



Imran can't be tried for failing to deposit gift in Toshakhana: IHC

- Detailed order on bail plea says rules amended in 2023 can't be applied retroactively
- FIA prosecutor completes cross-examination of Toshakhana official
- Much-awaited decision in £190m reference deferred again due to absence of judge

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC), in a detailed judgement on the post-arrest bail petition of former prime minister Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case, has declared that the accused cannot be prosecuted for failing to deposit a Bajaur jewellery set — gifted by the Saudi crown prince — to the state treasury under the rules.

In a 14-page verdict, Justice Mansoor Ali Khan Noon explained that only the submission of a receipt was mandatory, and not the gift itself, under the Toshakhana rules of 2018.

While penalties were introduced in 2023 through changes in the rules for non-submission of gifts to the state treasury, the same could not be applied retroactively to actions from prior years, the court ruled.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had in-

tiated criminal proceedings against Imran Khan and his spouse Radhika Babi, alleging procedural violations, undervaluation of the expensive jewellery set gifted by the Saudi crown prince, and a resulting loss of Rs32.8 million to the national exchequer.

The agency argued that Mr Khan influenced the "undervaluation" of the gift. However, the IHC judgement stated "no direct threats or pressure" were attributed to the former premier in the case.

Besides, the detailed verdict also cited that Suhail Abbasi, who evaluated the gift, became a sworn witness after being pardoned by the head of the anti-graft watchdog National Accountability Bureau (NAB), but his testimony remains unrecorded.

The court noted that the defence counsel maintained that the receipt for the gift money was submitted to the Toshakhana as per 2018 rules, thus the accu-

Justice Aurangzeb further observed that the former premier, despite being in detention for more than four months, had not been indicted. The trial faced significant delays, he noted, pointing out that the investigation had been completed by NAB before the case was transferred to the FIA.

Missed of bail

The judge also noted that there was no fear of tampering with evidence in the case, but emphasised that bail conditions required Mr Khan to appear at all trial court hearings, warning that "violation of bail can lead to its cancellation".

Meanwhile, the cross-examination of Toshakhana Section Officer Bin Yamin was completed before FIA's special court.

Judge Shahrukh Arjumand also recorded the testimony of cabinet division's deputy secretary coordination Mohammad

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CAPE TOWN: Pakistan captain Shan Masood drives during his fighting knock of 145 in the second Test against South Africa at Newlands, on Monday. His valiant innings was the cornerstone of Pakistan's much-improved showing in their second stanza, as they overcame the second-highest first innings deficit in Test history. Forced to follow on after managing just 104 in reply to South Africa's mammoth 615, Shan led from the front as his team managed to get the hosts to bat again, even though their victory target was a paltry 58. Shan's 205-run stand with Babar Azeem was also the highest opening stand while following on, and he also became the first Pakistan captain to score a Test century in South Africa. But ultimately, it was not enough to prevent Pakistan from going down 2-0 in the series.—AFP

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Ahsan downplays PPP's beef with federal govt

- Minister says differences exist in every household, but it doesn't mean there is a problem
- Sindh CM's office insists 'no communication' with Centre on establishment of Pakistan Maritime and Seaport Authority

Dawn Report

KARACHI: The PM's office government on Monday tried to downplay differences with its reluctant ally, the PPP, as a cabinet minister likened their disputes to 'domestic problems', saying that just because there were differences there wasn't a problem.

Talking to the media after attending a meeting regarding federally-funded Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) projects, Federal Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that differences in a coalition government were inevitable.

He was referring to concerns raised by PPP spokesperson Shazia Marri a day earlier, who accused the federal government for not consulting her party on key decisions, such as the establishment of the Pakistan Maritime and Seaport Authority (PMSEA).

In an impassioned statement, Mr Marri had said that the government's survival "hinged on PPP's support" and that it would "collapse" if that support was withdrawn.

Flanked by Sindh Energy Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Mr Iqbal responded to questions regarding her earlier by saying that "slight differences" were usual

when governments were formed via a coalition.

"These problems happen even in a household — between siblings, between husband and wife — but it does not mean there is a problem," he said, adding that both parties had managed their differences amicably.

"The two major political parties in the country have distinct ideologies, but one vision, and there is a consensus," he said. "That vision is Pakistan."

He said that both parties put their differences aside whenever it came to the country's development.

"We need to keep our politics aside and both parties have to play their

part," he said, adding that the understanding between the parties existed since the Charter of Democracy was signed between Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto in 2006.

"This is the beauty of Pakistan's politics, that two parties with independent values have matured," he said.

"Rather than harming (the country) with their differences, they collaborate and can work for the country's future," he added.

"We don't need the

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PTI links success of talks with govt's 'seriousness'

- Party spokespersons 'rogue elements' in ruling coalition want to sabotage the process
- PM's aide says dialogue can't move forward if PTI doesn't put its demands in black & white

By Iqram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: As it awaits a meeting with party founder Imran Khan to finalise its demands, the PTI has accused the federal government of being "non-serious" about talks with the opposition party, claiming that statements coming from certain ministers may put a damper on the dialogue process.

In a statement on Monday, PTI spokesperson Sherida Waqar Akram said government officials should not doubt the intentions of the opposition party, claiming that talks were not making any progress due to the "non-serious attitude" of the ruling coalition.

The dialogue, which kicked off over two weeks ago, has not made any significant headway so far. The major hurdles so far are the PTI negotiators' lack of access to Imran Khan, and the PTI's unwillingness to share its demands with the government in writing.

Mr Akram urged the government to rein in the "rogue" elements within its ranks, who were allegedly determined to

sabotage the negotiation process and had become major obstacles to its success.

