakistan team during challenging times, guiding it to the pinnacle of Test rankings and achieving a historic series win in the Caribbean. Saeed Anwar, with his natural grace and classical technique, redefined the role of an opener and thrived against some of the world's best bowlers under all conditions."

"These four giants of the game hold a special place in Pakistan's rich cricketing

history. Their contributions not only elevated the sport within Pakistan but also inspired future generations to pursue excellence. Their talent, charisma and unwavering commitment have made them true ambassadors of cricket and the PCB takes immense pride in honouring their accomplishments. "Pakistan is fortunate to have produced such extraordinary players who have showcased their skill and sportsmanship on the global stage. I hope that our aspiring cricketers will look up to these icons and strive to follow in their footsteps, carrying forward their legacy and continuing to strengthen Pakistan's position as a cricketing powerhouse."

Inzamam-ul-Haq played international cricket from 1991 to 2007 and was a member of Pakistan's 1992 World Cup-winning team. Misbah-ul-Haq represented Pakistan from 2001 to 2017, was part of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2009 winning squad and guided the team to the No.1 spot in the ICC Test Team Rankings in 2016. Mushtaq Mohammad played for Pakistan from 1959 to 1979 and captained the team to its first-ever Test win in Australia in 1977, featured in inaugural ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 1975 in England before coaching the Pakistan side to the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 1999 final -- also in England. Meanwhile, Saeed Anwar represented Pakistan from 1989 to 2003, amassing a total of 31 centuries and 68 half-centuries, including three centuries and three half-centuries across the 1996, 1999 and 2003 World Cups.

The four icons of the game were inducted following an independent and transparent voting process, which was participated by Wasim Akram, Zaheer Abbas (both PCB Hall of Famers), Azhar Ali (former Pakistan captain), Bismah Maroof, Nain Abidi (both former women international cricketers), Majid Bhatti, Mohi Shah, Mohammad Yaqoob, Nauman Niaz, Sawera Pasha and Zahid Maqsood (cricket journalists/analysts).

All-round New Zealand sink Pakistan by 78 runs in tri-nation series opener

LAHORE (APP): The all-round New Zealand defeated Pakistan in all departments of the game as they restricted the Green Shirts to 252 runs and successfully defended a commanding total of 330 in the first match of the tri-nation series at Gaddafi stadium here on Saturday night.

The Green Shirts were bundled out for 252-9 runs in 47.5 overs as Haris Rauf did not come out to bat after he had developed some pain in the ribs and could only bowl 6.3 overs. New Zealand scored 330-6 after they won the toss and elected to bat first on a batting friendly pitch at the Gaddafi stadium with the sun blazing down.

If the Kiwi batsmen lifted their team out of the mire, the bowlers snuffed out life from the Pakistan batting line-up. The spinners claimed six wickets in their 26 overs and conceded mere 112 runs. Player of the match Glenn Phillips and two other all-rounders Michael Bracewell and Daryl Mitchell were the main contributors to the team's comprehensive win against the hosts Pakistan.

During a practice session at the LCCA grounds a days ago, a reporter had questioned the wisdom of playing too many all-rounders in the team and the New Zealand bowling coach Jacob Oram had responded that he saw them as multi-skilled cricketers who could deliver the team in batting or bowling on the given day.

Glenn Phillips repaid the faith of the team management in all-rounders and hit a spectacular maiden ODI century to lift the team spirits and raise a total of 330 although they looked to hardly reach 300 runs by the 35th over of the New Zealand innings. The all-rounder Phillips smashed an unbeaten maiden century to propel New Zealand to a mammoth total and set Pakistan a target of 331 in the first match of the tri-nation series at the Gaddafi stadium on Saturday.

Phillips plundered



Pakistani bowlers for seven 6s and six 4s in a commanding innings of 106 not out which turned the tables on Pakistan. The Kiwis were modestly placed at 135-4 when Tom Latham fell to Haris Rauf in the 28th over. He put the Pakistan bats to the sword as he smashed 68 runs of the last 21 balls, he faced including 25 runs off Shaheen Shah Afridi's last over of the innings.

Phillips scored a useful partnership of 54 runs with Michael Bracewell but it was the vital partnership of 95 runs between Kane Williamson and Daryl Mitchell which provided stability to the New Zealand innings after they lost both the openers for 39 runs by the eight over of their innings. Kane Williamson played a responsible knock of 58 runs off 89 balls while all-rounder Daryl Mitchell struck 81 runs with two boundaries and four 6s.

He also picked the all-important wicket of explosive Pakistani opener Fakhar Zaman who looked all set to score fourth 100 against New Zealand and surpass former opener Saeed Anwar's record of three centuries against New Zealand.

In the field, Phillips took a flying catch at mid-wicket to dismiss Tayyab Tahir off Matt Henry and catch culminated a promising partnership between

Tayyab Tahir and Salman Ali Agha. The duo stitched 53 runs 9.3 overs and his dismissal stifled all hopes of some respectable total.

The all-rounder captain Mitchell Santner grabbed three important scalps including Muhammad Rizwan, Kamran Ghulam and Khushdil Shah as he conceded mere 41 runs off 10 overs.

All-rounder Michael Bracewell also rose to the occasion and plucked the wicket of crowd-puller Babar Azam who misjudged the bounce and played the ball into the hands of diving Phillips. The cautious knock of 10 off 23 balls by Babar Azam was the beginning of the end for Pakistan as the 52 run partnership came to an end.

Fakhar Zaman played an aggressive knock of 84 runs but his fall to a quicker delivery from Phillips dumped Pakistan. Salman Agha 40 (51) and Tayyab Tahir 30 (29) were the other major contributors.

On the eve when the Black Caps all-rounders flourished in all departments, the Pakistani all-rounders failed to live up to the expectations of the fans and cricket experts. Khushdil Shah 15 (18) and Salman Ali Agha could not do for their team what Phillips and Bracewell did for the Kiwis. Khushdil Shah and Salman Agha also remained wicket-less in

their 9 and 4.4 over spells respectively and conceded 66 and 31 runs.

Pakistan bowlers had the match under control in first half of the match as they restricted the Kiwis batsmen to 200-5 in 37.5 overs but lost the script in the last 12 overs and were clueless in the face of onslaught from Phillips. Shaheen Shah Afridi bowled respectably and claimed three wickets but conceded 40 runs off his last two overs. He leaked 88 runs in his quota of 10 overs. Naseem Shah, the other quick, returned bowling figures of 70-0 in his quota. Abrar Ahmed bowled a miserly quota of 10 overs for two wickets and conceded 41 runs. Haris Rauf was also impressive with the ball and conceded 23 runs for one wicket in 6.3 overs.

The match also witnessed two injury scares as Pakistan pace ace Haris Rauf did not complete his quota and left the field rubbing his ribs after bowling 6.3 overs while the Kiwi all-rounder Rachin Ravindra got stuck in the head and left the field bleeding as he muffed a Khushdil Shah catch at deep square leg.

Pakistan will play their second match against South Africa in National Bank stadium, Karachi on February 12 (Wednesday) and they must win to keep their hopes alive of playing the tri-nation final of February 14 (Friday).



LAHORE: Spectators enjoy while watching first match of the Tri-Nation Series played between Pakistan and New Zealand cricket teams at Gaddafi Stadium. —APP Photo

Bencic wins first WTA title since becoming mother

ABU DHABI (Agencies): Switzerland's Belinda Bencic celebrated with baby daughter Bella in her arms after beating American Ashlyn Krueger in the Abu Dhabi Open final to claim a ninth WTA title and first since becoming a mother.

The former Olympic champion, 27, battled back from a set down to overcome 20-year-old Krueger 4-6 6-1 6-1.

Bencic's victory came just 10 months after the arrival of her first child and less than four months since her return from more than a year out on maternity leave.

"It's been a while," she said, greeting an appreciative crowd at the Zayed Sports City International Tennis Centre.

The former world number four's last WTA title came at the Abu Dhabi Open in February 2023.