A day earlier, Senator Irfan Siddiqui had expressed apprehensions that the new demands of the PTI "may sabotage the entire negotiation process". The statement followed a suggestion by the PTI seeking the involvement of the establishment in the process.

In his statement issued on Monday, the PTI spokesperson claimed that the government failed to reciprocate the PTI's overtures with equal seriousness. He added that PTI's commitment to resolving the current political impasse was clear when Imran Khan took the initiative to form an empowered negotiating committee.

He emphasised it was incumbent upon the government to bring down the political temperature and ensure uninterrupted access to the PTI founding chairman for his regular inputs regarding the negotiation process because only he could make final decisions. He urged the government to fulfil its commitment

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No registered Afghans will be deported until June 30, SC told

Report states 784,954 illegal foreigners have been repatriated so far

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: With the Constitutional Bench set to resume the hearing of a petition against the mass deportation of Afghans on Tuesday (today), the federal government has assured the Supreme Court that validity of the PoR cards issued to the registered refugees had been extended until June 30.

The public interest petition, to be heard by a seven-judge bench headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, was filed by a coalition of

civil society activists comprising rights campaigners former senators Farhatullah Bahar and Mustajid Ahmad, mining persons' supporter Amina Masood Jangoo and lawyers Jibran Nasir, Imran Masrui and Imran Sharif through Advocate Umar Jibran Gilani. The petition was filed in the wake of a mass deportation decision announced by the Apex Committee on Oct 3, 2023.

In its report, the federal government assured the Supreme Court that all Afghan refugees who have been living in Pakistan following their registration in any form, including holders of PoRs or Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs), will be provided full legal protection and will not be apprehended or deported.

This promise extends till June

30, 2025, as per the July 22, 2024 notification issued by the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions. The total number of PoR and ACC holders living in Pakistan is estimated to be 1.3 million and 792,000, respectively.

The report, filed by Additional Secretary Interior Nazim Muhammad Bador, stated that until now a total of 784,954 illegal foreigners, including Afghans, had been repatriated.

The report explains that since the rollout of phoned of the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRIP), a majority of illegal foreigners, including Afghan nationals, have been repatriated. However, the foreigners, who have been registered, were not

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Trudeau to step down once successor chosen

- Canadian PM says his 'internal battles' mean he is no longer the best option to lead Liberal Party into next election
- Governor-general asked to prorogue parliament until March 24 to allow for leadership transition
- Announcement comes ahead of Trump's inauguration

By Gurat ul ain Siddiqui

TORONTO: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on Monday that he will resign as leader of the Liberal Party, but continue to serve as prime minister until a successor is chosen.

Speaking outside his Rideau Cottage residence, Trudeau said the decision came after months of reflection, and consultations with his family and senior Liberal Party officials.

"I intend to resign as party leader and as prime minister after the party selects its next leader through a robust, nationwide competitive process," he said. "Last night, I asked the president of the Liberal Party to begin that process."

The announcement, coming less than a year before a scheduled federal election, signals a major shift in Canadian politics. Trudeau has led



CANADIAN PM Justin Trudeau

the Liberal Party since 2013 and has been Prime Minister since 2015, when he took the party from third place in Parliament to a majority government.

If it takes time to see significant initiatives in climate policy, Indigenous

reconciliation, and social programmes like national childcare. However, declining public support, mounting internal dissent, and recent by-election losses have placed the Liberals in a precarious position.

"This country deserves a real choice in the next election," Trudeau said. "It has become clear to me that if I am having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election."

The decision was finalised over the holiday season, Trudeau explained, following extended discussions with his family. "Over the holidays, I had the chance to reflect. I've had long talks with my family about our future," he said. "Last night, over dinner, I told my kids about the decision I am sharing with you today."

In addition to beginning the leadership process, Trudeau confirmed that he had asked Governor General

Mary Simon to prorogue Parliament until March 24. He argued that this would provide the Liberal Party with the necessary time and space to focus on its leadership transition.

"Parliament has been paralysed for months after what has been the longest session of a minority parliament in Canadian history," he said. "Proroguing allows for the focus required to navigate this transition."

The announcement follows growing calls from within the Liberal Party for Trudeau to step aside, a movement that gained momentum after the resignation of Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland in December.

Freeland, once seen as one of Trudeau's closest allies, criticised his leadership as she stepped down, further emboldening dissenting voices within the party. By late December, a growing number of Liberal MPs had publicly urged him to resign.

"I am a fighter, and I am not someone who backs away from a fight, particularly when a fight is as important as this one," Trudeau said. "But it has become obvious to me that I cannot be the one to carry the Liberal standard into the next election."

The Liberal Party's leadership contest is expected to attract a diverse slate of candidates, including former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney, Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc, and Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly. The timing of the leadership race will be critical, with the next federal election tentatively scheduled for October but widely expected to occur earlier.

Trudeau's resignation also comes at a time of heightened economic and political uncertainty, including President-elect Donald Trump's

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Three slain in fresh spate of terror attacks

By Ghulam Muneem Marwat

LAKKI MARWAT: At least three people, including two policemen, lost their lives and two personnel of the Frontier Constabulary received injuries in multiple attacks by militants targeting law enforcers and civilians in the Lakki Marwat and Banera districts on Monday.

Two police officials were martyred after unidentified gunmen targeted them in the Jalsakhal area of Lakki Marwat, said an official, adding the attack took place near Nurul Khan Graveyard in the limits of the Ghumkhal police station. Both policemen were killed on the spot and the terrorists managed to escape on a motorcycle.

The slain constables, Hakeemullah and Khan Bahadar, were on their way to their respective duty stations on a motorcycle from their village Kharsakhal Pacha. He said that the deceased constables Hakeem and Khan Bahadar were deployed on the Shalwal Halat Ali Khan police station of Dera Pura town and Shalwal Halat Ali Khan police station, respectively. "They were assigned the duty to receive official letters and communications from their respective police stations and take/dispatch those to the district police office daily," he said.

After the attack, a heavy contingent of law enforcers reached the area and launched a search for the assailants. Hearing

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ON OTHER PAGES



State stoking sectarian tensions: Fazl

Accusing the government of stoking sectarian tensions, JUI-F chief Masud Fazl Khan alleged that the state was fomenting trouble, but warning the subsequent fighting on religious groups. Maintaining that the recent violence in Kurram was fanned in nature, he asked why the bad blood hadn't spilled over into nearby localities, such as Kohat, Hangu and D.I. Khan. Page 8



Insulation materials banned

The cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee bans the use of insulation and flooring materials seen as harmful to the environment. An ECC meeting, presided over by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, issued fresh orders for the implementation of its Aug 15, 2024, decision for the grant of industry status to the warehousing and logistics sector. Page 9

By Our Correspondent

Rescue teams and a contingent of Kot Addu police worked to remove injured passengers and recover bodies by cutting through the bus.



LAHORE: Girls burn dry leaves and twigs in Loco Shed area to brave freezing cold. The meteorological department forecast fog in some central and south Punjab districts on Tuesday (today). —White Star

The police tracked the suspects using Safe City cameras and call data records. The police arrested the shooter and are waiting for the arrest of the other suspect, the police official said. — Staff Reporter

By Acid Chondrolysis and Tissue Section

Those who lost their lives in the Israeli attack were identified as Muhammad Bilal, Muhammad Umar

Police Assistant Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dr Abdul Khair told Darwin that the assailants brought a wooden ladder and went to the backside of the police station as firing the main gate closed.

The worst on saying the armed men from Kharral party avenged and allegedly murdered two men of the rival group in August 2023. A murder case was lodged against the men of the attacking group accordingly.

The inquiry officials, including DIG intelligence special branch police Pargat Singh Raja (head of the committee), additional IG computers Ehsanullah Chohan and additional IG operations Zahid Nazeem Marwat have reached Islamabad.

[illegible]

Elly Holmström, MSc

Each committee, having members not less than 25-35 officers, comprises CCPO (for Lahore)/CPO (DPO), representatives of local fir-

These committees have also been tasked with establishing District Narrative News Centers to ensure that dissemination of any information aligns with the policies and narrative of the Presidential campaign.

emergency and transparency in security issues and law enforcement. The DCCs will also monitor establishment of Safe Cities Authority for enhanced real-time surveillance and monitoring to ensure effective law enforcement in all major cities of the province.

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02	سہ فارم	
03	والیسا کا نئی کارڈ	
04	نئی آڈیو ویل فائلنگ	
05	انکونٹر فائلنگ	



DAWN



PM for seizing assets of human traffickers

• Asks FC to extradite Pakistanis involved in 'heinous trade' abroad • Sukkur court summons PM, other officials on Jan 15 over boat tragedy

By Syed Irfan Hameed and Wassam Shumail

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif on Monday ordered strict legal action against human trafficking gangs in the country, including immediate confiscation of their properties and assets.

The directives came hours after an additional sessions judge in Sukkur summoned the premier, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Deputy PM Ishaq Dar on Jan 15 in connection with a recent incident in which 75 Pakistanis were killed when their boat capsized off the coast of Greece.

The judge issued the summons while hearing a petition which contended that due to the government's "negligence", unemployed Pakistanis were trying to reach Europe through illegal means and losing their lives in the process. The petitioner demanded action against those responsible for the killings.

Chairing a review meeting on measures taken against human trafficking, PM Shabbaz praised the Federal Investigation Agency for taking action against government officials for their involvement in the illegal practice.

He directed that strict punitive measures be taken against the facilitators, said a press release issued by the PM Office's media wing.

The prime minister was briefed on the measures taken against human trafficking, progress on the legal actions against facilitators and about legislation for the eradication of this practice.

The premier said that prosecution process against all the individuals involved in the heinous trade should be made more effective, adding that top lawyers be appointed for prosecution in consultation with the ministry of law and justice.

He said the Foreign Office should contact the consulates concerned to expedite the extradition of those Pakistanis who are running human trafficking operations abroad.

He directed that the ministry of information and broadcasting, in collaboration with the ministry of interior, should launch an awareness campaign to educate the general public about using only legal channels for overseas employment.

He said the country should promote technical training institutions that could provide certified professionals to the international market in accordance with modern requirements, adding that the screening process for individuals travelling abroad should be made more effective at the airports.

Earlier, Additional Sessions Judge Sukkur Javed Mirani issued notices to the PM, the foreign minister, and the interior minister through the speaker of National Assembly and directed them to appear before the court on Jan 15 on a petition filed by advocate Muhammad Ali Shah.

The petitioner held the respondents responsible for the deaths of 75 Pakistanis who he said were compelled to go abroad for employment because the government had failed in fulfilling its responsibilities, adding that the government had lost its writ.

The petitioner appealed to the court that a case be registered at the Robert police station against the government officials for their alleged negligence.

Honour to Aftab

Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif paid tribute to Shabbaz Aftab Hameed who had lost his life 11 years ago to save his school and classmates from a devastating attack. Aftab died on Jan 6, 2014, while preventing a suicide bomber from entering a school at Hangu village. More than 2,000 students were attending classes at the time of the incident.

He noted that at a young age of 15 years, Aftab displayed unflinching bravery and sacrificed his life to shield his school and classmates from a devastating attack.