"I am super happy to be back here in Abu Dhabi. I didn't imagine this.

Ladies Open Golf C'ship commencing Friday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 4th Ghazala Ansari Julke Challenge Cup Ladies Open Championship is set to begin this Friday at the Gymkhana Golf Club.

This is the first-ever open championship in the history of the Ghazala Ansari Julke Challenge Cup, transitioning from an amateur-only competition in its previous three editions to a tournament now welcoming professional lady golfers.

According to Dr. Asma Afzal Shami, who originally conceived the idea of dedicating championships to the forgotten icons of yesteryear, this championship is inspiring the young golfers to tread the same path as Ghazala Ansari.

The championship officials include Convenor Golf Club, Shaikat Jave, Bela Azam, the tournament director, Mamoona Azam, the championship coordinator, and Munazza Shaheen, the Chief Referee.

Meanwhile, the convenor emphasized that Gymkhana Golf Club holds a special place in the legacy of Ghazala Ansari, who belongs to this club, making it the ideal venue to host the championship for the fourth consecutive time.

He ensured the club's unwavering commitment to fostering women's golf, noting that participation has steadily increased with each edition. He lauded the efforts of Dr. Asma Shami and her team for luring women into golf and increasing not only the number, but also the quality of the sport.

Dr. Shami commended the club's unwa-

vering support and commitment to advancing women's golf. She praised PGF for introducing the pro category, emphasizing how it will propel the development of ladies' golf in Pakistan. This initiative allows elite amateurs to transition into the professional circuit, thereby creating opportunities for emerging players to excel in amateur events.

"This is a historic moment as we welcome professional lady golfers into this championship. The participation of players from Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Goth Machi, Peshawar, Wah Cantt, Raisalpur, and Multan is a great honor, and we are thrilled to host them at Gymkhana," she said.

Munazza Shaheen, the chief referee said there are now 7 categories in the championship including Professionals, WAGR Open category, Category B and C for amateur golfers with handicap 13 to 24 and 25 to 36. Then we have Senior lady golfers and juniors in two categories of ages 11 to 14 and below 10.

80 players have registered, among them 5 are professionals. 8 players in WAGR, making it an unforgettable number of golfers competing from this platform.

Bela Azam expressed her unwavering commitment to the championship, highlighting the crucial role of Julke as the title sponsor. She emphasized that Julke's sponsorship has been instrumental in elevating the status of the event, enabling it to expand through continued sponsorship and strategic development.

KHA organizes exhibition matches on Kashmir Solidarity Day

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Hockey Association (KHA) organized exhibition matches on Kashmir Solidarity Day to show unity and pay tribute to the Kashmiri people, while praying for their independence.

The event featured a series of exciting matches, including a draw between Fatima Jinnah XI and Begum Rana Liaquat Ali, and a thrilling 1-0 win for Mushaal Hussain Malik's team against Bilqees Edhi's team. Additionally, matches were held in the under-9 category (boys) and between KHA Color and KHA White (boys).

The event was attended by dignitaries including KHA Secretary Olympian Hanif Khan, Ehtisham Ali Warsi, Mehmoond Ali Khan, Dr. SA Majid, Laiq Lashari, Salman Khan, Masood Khan, Zahid Shahab, Chaudhry Tanveer Arshad, Raja Abdul Majeed, Raja Anwar, Kamal Javed, Iqbal Senior Joint Secretary KHA, Nusrat Hussain, Arshad Siddiq, Gul Faraz Ahmed Khan, Chairman KHA, Batool Kazim, Secretary KHA Women Wing, Dr. Arif Hafeez, Sagheer Husain Athar Husain, Azlan Khan, Rizwan Khan, Kashmala Batool, Kanza Saleem, Faiz, and others.

Players and officials observed a moment of solidarity with Kashmir and prayed for the freedom of Kashmiris. The event was a testament to KHA's commitment to promoting hockey and supporting social causes.

"We stand in solidarity with the Kashmiri people and pray for their independence," said Hanif Khan, KHA Secretary and Olympian. "We believe that sports can bring people together and promote peace and harmony." The event was a huge success, with players, officials, and spectators coming together to show their support for the Kashmiri people.

Man City survive Orient scare as Saints crash out



LONDON (AFP): Kevin De Bruyne spared Manchester City's blushes as they came from behind to beat third tier Leyton Orient 2-1 in the FA Cup fourth round, while Southampton's miserable season hit a new low with an embarrassing exit against Burnley on Saturday.

Pep Guardiola's troubled side were rocked when Jamie Donley's long-range effort came back off the bar and rebounded in off City goalkeeper Stefan Ortega to give Orient an early lead at Brisbane Road.

City finally drew level after 56 minutes when Uzbekistan defender Abdulkodir Khusanov deflected in Rico Lewis's shot for his first Manchester City goal since signing from Lens in the January transfer window.

Guardiola had to turn to his bench more than he would have liked just four days before a mammoth Champions League play-off round first leg against Real Madrid.

But the introduction of De Bruyne made the difference as the Belgian midfielder scored 11 minutes from time.

"It was a typical FA Cup game, that is why this competition is unbelievable. For the fans, how the crowd support and we knew they are strong," Guardiola said.

"It is my ninth season in England. I played many times against lower division teams. It was a tight game and we knew it for the situation that we have, but we reacted really well with great character." Victory came at a cost for City, though, as new midfielder Nico Gonzalez hobbled off just 22 minutes into his debut after a £50 million (\$62 million) move from Porto.

Bottom of the Premier League and seemingly destined for relegation, Southampton got no respite in the FA Cup as second tier Burnley won 1-0 at St Mary's.

Scott Parker's team went in front after 77 minutes when Marcus Edwards scored from close-range on his debut after signing on loan from Sporting Lisbon.

Everton eliminated Edwards, 26, was once compared to Lionel Messi before being released by Tottenham and rebuilding his career in Lisbon. It is almost 600 minutes since Championship promotion chasers Burnley last conceded a goal, with 10 clean-sheets in their last 11 games.

The last FA Cup tie at Goodison Park ended in disappointment for Everton, who are moving to a new stadium next season, as Bournemouth cruised to a 2-0 victory.

Andoni Iraola's side went ahead when Everton captain James Tarkowski fouled Antoine Semenyo in the area and the Bournemouth winger picked himself up to convert the 23rd minute penalty. Dan Jebbison tapped in Bournemouth's second on the rebound after Marcus Tavernier's shot was parried by Jordan Pickford in the 42nd minute. Rodrigo Muniz scored twice as Fulham won 2-1 at third tier Wigan.



In brief

Police arrest four accused in fake robbery case

RAWALPINDI (APP): R.A.Bazar police have arrested four accused in a fake robbery case registered in R.A.Bazar police station a week ago, said a police spokesman here on Saturday. He informed in a drop scene of a fake robbery incident against women took place in the RA Bazar area a week ago police managed to arrest the plaintiff, her friend and two accomplices involved in the case. Police also recovered Rs 853,000, weapons and other items from their possession. The accused namely Saika was given jewelry by her friend for sale, but she staged the incident to embezzle the money. The accused planned with her friend Sameera and her accomplices Umair and Muneeb a fake robbery and get registered a fake robbery case in R.A.Bazar police station. The police investigated the case using technical means and human intelligence, and found involved the plaintiff in the case who was arrested. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani appreciated SP Potohar, DSP Cantt and RA Bazar police for arresting the accused and recovering the embezzled money. SP Potohar said that the accused will be challenged with solid evidence and will be punished. No matter how clever the accused are, they cannot escape the grip of the law, he added.