GB protesters press govt to resolve power crisis

Organisers call for wheel-jam, shutter-down strike today; CM's aide claims '90pc of demands already met'

By Jamil Nagri

GILGIT: As the ongoing strike in Hunza blocked the Karakoram Highway (KKH) for the fourth consecutive day, protest organisers announced plans to intensify the protest over the Gilgit-Baltistan government's failure to supply electricity for even two hours a day.

The decision to intensify the protest, which was launched on the call of Hunza Awami Action Committee and the All Parties Traders' Association, came despite the GB government's claim that 90 per cent of their demands have already been met.

The strike in the Aghard area — the district headquarters of Hunza — has caused difficulties for locals and travellers, with heavy traffic remaining suspended and an alternative route open only for light traffic. Vehicles loaded with goods imported from China via Khunjerab Pass also remained stranded at the protest venue.

Despite freezing temperatures,



HUNZA: Trucks are stranded along the Karakoram Highway, which has been blocked by locals staging a sit-in against power outages. —AFP

protesters spent the night at their camps. They chanted slogans against the GB government and demanded electricity to Hunza.

People from various political groups and civil society organisations have been participating in the protest.

Protesters said the daily lives of locals have been paralysed, and students cannot study, putting their futures at stake. They said trade activities, online businesses, and other pursuits have come to a halt, affecting their livelihoods.

After mutual consultation on Monday evening, the protest organisers

announced their joint decision to intensify the protest from Tuesday, as the GB government had failed to fulfil their genuine demands. They said no vehicle, except in emergency cases, would be allowed to pass through any route in the area.

Women and children would also join the protest, as there would be complete wheel-jam and shutter-down strike to press the authorities to meet their demands.

Zahoor Ulahi, one of the organisers, said the GB government's offer had already been rejected by protesters. He said food should immediately be supplied to thermal generators for their operation to increase power supply. He said work on the power projects in Hunza must also be expedited. The organisers said people in other areas of GB were also leaving 12-hour-long buscholding.

Political point-scoring

On the other hand, Advisor to GB Chief Minister on Information Irfan Shah told a press conference that 90pc demands of the protesters had already been met by the government. He accused the PM, N, PPP and other political parties of exploiting locals for their political interest.

The adviser questioned GB assembly lawmaker Ubaidullah Baig's performance when he was senior minister to solve power crisis. He said the elected member from Hunza had failed to initiate a single power project.

Instead of thermal generators, he added, the GB government was working on a long-term solution. He claimed that work on several under-construction power projects would be completed next year.

Ex-CJP seeks expunging of remarks on constitutional bench challenge

Senior lawyers ask SCBA to stand by demand for full court to decide challenges to 26th Amendment

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Former chief justice of Pakistan Jawwad S. Khawaja has petitioned the Supreme Court to expunge certain observations made by the court while dismissing his application as frivolous.

The application sought to defer hearings on intra-court appeals challenging the trial of civilians by military courts until the validity of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution was determined.

The seven-judge constitutional bench, headed by Justice Amiruddin Khan, had imposed a fine of Rs25,000 on Jawwad Khawaja's application, declaring it frivolous. The bench will

resume hearing the ICAs on Tuesday. Justice Khawaja's review petition requested the apex court to expunge the statement that his earlier application lacked bona fide and was filed to delay the hearing of the appeals.

He also sought to set aside the findings that his application was frivolous and the imposition of the fine.

The petitioner explained that the application was filed in the public interest to determine whether civilians can be court-martialled under the Constitution. He reminded the court that the matter has significant implications for fundamental rights and the future of the country.

The petitioner also mentioned that it was a matter of record that the constitutionality of the constitutional bench was disputed, and therefore he urged that the present petition be accepted.

While rejecting the earlier application, the constitutional bench had ruled that decisions made by courts of competent jurisdiction remain valid and protected even if constitutional

amendments or legislation were later declared invalid.

Letter to SCBA chief

Meanwhile, a group of 53 senior lawyers, including former presidents of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), have written a joint open letter to SCBA President Mian Muhammad Raziq expressing disappointment at the Dec 26 and Dec 28 press statements, and said they stand firmly against attempts to undermine judicial independence and assert executive dominance over the judiciary.

The open letter said the support for the 26th Amendment under the garb of 'parliamentary supremacy' was gravely concerning, since the amendment upsets the delicate balance between the three organs of the state and goes against the trichotomy of powers.

The letter suggested a full court comprising all judges of the Supreme Court be constituted to uphold the legitimacy and credibility of the court.

Internet users grew in 2024, says minister

KARACHI: Dispelling the impression that internet interruptions had been a recurring problem over the past year, IT Minister Shaukat Farooq Khawaja maintains that the number of internet users in the country had grown over the past year.

In a statement, the minister said that an overall statistical evaluation of Pakistan's exports over a 33 per cent growth over five months, "a mark that was inconceivable had internet interruptions been a recurrent norm".

The comparative growth of internet users from 2023 to 2024 was up by 25 pc, she said, adding that this was a "reflection of the nation and committed efforts put together [sic] by the IT ministry regarding internet connectivity".

Last week, a report from TopVPN.com, an independent VPN reviewer, claimed that the cumulative financial impact of internet shutdowns and outages in Pakistan during 2024 was around \$1.62bn.

However, Mr Khawaja contended that fixed-line or broadband internet was never shut and "the IT industry is fully functional, apart from the brief outage experienced during the months of August and September". He claimed that the information regarding internet closures had been "far exaggerated than where it truly stands". —Dawn Report

SC registrar discusses reforms with top court officials

Move aimed at improving Pakistan's ranking on World Justice Index

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court Registrar Muhammad Salim Khan on Monday held an interactive session with heads of different sections of the top court, as part of the ongoing judicial reforms aimed at improving service delivery and broadening access to justice.