ANF recovers over 18 kg

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover over 18 kg drugs worth Rs 10 million and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday. He informed that 9.478 kg ice absorbed into the clothes of a passenger going to Jeddah was recovered at Islamabad International Airport. In another operation at Islamabad Airport, 354 grams hashish hidden in the shoes of a passenger going to Dubai was recovered. 934 grams ice concealed in kitchen utensils was recovered from a parcel booked for Bahrain through a courier office located in Rawalpindi. 8 kg heroin hidden in the secret cavities of a vehicle intercepted near Malomere in Jhang was recovered and an accused was arrested during the operation. 100 grams hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near Sheikh Yousuf Chowk in Dera Ismail Khan. Separate cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

Police bust key gang member

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police's Phulgran team on Saturday arrested a key member of a notorious gang involved in multiple motorcycle theft cases. A public relations officer told APP that the arrested suspect has been identified as Amir Hayat. He was wanted in several motorcycle theft incidents and was allegedly part of a network operating in the area. He said police recovered four stolen motorcycles worth millions of rupees from the suspect's possession. Efforts are underway to apprehend the suspect's accomplices and facilitators," said DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq. He said DIG Jawad reiterated that strict action would continue against those depriving citizens of their valuable assets, ensuring the safety and security of the public.

MNA Noor Alam meets Governor Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Noor Alam Khan met with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi here on Saturday to discuss the deteriorating law and order situation and the political issues in the province. During the meeting, MNA Noor Alam Khan welcomed the decision to hold All Parties Conference at the Governor House to address the province's issues, and in light of that, the formation of a political committee consisting of the province's political parties to engage with the federal government for solutions. He praised the leadership of Governor Faisal

Karim Kundi, highlighting his patience and political insight, which he deemed commendable.

In response, Governor Kundi emphasized that problems can be solved through dialogue.

He also expressed his commitment to fulfilling the trust placed in him by the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), guided by the vision of Benazir Bhutto and the mission of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Meanwhile, Governor Kundi visited the residence of Syed Bazil Ali Naqvi, the Minister for Social Welfare in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir and a central leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Azad Kashmir, to inquire about his health.

Islamabad Police nab seven, seize illegal weapons

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police arrested seven individuals in the last 24 hours for possessing illegal weapons as part of an ongoing crackdown. Police teams seized four pistols, two Kalashnikovs, and ammunition from their possession on Saturday.

A public relations officer told APP that following the special directives of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police is conducting a vigorous campaign against illegal weapons in the federal capital.

In this regard, 07 accused involved in possessing illegal weapons were arrested during the last 24 hours. Police teams also recovered four pistols, two Kalashnikovs with ammunition from their possession. Additionally, various cases were registered against them at various police stations.

SSP Operations

Muhammad Shoaib Khan said that the aim of the campaign is to prevent crime in the city, rid the city of illegal weapons, and ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property.

SSP Shoaib further said that actions against criminal elements across Islamabad will be intensified, and a comprehensive strategy will be adopted to address this issue.

No element will be allowed to disrupt public peace, use illegal weapons in the federal capital, or spread fear and panic among citizens. Citizens who possess licensed firearms are requested to register them with their respective police stations and cooperate with the Islamabad Police during the ongoing campaign against illegal weapons, he added.

The Islamabad Police is utilizing all available resources to ensure the safety and security of citizens' lives and property.

Read Pakistan organizes NRC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Read Pakistan with the collaboration of the Serena Hotels under the Public Diplomacy initiative on Saturday organized National Readers' Conference (NRC) 2025 which brought together a vibrant community of readers, writers, educators, and intellectuals to celebrate and promote the culture of reading in the country.

The NRC 2025 served as a dynamic platform for discussions on the significance of literacy and education in shaping a progressive society, said a press release.

Esteemed speakers, including the deputy head of mission of the Embassy of Portugal (Ms. Alexandra Baptista), the First Secretary of the Embassy of Belgium (Gillez Hachez), the Director General of the Civil Services Academy Lahore (Farhan Aziz Khwaja), the national prize winners, author (Dr. Rakshanda Parveen) and (Dr. Sadiqullah Khan), Muneer Ahmad (CEO of DEVCOM).

The panel consisted of veterans of their fields, including Ms. Sadaf Raza (Reiki Master), Faisal Malik (Edtech Expert), Ms. Sanobar Nazir (Writer and Activist), and Maya Sofia Hamidi (Principal of RUNG School of Music and Arts), addressed the audience on diverse topics related to literature, education, and the role of books in fostering critical thinking and creativity.

One of the highlights of the conference was the keynote speech delivered by Keynote Speakers, who inspired the audience with their insights on specific topics. The event also featured engaging panel discussions, book launches, and interactive sessions that provided participants with unique opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals and exchange ideas.

As part of the conference's agenda, Read Pakistan hosted various competitions to encourage young readers and writers to showcase their talents. These included essay writing, poetry recitation, and storytelling competitions.

Acting Chairman Senate urges students to focus on research and innovation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan, on Saturday urged students to embrace modern research, scientific advancements, and innovative thinking to ensure the sustainable and efficient utilization of resources.

Addressing the convocation at Alhamd Islamic University, he congratulated the graduating students and encouraged them to move forward with confidence, humility, and a positive mindset. He advised them to use their intelligence, energy, and vision to bring positive change to

the world.

Praising their hard work and dedication, Syedaal Khan described the day as a moment of joy and celebration, marking the beginning of a new journey.

He commended Alhamd Islamic University as a beacon of knowledge and enlightenment, recognizing its role in promoting education and moral values.

He said that the university prioritizes academic excellence and ethical integrity, fostering an environment that encourages innovation, intellectual growth, and the pursuit of truth.

He also lauded the faculty and administration for maintaining high educational standards.

Addressing the graduates, Syedaal Khan said, "This is not just a degree; it is the key to your future. You are now prepared to face challenges, solve problems, and lead with courage and integrity."

He stressed that success is not merely reaching a destination but is reflected in the values and impact one leaves on the world. He expressed gratitude to teachers, parents, and mentors for their role in shaping the students' futures.

He reminded graduates to never underestimate the power of their education and values, stating that true success lies not only in personal achievements but in the difference, one makes in others' lives.

Highlighting the natural resources and strategic significance of Balochistan, Syedaal Khan described it as a region rich in mineral wealth and the backbone of Pakistan's economy.

He particularly emphasized Gwadar Port, noting its potential to drive economic growth not only for Pakistan but for the entire region.

Iranian envoy inaugurates 'Hafez-e Shirazi Corner' at AIOU



ISLAMABAD (APP): Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam, has reiterated Iran's commitment to deepening bilateral relations with Pakistan, particularly in trade, economy, and security.

During a visit to Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Ambassador Moghadam, alongside Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir, Dean

of the Faculty of Social Sciences, inaugurated the 'Hafez-e Shirazi Corner' at the university's history museum the other day. He lauded the cooperation of Pakistani officials in enhancing parliamentary relations between the two nations.

Highlighting the importance of academic collaboration, the envoy expressed Iran's keen interest in initiating faculty exchange pro-

grams between universities in both countries. He emphasized that such initiatives would help preserve and promote the shared cultural and civilizational heritage for future generations.

Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir, while congratulating the Iranian ambassador on the 46th anniversary of Iran's Islamic Revolution, stressed the enduring support between Pakistan and Iran in the realms of education and culture.

Dr. Farhat Asif, President of the Pakistan Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, elaborated on the objectives behind the establishment of the Hafez-e Shirazi Corner. She also noted that the university's museum houses a 'Makhduum Quli Faraghi Corner,' dedicated to the renowned Turkmen poet.

Expressing his gratitude, Ambassador Moghadam thanked AIOU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood for facilitating such cultural initiatives, asserting that they play a vital role in strengthening people-to-people ties between Pakistan and Iran.

Minister visits examination centers of Kanz-ul-Madaris Board

ISLAMABAD (APP): The annual examinations under the Kanz-ul-Madaris Board for the year 2025 are currently underway, with 786 examination centers established across Pakistan.

Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Saturday visited the examination center at the Global Madani Markaz Faizan-e-Madina, along with other departments associated with the Board.

He was accompanied by Abdul

Haseeb, Zahid Mansoori, officials from the Majlis Rabita, Board members of Kanz-ul-Madaris and the head of public relations, among others.

During the visit, Kanz-ul-Madaris Board officials briefed the minister on the examination process, revealing that a total of 168,449 candidates are appearing in the 2025 exams. This includes 90,417 students for Tajweed and Qira'at, Dars-e-Nizami, Takhassusat, and Kulliyat-ush-Shariah programs, 69,501 students for Nazrah Quran and Hifz-ul-Quran

exams, 8,393 students for short courses, including the Imamat Course and Faizan-e-Shari'ah Course, they told.

The minister was also told that to ensure the smooth conduct of examinations, 3,758 invigilators and staff had been deployed.

The federal minister praised the arrangements made by the Kanz-ul-Madaris Board and assured full support for their initiatives.

At the end of the visit, he was presented with a collection of religious books as a token of appreciation.

Police arrest 4 kite sellers, recovered over 700 kites, string rolls

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi are making efforts to control kite flying and managed to arrest four kite sellers on recovery of over 700 kites and seven kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that Taxila police arrested Masood for having 350 kites and string rolls while Race Course netted Nisar for possessing 300 kites and three string rolls.

R.A.Bazar police also arrested an accused namely Waqas with 70 kite and a

string rolls while Dhamial police netted Fahad Shoukat for having 40 kites and two string rolls. Separate cases have been registered against the accused and further investigations are under process.

Divisional Superintendents of Police directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers.

The spokesman informed that Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani, are also organizing awareness walks in different areas against kite fly-

ing and aerial firing. An awareness walk was organized in R.A.Bazar area to sensitize the masses regarding the hazards and prevention of kite flying.

The awareness walk was conducted in the area of R.A.Bazar police station. A large number of traders, students, citizens and SHO R.A.Bazar Police Station, SDPO Cantt, Mirza Javed Iqbal participated in the awareness walk. The aim of the walk was to provide awareness to the citizens about the harms of the kite flying and its prevention. Special awareness pam-

phlets were distributed during the walk and awareness banners were also displayed at different points.

The kite flying is a dangerous game and a crime. After the amendment in the law, kite flying is a non-bailable crime, which could be punished with imprisonment from 03 to 07 years and a fine of Rs 500,000 to 5 million. Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of the CPO are utilizing all available resources to prevent kite flying, he said adding, the civil society, citizens especially parents should discourage kite flying.



RAWALPINDI: A view of ongoing work of Flyover at Adyala road. —INP Photo

LHC orders removal of encroachments from two residential plots in Media Town

RAWALPINDI (INP): Justice Jawad Hassan of the Lahore High Court (LHC), Rawalpindi bench, has directed the Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi, Director PHATA and DG Co-operative housing society to remove encroachments from two residential plots, located in Block A of the Media Town (Rawalpindi Press Club Housing Society) on Monday and to report to the court.

Justice Hassan while hearing the petitions of senior journalists Muhammad Asghar and Abdul Latif filed against denial and encroachment by the management of Media Town despite allotment and clearance of all the dues.

Justice Hassan directed the DC Rawalpindi, Director PHATA, DG Co-operative Housing Society and management committee to ensure the handing over the possession of the plots to the petitioners on Monday as the court will be adjourned only after the compliance of court orders.

The court had also observed that the court will initiate proceedings against the concerned government officials/officers for not handing over possession of the allotted plots to the petitioners as per provision of the relevant law.

According to advocate Saeed Yousuf Khan, counsel for the petitioners the management of media town deprived the senior journalists from their plots in order to facilitate an influential figure of PML-N and also produced the proof of the encroached land before the court.

Saeed also produced an investigation report of government of the Punjab's Housing, Urban development and public health engineering department on Feb 6th regarding "probe into the matter regarding investigation of the layout plan of the house scheme "Rawalpindi press club cooperative housing society".

The committee comprised, director (special planning) PHATA, convener,

Headquarter Lahore, Director PHATA Region Rawalpindi and Deputy Director (P&D) PHATA Headquarter.

The committee said: "So in view of above, Rawalpindi Press Club Cooperative Housing Society is bound to give possession to the owners of plot # 334-A and 335-A as per approved LOP and is responsible for violation of approved layout plan of Rawalpindi Press Club Housing Society. Action may be taken against representatives of RPCCHS as per law.

Grievances of the complainants could be addressed by giving them physical possession in the same area as per approved LOP by removing encroachment/illegals, if possible, or in another area of the scheme if prevailing rules and regulations allows. Accordingly, the requisite documents for construction may be handed over to complainants.

In light of the directions of the Hon'ble Lahore High Court, Lahore

followed by the findings of the Probe Committee, director of PHATA, Region Rawalpindi is hereby directed to assist the competent authority in the demarcation of the plots in question.

Upon demarcation of plots, the concerned department/office/management committee shall ensure compliance with the court's directions and address grievances of the petitioners by handing over possession of plot # 334-A and 335-A in Rawalpindi Press Club Cooperative Housing Society, Rawalpindi.

Copies of the probe committee's report was sent to the secretary information and culture department Punjab, Regional Police Officer Punjab Police Rawalpindi, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Rawalpindi and Director PHATA, Rawalpindi.

Meanwhile, RIUJ president Tariq Usmani appreciated the LHC decision regarding removing encroachments

from the two plots of media town and to hand over the procession to their original allottees.

Usmani conveyed his expectation that the court's ruling would be followed by the relevant authorities and that rigorous legal action would be taken against individuals who were encroaching and preventing the plots from being returned to their original owners.

Tariq Usmani, president RIUJ had already attributed some groups of journalists to 'Vultures' – a large bird that eats dead animals – as they used all dirty tactics against two senior journalists for depriving them of getting processions of their plots allotted by the Punjab government.

He also appealed to the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz to order strict legal action against the responsible (encroachers) who not only violated the law of land but also caused mental stress to the families of the two senior journalists.

Afghan detainees released

KABUL (BNA): 42 Afghans, including women and children, were released from prisons in neighbor country and returned to the country. According to the Border Directorate of Nangarhar province, these individuals were arrested in neighbor country due to a lack of legal documents. They had been detained for two to five months in prison and were returned to their original locations after receiving humanitarian assistance.

648 Afghan families deported

KABUL (Amu TV): At least 648 Afghan migrant families were deported or repatriated from neighbor countries last week, according to data compiled by Amu TV from Taliban-run Bakhtar News Agency reports. 119 families returned to Afghanistan through the Torkham border crossing, while another 83 entered via Spin Boldak. An additional 171 families crossed from Iran at the Pul-e-Abrisham border in Nimroz, while 275 entered through the Islam Qala border.

Farmers struggle as hing prices plummet

KABUL (TOLOnews): Some farmers in Afghanistan who have invested in cultivating the hing plant are complaining about a sharp drop in its market price. According to them, due to the lack of a suitable market, the price of hing per kilogram has dropped from 25,000 afghani to only 7,000 afghani, causing a significant financial loss to farmers. Abdulhai, one of the farmers, said: "We planted hing hoping for a good sale, but this year its price has dropped drastically. Now, they buy it for 3,000 to 4,000 afghani per kilogram, which is not only unprofitable but also causes us losses." Abdul Ahmad, another farmer, added: "We cultivated this product in the hope of earning a lawful livelihood. Last year, its

price was between 20,000 to 25,000 afghani, but this year its rate has fallen to 7,000 to 8,000 afghani." Several other farmers are calling on the Islamic Emirate authorities to establish domestic and international markets for this valuable plant. Ghulam Nabi, a farmer, said: "We ask the government to sign trade agreements for hing, as it has high demand in global markets." Nasim, another farmer, also stated: "We ask the government to find foreign markets for hing so that we do not suffer losses and can earn a lawful livelihood from it." The Ministry of Agriculture considers the increase in Hing production as one of the main reasons for the price drop and says efforts are being made to improve its market access.

Misbahuddin Mustaeen, spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, said: "Globally, hing production has increased, which has led to its price decline. It is not that if hing is expensive in neighboring countries, our product should remain cheap. We are working to secure a better position for this product in global markets." Hing, which is used in pharmaceutical and food industries, is primarily cultivated in northern Afghanistan and has many admirers worldwide due to its unique properties. This valuable plant has been introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock as an alternative to opium poppy cultivation, but its price decline has raised concerns among producers.