During the session the registrar said that Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, since assuming office, has prioritised brainstorming with stakeholders across the justice sector to identify and address challenges in judicial operations.

The comprehensive reform agenda aims to enhance the efficiency of the Supreme Court and elevate the judiciary's standing on the World Justice Index. These reforms focus on digitalising the court processes, improving accessibility, streamlining procedures, ensuring accountability and fostering greater transparency in judicial operations.

Sher Shah, one of the participants, emphasised that reforms were designed not only to minimise the case pendency but also to ensure that litigants receive timely and effective justice.

He underscored that litigants were the core stakeholders of the justice system and must be treated with the utmost respect to highlight the institution's commitment to justice and reinforce its soft image.

Respectful and fair treatment of litigants, he noted, is essential for restoring public trust and showcasing the judiciary as a reliable and people-centric institution, so that

the institution remains committed to reinforcing its role as a symbol of justice, fairness, and respect for all.

The session also addressed key areas of reform, including advancements in IT infrastructure, improvements in case management systems, capacity building of staff, and introduction of training programmes.

A notable initiative discussed was the launch of the "Online Feedback Form — Stakeholders' Engagement for Judicial Reform", available on the Supreme Court's official website.

This platform invites the public to

share suggestions and insights to enhance service delivery and foster meaningful engagement. The feedback form can be accessed at <https://scj.gov.pk/Feedback.aspx>.

The IT directorate also presented updates on progress achieved under the CJP leadership, highlighting the integration of digital technologies and the establishment of mechanisms to make the judicial process more accessible and transparent.

These initiatives align with the judiciary's commitment to addressing systemic challenges and ensuring a responsive and trustworthy justice system.

PRINCIPAL PARTNER: UNITED NATIONS PAKISTAN

STRATEGIC PARTNER: Uthmaniyah

SUPPORTED BY: EBM, GIZ

ENGINEERING PARTNER: Pakistan Engineering Council

DAWN MEDIA Breathe Pakistan LET'S WEATHER THE CHANGE - TOGETHER

ECO's cultural heritage offers foundation for regional integration: experts

By Mikhat A. Khan

ISLAMABAD With their rich cultural heritage and diversity of languages and traditions, member states of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) offer a foundation for fostering mutual understanding, regional integration and sustainable development.

This was observed by speakers at a seminar on "Fostering cultural harmony: celebrating diversity among ECO member states," organised by the ECO Cultural Institute, Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, and the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies.

They said embracing this diversity not only strengthens diplomatic and cultural ties but also paves the way for economic collaboration and social cohesion, positioning the ECO region as a global model for harmony through diversity.

The speakers underscored the vital role of cultural diversity in fostering unity and regional integration. The discussions revolved around leveraging the rich cultural tapestry of the ECO region to enhance mutual understanding, regional harmony, and shared prosperity.

Dr Farhat Auli, IPDS President, emphasised the significance of cultural diplomacy as a bridge connecting the ECO member states and highlighted Pakistan's pivotal role in promoting cultural exchange within the ECO framework, celebrating the nation's rich heritage and its commitment to fostering regional harmony.

Dr Saad Khan, ECO Cultural Institute President, stressed the importance of preserving the region's shared cultural heritage and pointed out that ECO, as a platform, had nurtured a sense of belonging and cooperation among its member states. He urged the further investments in cultural initiatives that strengthen bonds and celebrate the unique traditions and values of the region.

Raina Insaan Afridi Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister, said cultural harmony was a cornerstone of sustainable regional integration and stressed the need for continued dialogue and collaborative efforts to protect and promote the shared heritage of the ECO member states. He also highlighted Pakistan's commitment to ECO's vision and its role as a bridge between South and Central Asia.

Dr Anwarbek Atakshiev, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan, reflected on the historical ties between ECO member states, emphasising that the shared cultural and historical legacy offers a strong foundation for regional solidarity.

Khassan Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, highlighted Azerbaijan's commitment to promoting cultural diplomacy within the ECO framework and stressed the importance of leveraging the region's cultural wealth as a tool for peacebuilding and fostering sustainable development.

Dr Synnisa Madadi, Executive Director, Institute of Philosophy, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences and former ambassador of Azerbaijan, said interplay between cultural heritage and regional stability is an important aspect, and underscored the need to protect intangible cultural heritage.

Nurlan Nimgaliev, Deputy Head of Mission at the embassy of Kazakhstan, focused on Kazakhstan's efforts in promoting cultural initiatives that highlight the region's diversity.

NA body orders hiring of local experts for revision of master plan

Summary moved to federal cabinet for formation of master plan commission, CDA informs committee

By Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD A parliamentary panel on Monday directed the Ministry of Interior to engage local experts, town planners and reputable firms for the timely finalisation of Islamabad's master plan.

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Interior met at Parliament House with Raja Khuram Shabbaz Nawaz in the chair.

The chairman of the CDA, advised the committee and said a summary had been moved to the federal cabinet for formation of the master plan commission.

The previously formed commission

had directed hiring of international consultants for the revision of the master plan.

The committee expressed displeasure over hiring of international firms, considering it wastage of taxpayers' money.

The chair emphasised that the Ministry of Interior should engage local professional experts to ensure timely completion of the master plan.

Daxidhis Associates, a Greece-based firm that prepared the master plan in 1960, had recommended its revision after every 20 years in accordance with the needs of time.

However, successive governments did not bother to make proper revision rather kept focusing on selective changes without any input from professionals, resulting into poor planning in the capital city.

So far, over 50 major changes have been made in the master plan and the incumbent government also made at least seven changes to it last month without getting any input from experts.

In the new changes, at least three sectors have been excluded from Zone I of Islamabad and made residential sectors after changing their original status of half green and half for institutions.

Meanwhile, the committee also expressed displeasure about the imposition of heavy fees on unregistered vehicles and directed the Ministry of Interior to ensure not only the cancellation of the notification dated August 2, 2024 but also refund of the collected amounts to the public in line with the committee's previous recommendations.

Furthermore, the committee recommended a one-time relaxation for new registrations and a token late fee for three months.

The ministry was directed to consult the relevant departments and stakeholders to revisit the increased slab and formulate a standardised registration fee structure.

Meanwhile, the director general FIA was directed to brief the commit-

tee on the government's current policy and strategies for addressing human trafficking cases.

The chair directed the DG chief to present a legislative draft for stricter punishments for agents involved in human trafficking and to fix responsibility on FIA officials and officers found complicit in such cases.

Meanwhile, the committee considered the "Nationalisation (Amendment) Bill 2024" (sections 3-9, 11 & 12) and "The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 2024" moved by Syeda Noorhan Hudaib, MNA, and recommended that the bills be passed by the National Assembly.

The committee also reviewed "The Pakistan Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2024" (section 14A) (Government Bill), "Pakistan Land Port Authority Bill 2024" and "The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2024" (section 498 A.A) moved by MNA Sofia Naeed Shah and deferred them to the next meeting.

Pak-US ties still relevant for regional peace: speakers

ISLAMABAD The participants at a roundtable on Monday highlighted the enduring and dynamic relationship between Pakistan and the US and pointed out its strong future potential.

The discussions underscored the continuing relevance of Pak-US partnership for regional peace, stability and security.

NUIST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS) organised a keynote address on "Pak-US relations" by Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Riwaz Naeed Sheikh.

Guest NUIST Dr Muhammad Zahid Latif greeted the honouree upon arrival and briefly apprised him about the university's multidimensional knowledge capabilities.

Moderated by Dr Ashfaq Hussain Khan, DG NIPS, the session was attended by statesmen, former senior civil and military officials, veteran ambassadors, public officials, academics, think tank experts, scholars, researchers, and students.

The experts agreed that pragmatic cooperation and mutual respect are key to unlocking long-term opportunities for bilateral ties. The deliberative exchange emphasised the importance of

adopting a forward-looking and merit-based approach to further strengthening the bilateral relations.

There was a chorus call during the discussion for increased academic, think tank, S&T, and innovation-based collaborations between Pakistani and American educational and research institutions.

By leveraging knowledge diplomacy, both countries can deepen common understanding and address pressing global and regional challenges effectively.

The attendees also stressed the significance of increased Pak-US business-to-business exchanges and enhanced trade linkages.

It was agreed unanimously that greater cooperation in the sectors of agriculture, higher education, advanced ICTs, renewable energy, healthcare, and minerals would be mutually advantageous.

The discussants considered that the bilateral dialogue on regional security and stability was a positive development.

The session concluded while stressing the importance of fostering greater bilateral engagement for regional and global growth development, and prosperity.—Staff Reporter

Unicef provides seven 4x4 vehicles to immunisation directorate

By Iram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD Unicef has provided seven 4x4 vehicles to Federal Directorate of Immunisation (FDI) to ensure that it would get access to remote regions of Pakistan.

Provision of 4x4 vehicles will help overcome accessibility challenges in hard-to-reach areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Aard Kashmir.

Vaccination of children is one of the top priorities of prime ministers. Special Secretary Health Mirza Nadeemuddin Mashood Ahmed said during a ceremony to hand over the vehicles. Funded by GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, these vehicles are pivotal in expanding integrated immunisation services to Pakistan's most vulnerable populations.

They aim to enhance service delivery, close immu-

nisation gaps, and target zero-dose children in underserved regions.

Unicef's support includes crafting outreach and micro-plans, supplying necessary materials, monitoring progress, and ensuring optimal use of these vehicles. Mr Mashood encouraged donors and partners, GAVI and Unicef, to maintain momentum and explore new strategies for further improving immunisation coverage.

During the opening remarks, FDI Director General of Health Dr Shabana Saleem emphasised the importance of ensuring vaccines reach every child, no matter how remote their location is. She expressed her gratitude to Unicef for their unwavering support, stating, "These vehicles will strengthen our outreach capacity and help ensure that every child has equitable access to life-saving vaccines."

She stated that the govern-

ment firmly believed that where children remained unvaccinated, both their lives and the health of their communities were at risk.

"This is why the FDI is relentlessly working to vaccinate every child against the 12 targeted vaccine-preventable diseases, ensuring that no community, however remote or challenging, is left behind," she said.

Highlighting Unicef's commitment, Dr Chatterjee remarked, "We are honoured to contribute to this collective effort to serve Pakistan's underserved communities."

"With the support of GAVI, the government, and our partners, we are committed to building a healthier, fully immunised Pakistan," Zafar Iqbal Channa, Director Technical FDI, said it was another milestone in the ongoing efforts to strengthen Pakistan's immunisation infrastructure and achieve universal health coverage for all children.

German diplomat found dead in Islamabad

By Munawar Azam

ISLAMABAD A German diplomat was found dead in Diplomatic Enclave on Monday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Thomas Jergen Rieckhoff, 58, second secretary at the embassy of Germany.

Police said the diplomat was

found dead with his eyes, nose and mouth bleeding at his residence located in Karakoram Heights inside the high security area.

The police said the diplomat did not come to office on Monday and also did not respond to phone calls made from the embassy.

In response, the embassy sent an employee to the residence of

the diplomat, who did not get any response from inside the house.