Afghans reject anti-IE propaganda, emphasize unity

KABUL (BNA): Since the Islamic Emirate regained control of Afghanistan, both domestic and foreign opposition groups have attempted to portray the government as weak through various means, including a concerted campaign of negative propaganda. However, such efforts have failed to sway the Afghan people's confidence in their leadership. These propaganda efforts are primarily aimed at undermining the government's legitimacy and fostering distrust among Afghans. In response, citizens are urged to remain vigilant, prioritize national interests, and stand united in their pursuit of lasting peace and stability.

Much of this narrative is being pushed by factions that lost influence following the Emirate's return and are now attempting to regain their foothold. Additionally, certain foreign powers, driven by political and economic agendas, continue to distort the Emirate's actions to advance their own interests. Afghans are encouraged to critically assess these external influences and make informed decisions based on national priorities. With a strong political awareness, they remain capable of distinguishing between allies and adversaries. Ultimately, those working against Afghanistan's government must acknowledge the futility of their efforts. The Afghan people's trust in the Islamic Emirate remains unwavering, making any attempts to weaken the system ineffective.

Afghan 2nd largest foreign population in Turkey

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Turkish Statistical Institute has published the results of its 2024 Address-Based Population Registration System, revealing that 139,251 Afghan citizens are living in Turkey. According to data released Afghan citizens form the second-largest foreign group in Turkey, following Iraqi nationals. The Turkish Statistical Institute gathers and publishes data on both the domestic and foreign population of Turkey through its address registration system. The system tracks individuals with legal residency status in the country. Statistics show that the number of foreign citizens residing in Turkey in the previous year reached 1,480,547. This represents a decrease of about 89,996 people compared to 2023. The largest foreign groups in Turkey are Iraqi, Afghan, German, Turkmen, and Iranian nationals, according to the report. Only individuals with legal residency status are included in these statistics, excluding undocumented refugees.

The total population of Turkey is reported to be 85,664,944, reflecting an increase of approximately 292,000 people compared to 2023. This growth is attributed to both natural population increases and the inflow of foreign nationals. Afghan citizens have been migrating to Turkey both legally and illegally in the past three years, driven by poverty and the policies of the Taliban. This trend is expected to continue as the political and economic situation in Afghanistan remains unstable. In Turkey, only individuals with legal residency status are allowed to register their addresses. Undocumented refugees are not included in this system. According to the published data, the population of Turkey is 85,664,944, reflecting an increase of approximately 292,000 people compared to 2023.

New health center inaugurated in Helmand

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, the Acting Minister of the Ministry of Public Health, announced the inauguration of a new health center in Sangin district during his recent visit to Helmand province. The facility, valued at approximately 26 million Afghanis, aims to enhance healthcare services for local residents. In his remarks, Minister Jalali expressed his satisfaction with the construction of the health center, emphasizing its significance in improving health services in the area. "We are striving to provide quality services to every citizen and to work in a way that addresses the needs of the people," he stated. The Ministry of Public



Health is committed to expanding and developing the healthcare system across the country. This initiative is part of a broader effort to create a self-sufficient and standardized health system that meets the needs of all citizens.

Report warns that cuts to aid may deepen Afghanistan's crisis

KABUL (Amu TV): Any reduction or pause in humanitarian operations in Afghanistan will have a severe impact on the population, according to a new report by ACAPS, an independent crisis analysis organization. The report warns that the effects of funding cuts and restrictions on humanitarian operations will become clearer in the coming weeks, as organizations assess which programs can continue under newly issued waivers. The concerns come after President Donald Trump issued an executive order on Jan. 20 calling for a 90-day suspension of US-funded foreign aid, including humanitarian assistance. On Friday, Trump also called for the immediate closure of the US Agency

for International Development (USAID), just hours before most of its staff were set to be placed on administrative leave or laid off—an apparent step toward dismantling the government's primary provider of global humanitarian and development aid. ACAPS noted that Afghanistan's 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) calls for \$2.42 billion in humanitarian funding to assist 16.8 million people out of the 22.9 million in need. As of Feb. 3, however, less than 12 percent (\$279.5 million) of the plan had been funded—74 percent of which was pledged by sources connected to the US government, the organization said. Residents have already

begun feeling the economic impact. "People are unemployed. There is no work. The price of food is high," said a resident of Pakтия. "In the past, goods were sold in Pakistani rupees, then it switched to Afghanis, but now it is still sold at the same high price." While some exemptions have allowed certain US humanitarian aid programs to continue, ACAPS found that some life-saving projects—ones that should have been covered under existing waivers—remain suspended, with funding frozen. A sharp fluctuation in Afghanistan's currency market has been an immediate consequence of the restrictions, leading to higher prices for essential goods, including food and

fuel. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has warned that one-third of Afghanistan's population will face severe hunger by March. "We are unemployed. The government must take action. They need to regulate prices and assess the market," another Pakтия resident said. Beyond the immediate crisis, US policymakers have expressed concerns about Taliban access to humanitarian aid. The former head of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has previously stated that a significant portion of these funds has ended up in the Taliban's hands, raising questions about oversight and distribution.

Tourism booms in Zabul after highway reconstruction

ZABUL (TOLOnews): Local officials in Zabul say that after the reconstruction of the Kabul-Kandahar highway, the number of domestic tourists visiting the province's natural attractions has increased. They say that more than ever, better facilities and conveniences have been provided for tourists. "Alhamdulillah, security has now been ensured, and with the construction of the Kabul-Kandahar highway, visits to Zabul's recreational areas have increased, and more facilities for travel and tourism have been made available," said Zabiullah Jawhar, the spokesperson for Zabul's security command. One of Zabul's most

important tourist attractions is the mountainous region of Shinkay, located in the Shinkay district. This area hosts many visitors not only in spring and summer but also in winter. Some domestic tourists who have visited this area are calling for more tourism-related facilities. "This is the Shinkay area. Many young people come here in winter for recreation because it is a great place for tourism and relaxation," said Abdul Halim Ahmadi, a resident of Zabul. "Now that security has been established, more residents of Zabul are coming to these areas for recreation. But our request

is that more services be provided for tourists, such as the construction of shops and restaurants," stated Ahmadullah Rahmani, another resident of Zabul. "Most Zabul residents travel to surrounding areas for recreation during the winter season. With security now ensured, Shinkay has also become a popular destination," stated Mohammad Rahim Jawad, another resident of Zabul. The snow-covered mountains, vast plains, and historical sites of this area have attracted the attention of many domestic tourists. Abdul Wasi, who came from Kandahar to visit Zabul's recreational sites, said: "We have come here

from Kandahar. The government should provide more facilities for tourists in this area and establish markets so that visitors from other regions are encouraged to come here." "I have also come from Kandahar to Zabul. This mountainous area is a great place for recreation," said Hikmatullah, another tourist. In addition to its natural attractions, Zabul also has significant historical sites that attract both domestic and foreign tourists. Among the attractions are Sahraana, Surghar (Red Mountain), Bala Hisar, Koh-e Bori, and the Qala-e-Shah Alam Khan, which host a large number of visitors each year.

4.3m MT of goods transported via railways in 2024

KABUL (Pajhwok): About 4.3 million metric tonnes of goods were transported through railways from four Afghan ports last year, the Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) said on Saturday. Economic analysts consider railway as best routes to deliver goods to markets on time. MoPW spokesman Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas told Pajhwok Afghan News these transportations occurred in 2024. Around 4.2 million metric tonnes of goods were imported and over 92,000 metric tonnes were exported via railroads, he added. He said 3.4 million metric tonnes were transported through Hairatan Port, 386,000 tonnes via Aquina Port, 565,000 tonnes through Torgundi Port, and 22,000 tons via Khawaf-Herat, totaling 4.3 million metric tonnes. Afghanistan import goods from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia, and Belarus, including food, oil, and gas, Haqshenas explained. According to

Haqshenas, Afghanistan exported goods to Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, and Russia, and these export items included pomegranate juice and mineral stones. Afghanistan is directly connected to Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan via Hairatan, Aquina, Torgundi, and Khawaf-Herat ports, and transit trade is done through these routes, which indirectly connect these countries to Central Asia, and other countries. In a meeting last month, Deputy Minister of Railways extended the agreement on quadrilateral railway corridor between Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and China for 2025. Haqshenas said 4,200 containers were transported through this railway corridor between Afghanistan and China in 2024, and the agreement has been renewed for 2025. According to him, the extension of the corridor agreement will lead to a significant increase in rail transport. The corridor,

which passes via China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan and connects to the Hairatan-Mazar railway line, was established by the four countries in 2022, Haqshenas said. Economic analysts say rail transport could deliver goods to markets on time and consider it best for trade. Abdul Nasir Rashtia, an economic analyst, told Pajhwok imports and exports via railways could deliver goods to the market on time and also reduce costs. He explained any reduction in transportation costs could undoubtedly have a very positive impact on lowering prices in markets. "But there is a concern that if many goods are imported to the country through railways, it may lead to the weakening of Afghanistan's domestic production; because Afghanistan still depends on imports. Efforts should be made to increase the level of production to export goods through railways". He said Afghanistan was a landlocked country and

railroads undoubtedly created vast markets for the sale of goods within Afghanistan, he added. According to him, there is a need to manage imports and the government should try to increase Afghanistan's domestic production so that exports could increase. Mohammad Issa Mubarez, another economic analyst, told Pajhwok Afghanistan was a mountainous and landlocked country, so railways were the best route for transportation. "If Afghanistan wants to do trade with other countries, the easiest and least expensive way that does not harm the environment is railway." Afghanistan could export many goods on time and also transit them through the railways. As trade expands via railways, the economic situation improves and poverty is eliminated. Haqshenas said the ministry was always trying to provide favorable conditions for more transactions and facilities for traders.

Afghani strengthens, fuel, gold prices down

KABUL (Pajhwok): Prices of fuel, sugar and Russian gold went down as the afghani strengthened against the US dollar during the outgoing week in Kabul, market sources said on Saturday. Haji Mohammad Hussain, owner of Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said that one US dollar traded for 73.85 afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees for 260 afis against their previous week's 75.20 afis, and 260 afis. Haji Hussain, referring to the increase in the value of the afghani against the US dollar, said that the Central Bank has increased dollar sales. Fuel prices down A worker at the Ahmadayar pump station told

Pajhwok the price of one litre of petrol decreased from 65afis to 61afis and rate of diesel from 66afis to 60afis. Mohammad Sharif, a liquefied gas seller in Koloa Pushta neighborhood, said the price of a kilogram of the commodity declined from 58afis 50afis. Food items Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders' Association, said the price of a 49-kilogram sack of Indian sugar went down from 2,650afis to 2,550afis. But the price of a 49-kilogram Kazakh flour stayed stable at 1,400afis, 16-liter tin of Malaysian cooling oil at 1,850afis. A 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice remained unchanged at 2,600afis, a kilogram of African black tea at 400afis

and the same amount of Indonesian green tea at 350afis. Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh Market, put the retail price of a 49-kilogram bag of Kazakh flour at 1,450afis, a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice at 2,650afis and a 49-kg sack of Indian sugar at 2,600afis. A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil accounted for 1,900afis, one kilogram of black tea for 400afis and the same quantity of green tea for 450afis, he added. Gold prices Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold stayed unchanged at 5,500afis, but the Russian variety increased from 4,350afis to 4,400afis.

Long-standing feud ends after 50 years in Nangarhar



NANGARHAR (BNA): A 50-year feud between two families in Mamli village has finally come to an end, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Department of Information and Culture and local tribal elders. Qari Ehsanullah Sajid, head of Nangarhar's Department of Information

and Culture, confirmed to the Bakhtar News Agency that this longstanding enmity, which had claimed the lives of two individuals from both sides, has been resolved. Members of the families involved expressed their joy at the resolution of the conflict and pledged to fos-

ter a future of harmony and cooperation. This resolution is part of a broader trend observed since the rise of the Islamic Emirate, where numerous cases of hostility across the country have similarly been addressed, leading to renewed relationships built on peace and mutual respect.

Ghazni's historic sites at risk of collapse

GHAZNI (TOLOnews): Several cultural activists and residents of Ghazni province say that many of the province's historical and ancient sites have been damaged due to natural events, while others are at risk of collapse. Bala Hissar, one of the most important historical and ancient sites of Ghazni, with a history of over a thousand years, is now in danger of falling into ruins. "Every type of damage has its own significance, but the destruction of historical and ancient sites erases the historical values of a country and region. These are damages that may not be repairable and could have irreversible consequences," said Shirin Ansari, a cultural activist in Ghazni. "If the historical monuments in Ghazni province are not restored and preserved, it will have a very negative impact on the tou-

rism industry, and tourists will no longer be interested in visiting Ghazni," Shafiuallah Ghalib, another cultural activist, added. Some residents of Ghazni province have criticized the authorities for neglecting these historical sites, saying that if the situation continues, these monuments will be completely destroyed. "Many historical places and sites in Ghazni are deteriorating. If the Islamic Emirate's authorities do not pay attention to them, these structures will be completely lost in the coming years," said Mohammad Abid, a resident of Ghazni. "Historical buildings are collapsing, and many have been severely damaged. We urge the authorities of the Islamic Emirate to take action to preserve this cultural heritage," said Abdul Raziq, another resident of Ghazni.

Local officials in Ghazni say they have launched programs to restore and rehabilitate the province's historical monuments. Hamidullah Nisar, the head of Ghazni's Information and Culture Department, said: "The Information and Culture Department is making every effort to prevent the complete destruction of these monuments. Many of these sites require extensive restoration and significant funding. We, along with the Ministry of Information and Culture, will work to take the necessary steps for the restoration of these historical sites as soon as possible." According to the Ghazni Department of Information and Culture, in the past two years, the restoration work of 14 historical monuments has begun at a cost of over \$200,000, some of which have been completed and will soon be put into use.

PTI will not be allowed to repeat May 9 or Nov 26: Asif

F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that the government will not allow the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to disrupt the state again by repeating incidents like May 9 or November 26.

He expressed these views during a press conference at his residence in Sialkot Cantt here today (Saturday). He said that the PTI has once again announced a series of protests. "The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is spending immense resources, wealth and wealth on the PTI rally to be held tomorrow, Sunday. Millions of rupees are being spent on this rally, while government employees are being forced to participate in this rally.

Government missionaries and government employees are working day and night for the success of the rally," he added. The minister said that he had earlier pointed out that whenever there was an opportunity to improve Pakistan's image at the international level, to increase Pakistani respect and honor, or when a respectable event comes up for Pakistan like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conference, PTI comes out to protest.

"During the SCO conference, the PTI also attacked Islamabad, which is a clear proof of its riotous politics," he said. "The Champions Trophy is going to be held in Pakistan, but the PTI has planned a protest program on February, 18 or 19, the day the Champions Trophy is to start, which is beyond understanding. Why are

there no such rallies and processions in other provinces? The PTI has always held violent demonstrations and rallies, which no one can ever allow," he maintained. He said that no one will have any objection to peaceful gatherings. The administration can also make appropriate arrangements for this, but if someone comes to Islamabad, goes to Punjab or goes to any other province with the intention of holding such a gathering that is an attack on the state, a conspiracy to create a new May 9, a conspiracy to create a November 26, then this cannot be allowed, he added.

The minister said that political parties should adopt political behavior and not attack the state like violent groups. "This behavior of PTI is not acceptable for the state of Pakistan in any way. These people are inciting the atmosphere of terrorism, which is not the right thing to do. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur said that 99 percent of their demands have been fulfilled, then why are they protesting, they should celebrate.

There is a commotion in the PTI. There was a lot of noise that Trump would come and the PTI founder would come out of jail, but nothing like that happened. One of the delegations from America said that the PTI is spending three to four million dollars a month in America. Soon, there will be fights among them over this money because all this money was looted in Pakistan and these people have fled and are involved in anti-Pakistan activities," he added.