Later, officials from embassy reached the residence and broke the locks open and entered the flat without informing the police, and found him dead.

The embassy then informed the police and officials from Secretariat police station who

reached the flat and shifted the body to hospital.

The police were told that the diplomat was a heart patient. It was not clear when the diplomat died. However, he had last used his Whatsapp at 7:44pm on Saturday, police said.

Spokespersons for the German diplomatic mission did not respond to Dawn's requests for comment.

**THIRD WORLD CENTER FOR CHEMICAL SCIENCES**
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF KARACHI, KARACHI-75270

TENDER NOTICE NO. ICCBS-TWC-PUR-12540-280123
Service & Maintenance of Air Conditioning & Cooling Equipment (Annual Contract)

Sealed Tenders are invited from EPADS Vendors / Suppliers, registered with the Sindh Revenue Board and Industries Tax Department (Income application through EPADS (E-Pak Acquisition and Disposal System) for "SERVICE & MAINTENANCE OF AIR CONDITIONING & COOLING EQUIPMENTS (Annual Contract)" on the PDR on Single Stage, One Envelope procedure for the Center.

Tender Schedule : Date and Time			
Tender Issue from	Tender Issuance till	Tender Submission	Tender Opening
13 JANUARY 2025	27 JANUARY 2025	28 JAN 2025 11:30 am through EPADS	28 JAN 2025 12:00 Noon through EPADS

The Bidding Documents can be obtained or downloaded from 13 JANUARY 2025 from EPADS (www.portalsindh.eprocure.gov.pk) or ICCBS websites (www.iccs.edu). Bidding Documents (Signed & Stamped) along with Earnest Money must be submitted through EPADS as per the above schedule. The Original Bid Security Pay Order must reach the Purchase Department ICCBS before the Deadline for Submission of Bids.

The Tender Fee amounting Rs. 1,000/- (Non-Refundable) must be deposited in United Bank Limited Account No. 1146-291497301 entitled "International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences Tender Account". The Original Deposit Slip / Online Deposit Receipt MUST be submitted along with the Bid.

Earnest Money equivalent to 2% of the Bid Value must be submitted in the form of a Pay Order in favour of the "International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences Tender Account" at the ICCBS Purchase Office.

Only Uploaded Bids (Duly Signed & Stamped) along with Supporting Documents will be accepted. An Alternate Bid / O plan should accompany a Separate Pay Order for Earnest Money. The Procuring Agency may reject all or any Bid subject to the relevant provisions of SPP Rule No. 20.

For any information or detail :
Purchase & Store Department
T: 34818811; 311-232-262 (158, 169, 188)
Email: ictbids@iccs.edu
DIRECTOR
tenders@iccs.edu, store.iccs@iccs.edu (I.C.C.B.S.)

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**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
GOVERNMENT OF SINDH

OFFICE OF THE COMMERCIAL DEPARTMENT
SINDH INTEGRATED EMERGENCY & HEALTH SERVICES (SIEHS)
HEALTH DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT OF SINDH
PHONE NO: +92-21-111-111-823 Ext: 2510 & 2005
www.siehs.org

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

SINDH INTEGRATED EMERGENCY & HEALTH SERVICES (SIEHS) invites sealed bids on CDP basis from well-reputed manufacturer, authorized agents/importers/suppliers in Pakistan registered with Income Tax & GST or SST in accordance with SPP Rules for the year 2024-25 as per SPP Rules 2010 (Amendment 2024) for following category.

TENDER NO	TENDER DESCRIPTION	BIDDING PROCEDURE	SUBMISSION & OPENING OF BIDS (DATE & TIME)
01	PROCUREMENT OF JANITORIAL ITEMS	SINGLE STAGE ONE ENVELOPE	1. SUBMISSION OF BIDS (EPADS) UP TO 24-01-2025 AT 09:30 AM 2. OPENING OF BIDS (EPADS) AT 10:00 AM ON THE SAME DAY.
02	PROCUREMENT OF KITCHEN ITEMS		
03	PROCUREMENT OF OFFICE STATIONERY ITEMS FOR ADMIN		
04	PROCUREMENT OF SMART RACK		
05	RENOVATIONS OF BUILDING (TURNKEY-BASIS PROJECT)		
06	PROCUREMENT OF FURNITURE & FIXTURES		
07	PROCUREMENT OF MEDICAL LAB TEST FOR PWD & PWT		
08	PROCUREMENT OF BIO-MEDICAL SUPPLIES		
09	PROCUREMENT OF SPARE PARTS FOR AMBULANCES		

- Tender documents can be downloaded from SPPRA (EPADS) Website and should be submitted on EPADS Portal also.
- Bid shall include all Government taxes or duties.
- Bidder fee of 3000/- in Pak rupees in shape of pay order/demand draft in favor of Sindh Integrated Emergency & Health Services NTN: 4979065-0
- Bid Security @ 2% of the total bid value of quoted items by the bidder in shape of pay order/demand draft/bank guarantee in favor of Sindh Integrated Emergency & Health Services NTN: 4979065-0
- Performance Security @ 2% of the total bid value of winning items by the successful bidder in shape of CDR/Bank Guarantee in favor of Sindh Integrated Emergency & Health Services NTN: 4979065-0
- The original sealed bid security along with technical proposals should be submitted at this department before submission of the tender. Else will be declared as disqualified.
- The tender Receipt will be purchased from the procurement branch of the institute and must be attached in the technical proposal. Else will be declared as disqualified.
- In case of announcement of public holiday or any unfavorable circumstance, the bids shall be submitted and opened on next working day.
- The CDD shall reserve the right to increase or decrease the quantity of any item of schedules as and when it is deemed necessary according to SPP Rules 2010 (Amendment 2024). The procurement committee may reject all or any bids subject to the relevant provisions of SPP Rules 2010 (Amendment 2024).