He said that regarding the PTI

talks, he had already said that they were not serious about the talks and the same thing happened and all the talks produced no result. The PTI has tried to disrupt international meetings before it. They are also starting rallies and gatherings on the occasion of a global event, the Champions Trophy.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were also deprived of power, but none of them attacked the state, but the PTI is repeatedly attacking the country and the nation and it should change its behavior as a political party, he observed. In response to a question, Khawaja Muhammad Asif said, "We want good relations with the international community, but there will never be any compromise with anyone on the issue of Pakistan's integrity and Pakistan's honour and dignity will be given priority at all costs."

In response to another question, he said that those who attacked the country's institutions on May 9 were found guilty of treason and were also charged with treason. He said that those who had attacked the nation's institutions on May 9 were convicted of betraying their country and cases were also filed against them.

The federal minister said that they were trying to eliminate terrorists and the war would continue until terrorism is eradicated from its root and our youths are making sacrifices in the war. He said that the language of the PTI is neither political nor are these people political. "Their leader is a mentally ill person who puts his hand in the pocket of every person sitting next to him," he claimed.



HARBIN: President Asif Ali Zardari departing for Pakistan after completing his 5-day visit to China.

ATC issues warrant of 12 in May 9 vandalism

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) has issued non-bailable arrest warrants for 12 accused, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) former Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) Arbab Waseem and former MPAs Arbab Jehan Dad and Malik Wajid, in connection with the attack on Radio Pakistan Peshawar on 9th May 2023.

ATC Judge Wali Muhammad Khan initiated the hearing of the case, but the 12 accused, including Arbab Waseem, Arbab Jehan Dad, and Malik Wajid, did not appear in court. The court was informed that the accused were nominated in the case related to the attack on Radio Pakistan on May 9, in which the building was set on fire during a protest.

A case was registered against the accused at the Eastern Police Station, and the police completed the investigation and initiated the trial against 81 accused. However, 12 accused, including Arbab Waseem, did not appear during the trial, prompting the court to issue non-bailable arrest warrants against them.

'Federal govt slash KP surplus budget'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on Finance and Interprovincial Coordination Muzammil Aslam has issued a statement highlighting discrepancies in the province's surplus budget and federal accounts. According to Aslam, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's surplus budget stands at approximately 169 billion rupees, whereas the federal government has reduced this figure to 86 billion rupees.

Advisor on finance said that despite the federal government withholding development funds for merged districts and reducing ongoing expenditures allocation, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has managed to generate a surplus of 169 billion rupees. Additionally, the provincial government has contributed an extra 40 billion rupees to pension and gratuity funds, which the federal accounts have incorrectly classified as expenditures.

Muzammil Aslam pointed out discrepancies in the statistics reported by the federal Ministry of Finance for Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to federal statistics, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's government institutions have experienced a decline in reserves, while the Accountant General's reports show a decrease in Punjab's financial expenditures, resulting in statistical differences.

PTI, civil society move LHC against PECA

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The controversial Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) was challenged in the Lahore High Court by the PTI, civil society and a notable journalist organisation.

The petition was moved by the Opposition Leader in the Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar and others through Advocate Azhar Siddiqui in which the provincial government, chief secretary and others were made respondents.

Hamas frees three Israeli hostages

DEIR EL-BALAH (AFP, Reuters): Hamas released three Israeli hostages on Saturday, the fifth group freed under a fragile Gaza ceasefire, with Israel condemning their "cruel" handover and worrying physical appearance. Israel's prison service confirmed it had released 183 Palestinian prisoners on Saturday during the fifth exchange of the Gaza ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel.

It said in a statement that "183 terrorists were transferred from several prisons across the country", before they "were released" to the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza. The fifth exchange since the truce took effect last month comes as negotiations are set to begin on a more permanent end to the war. It came after President Donald Trump floated a proposal for the United States to take over the Gaza Strip and clear out its inhabitants, sparking global outrage.

Or Levy, Ohad Ben Ami and Eli Sharabi, who were all seized by militants during Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack that sparked the 15-month war, "crossed the border into Israeli territory," the Israeli military said. Jubilant crowds in Israel's commercial hub Tel Aviv cheered as they watched live footage of the three hostages, flanked by masked gunmen, brought on stage in Deir El-Balah before being handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

But the joy of their release was quickly overtaken by concern for their condition, with all three appearing thin and pale. The choreographed handover included forced statements from the three on stage, in which they stated support for finalizing the next phases of the Israel-Hamas truce.

"The disturbing images... serve as yet another stark and painful evidence that leaves no room for doubt - there is no time to waste for the hostages! We must get them all out," said the Hostages and Missing Families Forum campaign group. The office of Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu, whose dejected-looking image appeared on a banner at the Deir El-Balah handover site, said that the images out of Gaza were "shocking." Israel's President Isaac Herzog denounced the treatment of the hostages who were paraded on stage, calling it "a crime against humanity."

"The whole world must look directly at Ohad, Or, and Eli - returning after 491 days of hell, starved, emaciated and pained - being exploited in a cynical and cruel spectacle by vile murderers," Herzog said on X. Sharabi, 52, was at his home in kibbutz Beeri with his British-born wife and their two daughters when militants stormed it.

The armed men shot their dog, before locking the family in their safe room and setting it on fire. The bodies of his wife and two daughters were later identified. Ben Ami, who has dual Israeli-German citizenship, turned 56 in captivity. He was abducted from his home in Beeri along with his wife, who was released during the war's first truce in November 2023. Levy was abducted from the Nova music festival, where gunmen murdered his wife.

Former hostage Yarden Bibas, who was freed last week by Hamas militants in Gaza, on Friday urged Netanyahu to help bring back his wife and two children from the Palestinian territory. "Prime Minister Netanyahu, I'm now addressing you with my own words... bring my family back, bring my friends back, bring everyone home," Bibas said in his first public message following his release.

Hamas previously said his wife Shiri and his two sons Ariel and Kfir - the youngest hostages - were dead, but Israel has not confirmed their deaths. The Hostage and Missing Families Forum urged the Israeli government on Friday to stick with the Gaza truce, even as Trump's comments sparked backlash across the Middle East and beyond.

Trump revokes Biden's access to intelligence briefings

WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump has announced that he is revoking former President Joe Biden's access to intelligence briefings in his latest act of retribution against his rivals. Trump said that there was "no need" for Biden to keep his "security clearances" and that he was taking the action in response to his predecessor revoking his access to classified material after he left office.

"He set this precedent in 2021, when he instructed the Intelligence Community (IC) to stop the 45th President of the United States (MEI) from accessing details on National Security, a courtesy provided to former Presidents," Trump said in a post on Truth Social. Trump also suggested that Biden could not be trusted with sensitive information after special counsel Robert Hur's report on his predecessor's handling of classified information described the Democrat's memory as "fuzzy" and having "significant limitations".

Hur, who declined to bring charges against

Biden, said that the then-president struggled to remember key dates such as the death of his son Beau and his time as vice president. In a callback to his signature slogan on the reality TV show, The Apprentice, Trump added in capitals: "Joe, you're fired." Steven Cheung, the White House director of communications, shared Trump's post of the announcement on X, adding: "Hit the road Jack and don't you come back no more!" Biden did not immediately comment, though some former officials of his administration hit out at the move.

"This will not lower the price of eggs," Andrew Bates, the former White House senior deputy press secretary, said in a post on X, referring to Trump's focus on inflation during his election campaign. US presidents do not require security clearances and have access to classified information by virtue of their position. Former presidents have traditionally received intelligence briefings as requested, though access is provided at the sole discretion of the

incumbent president and there is no formal security clearance process involved.

Shortly after taking office, Biden said that Trump should not have access to intelligence briefings due to his efforts to overturn the outcome of the 2020 presidential election, culminating in the January 6, 2021, riot at the US Capitol. "I just think that there is no need for him to have the intelligence briefings," Biden said at the time in an interview with CBS News. "What value is giving him an intelligence briefing? What impact does he have at all, other than the fact he might slip and say something?"

Trump was charged with four criminal counts over his efforts to cancel the results of the vote, including conspiracy to defraud the US and conspiracy against the rights of citizens, before prosecutors dropped the case along with several other prosecutions he was facing following his re-election. Trump's administration has revoked access to intelligence briefings from dozens of critics and rivals since taking office on January 20. — Aljazeera

BJP wins New Delhi elections after 27 years

NEW DELHI (AFP): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that "development had won" as his Hindu nationalist party took back control of the capital province Delhi in local elections.

"Development has won, good governance has won," Modi said after the city's former chief minister — a key opposition leader to the premier — confirmed having lost his seat. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is in government in the national parliament but has not controlled the local legislature in the capital Delhi since 1998, so it is a symbolic and strategically

important victory. "We will leave no stone unturned in ensuring the overall development of Delhi and making the lives of residents better," Modi said in a post on social media. Arvind Kejriwal lost his seat to Modi's BJP, according to election commission results, reflecting wider damaging losses by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Kejriwal's AAP had governed the sprawling megacity of more than 30 million people for most of the past decade. "We accept the verdict and congratulate the BJP," Kejriwal said in a video statement. Chanting BJP supporters

danced for joy outside its New Delhi headquarters as vote results from Wednesday's election were posted, waving flags and counters of Modi. Counting continues but the BJP had secured seats well past the majority mark, according to the election commission, with the party set to take around two-thirds of the 70-seat assembly.

"Our victory is a sign of the people's faith in Prime Minister Modi's vision of progress," interior minister and BJP stalwart Amit Shah said in a statement. "The Delhi mandate shows that people can't be misled with lies every time."

Afghan national killed in operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: An Afghan National involved in terrorism inside Pakistan was killed during an operation conducted by the security forces in general area Datta Khel of North Waziristan.

The individual was later identified as Luqman Khan alias Nusrat (Afghan National), Son of Kamal Khan, resident of Spera District, Khost Province, Afghanistan.

Interim Afghan Government authorities are being approached to take over the body of the individual, being an Afghan citizen. Such incidents are irrefutable evidence of involvement of Afghan Nationals in terrorist activities in Pakistan. Interim Afghan Government is expected to fulfill its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan.

Chief Secretary (CS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam has lauded armed forces for conducting successful intelligence-based operation in Datta Khel, North Waziristan that resulted in elimination of three Khwarij terrorists.

In a statement issued here Saturday, CS said that swift and strategic action in neutralizing these elements reflects the military's operational excellence and unwavering commitment to eradicate terrorism from our soil.

The recovery of weapons and ammunition further underscores the significance of this operation in dismantling terrorist networks. The achievement is a testament to Pakistan's relentless fight against terrorism, the statement said.

No fight with establishment, says Fazl

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Saturday has said that there is no fight with the establishment, however, the rigging in election has to be stopped.

If all institutions work within their constitutional limits, real democracy and stability may be possible in the country. He was talking to media representatives at Kishwar Khan residence in Mardan Gujjar Garhi. Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the mandate of the people was stolen in the February 8 elections and we are fighting for the rights of the people.

He said that any politician, including the founder PTI, was in jail and did not support political opponents out of the field by force. There is no room for extremism in politics, and all parties have to follow the principles of tolerance so that the democratic process is stable. Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that PTI and JUI's behavior has been strict in the past But now efforts are underway to moderate the situation.

Naval Chief visits foreign navy ships during exercise

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf visited foreign ships of navies participating in 9th Multinational Naval Exercise AMAN-25. Upon his arrival onboard foreign visiting ships, the Naval Chief was warmly welcomed by Senior Officers/ Commanding Officers and was presented Guard of Honour by smartly dressed out contingents.

The Naval Chief visited Bangladesh Navy Ship BNS SOMUDRA JOY, China Navy Ship PLA (N) GAO YOUHU, Indonesia Navy Ship KRI BUNG TOMO, Iran Navy Ship IRIS JAMARAN, Japan Navy Ship JS

MURASAME, Malaysia Navy Ship KD TERENG-GANU, Sri Lanka Navy Ship SLNS VIJAYABAHU, UAE Navy Ship ABU DHABI CLASS SHIP and USA Navy Ship USS LEWIS B PULLER amongst the platforms participating in Multinational Naval Exercise AMAN-25. The Admiral interacted with Senior Officers/ Commanding Officers and was given briefings on board ships.

During interactions, the Admiral highlighted that Pakistan believes in collaborative efforts for maritime security and maintenance of good order at sea. With the same spirit, Pakistan Navy is persistently con-

tributing into peace and stability in the region through its initiative like Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP) and multinational exercise AMAN.

The AMAN Exercise demonstrates Pakistan's commitment to peace, reinforce regional maritime security and enhance interoperability between regional and extra regional navies. The Naval Chief further expressed that cooperation and partnership generated through AMAN will grow in future and shall bring us closer to the mutual goal of peace and prosperity. He appreciated their participation in AMAN Exercise to fulfill the common resolve of "Together for Peace".



KARACHI: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf during his visit to PLA (N) Gaoyouhu Ship in 9th Multinational Maritime Exercise Aman-25.

Lebanon forms its first govt in over 2 years

BEIRUT (AP): Lebanon's new prime minister on Saturday formed the country's first full-fledged government since 2022. President Joseph Aoun announced in a statement that he had accepted the resignation of the former caretaker government and signed a decree with new Prime Minister Nawaf Salam forming the new government.

Salam's cabinet of 24 ministers, split evenly between Christian and Muslim sects, was formed less than a month after he was appointed, and comes at a time where Lebanon is scrambling to rebuild its battered southern region and maintain security along its southern border after a devastating war between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group. A US-brokered ceasefire deal ended the war in November.

Lebanon is also still in the throes of a crippling economic crisis, now in its sixth year, which has battered its banks, destroyed its state electricity sector and left many in poverty unable to access their savings. Salam, a diplomat and former president of the International Court of Justice, has vowed to reform Lebanon's judiciary and battered economy

and bring about stability in the troubled country, which has faced numerous economic, political, and security crises for decades.

Though Hezbollah did not endorse Salam as prime minister, the Lebanese group did engage in negotiations with the new prime minister over the Shiite Muslim seats in government, as per Lebanon's power-sharing system. Lebanon's new authorities also mark a shift away from leaders that are close to Hezbollah, as Beirut hopes to continue improving ties with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations that have been concerned by Hezbollah's growing political and military power over the past decade.

In early January, former army chief Aoun was elected president, ending that position's vacuum. He was also a candidate not endorsed by Hezbollah and key allies. Aoun has shared similar sentiments to Salam, also vowing to consolidate the state's right to "monopolize the carrying of weapons," in an apparent reference to the arms of Hezbollah.

Salam's 24-member cabinet included Deputy Prime Minister, Tarek

Mitri, Defense Minister, Michel Menassa, Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Ahmad Al-Hajjar, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Youssef Rajji, Minister of Telecommunications, Charles Hajj, Minister of Energy and Water, Joseph Saddi, Minister of Justice, Adel Nassar, Minister of Finance, Yassine Jaber, Minister of Public Health, Rakan Nasser Eldine, Minister of Culture, Ghassan Salameh, Minister of Industry, Joe Issa Al-Khoury, Minister of Economy and Trade, Amer Al-Bisat, Minister of Agriculture, Nizar Hani, Minister of Information, Dr Paul Morcos, Minister of Social Affairs, Haneen Sayed, Minister of Youth and Sports, Nora Bayrakdarian, Minister of Tourism, Laura El-Khazen Lahoud, Minister of Education, Rima Karami, Minister of Environment, Tamara El-Zein, Minister of Public Works and Transport, Fayeze Rasamny, Minister of Displacement, Kamal Shehadeh (and State Minister for Technology Affairs and AI), Minister of Labor, Mohamed Haider, Minister of Administrative Development, Fadi Makki.