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

TSS-342501422024 Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Request for Proposal for selection of Consultancy services invited on Electronic Public Procurement System (EPPO) from well-regulated national/international firms (JV) / service providers meeting the eligibility criteria, viz having registration with FBR for Income Tax and SRA and who are on Active Taxpayers List (ATL) having registration with PEC as a Consulting Engineering Firm having mandatory code 1217, and are not black listed in any procuring agency or authority for preparation of Hiring of "Consultancy Services from Consulting Firms" Titled as Construction of Cold Storage Facilities and Establishment of Onion Frying Plant with Staging Facility in Various Districts of Balochistan (Package 2). Bid Security 2%. Detail as under -

S.No.	Description	E/Coef.
1	Construction of Cold Storage Facilities and Establishment of Onion-Frying Plant with Staging Facility in Various Districts of Balochistan (Package 2).	1,750,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 3 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity Turnover of at least 3,000,000 PKR Amount in 3 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List SRA Registration Certificate The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan PEC/CAEP Registration Must have established office Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of 02 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. The FINANCIAL PROPOSALS shall be opened of those consultants whose technical proposal is considered and approved. The Selection of Consultants shall be made as per Evaluation Criteria method as mentioned in the "Data Sheet of this "Request for Proposal" document. The incomplete request for proposal or received after due date mentioned above will not be considered. The RFP Documents can be downloaded from SPPRA Website (www.sppra.gov.pk). Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted upto 29 January 2025 at 09:30 AM Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 10:30 AM Address: Room No. 03, Block No. 04 Balochistan Court Secretariat Quetta Phone no: 3254199954 Email: info0304@icssd.com Project Director Green Balochistan Initiative

AB No.68206-01-2025

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

TSS-342501422024 Only electronic bids will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Request for Proposal (RFP) for the selection of consultancy services is invited on the Electronic Public Procurement System (EPPO) from well-regulated national/international firms (JV/service providers meeting the eligibility criteria. These include having registration with FBR for Income Tax, SRA, and being on the Active Taxpayers List (ATL), having registration with PEC as a Consulting Engineering Firm with mandatory code 1217, and not blacklisted by any procuring agency or authority. The RFP is for hiring Consultancy Services from Consulting Firms for feasibility study, Master Planning, Topographic Survey, and Detailed Design for the construction of a liver transplant institute at Quetta. Bid Security 2%. Details as under -

S.No.	Description	E/Coef.
1	Consultancy services for feasibility study, Master Planning, Topographic Survey, and Detailed Design of construction for the liver transplant institute at Quetta.	36,500,000

Procurement shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules. Eligibility of Bidders: Assignments of similar nature and complexity Turnover of at least 10,000,000 PKR in 1 subsequent previous year Presence on the Active Tax Payer List (ATL) SRA Registration Certificate. The bidding firm must not currently be blacklisted by any procuring agency in Pakistan. PEC/CAEP Registration with the following PEC service codes: 0506, 0507, 0509, 0510, 0511, 0512, 0514, 0516, 0518, 0521, 0532, 0533, 0536, 0537, 0538, 0540, 0541, 0543, 0544, 0545, 0546, 0547, 0548, 0549, 0572, 0575. PEC project profile codes: 1201, 1203, 1204 (S, 1215 (S & R), 1225, 1231, 1232 (S, 1235 in Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical disciplines. NTN & CAC copy, SSCP registration/Registration of Firms. The bidder/consortium must hold an active taxpayer certificate along with Income Tax returns for the last 3 years. Financial audit reports of the bidder from a recognized Chartered Accountant (CA) for the last three years must be attached. Bidder's consortium firms/members must have at least 10 years of experience. List of litigation (if any) their nature and status/dates. If there is no litigation attach an affidavit on Rs. 100/- non-judicial stamp paper stating that there is no case of litigation on the bidder. Attach an affidavit on Rs. 100/- non-judicial stamp paper stating that the bidder has never been blacklisted by any authority/government department or institution. Separate affidavits must be submitted for all consortium members. Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage, Two-Envelope Bidding Procedure. Bid Security: The bids must be accompanied by Bid Security in the form of 2% of the estimated cost, as specified above, in the name of the undersigned from a scheduled bank. Tender Fee: In shape of green challan form for an amount of Rs.1500/- (NON REFUNDABLE) deposited in the head of account C-02714 through Government Treasury (National Bank of Pakistan from the date of publication of this invitation in newspapers till the last date of submission i.e 23/01/2025. Financial Proposals: The financial proposals will be opened only for those consultants whose technical proposals are considered and approved. The selection of consultants shall be made as per the Evaluation Criteria mentioned in the "Data Sheet" of this "Request for Proposal" document. Incomplete requests for proposals or those received after the date mentioned above will not be considered. The RFP documents can be downloaded from the SPPRA website (www.sppra.gov.pk). Last Date of Bid Submission: The tenders must be submitted by 23 January 2025, no later than 12:00 PM. Tender Opening: All tenders will be opened on the same day at the office of the undersigned at 1:00 PM. Address: Office of the Chief Engineer Building, S&I Zone CAW Complex, Jaffer Khan, Jamali Road Near Akber Ruggi Stadium Quetta Phone: 3327681618 Email: sachinmishra750@gmail.com Project Director, Liver Transplant Institute, Quetta

AB No.68206-01-2025



Fragile peace

WHILE a peace deal to end the violence in Kurram tribal district was signed on New Year's Day between the warring tribes, the fact that the local deputy commissioner was attacked in the district mere days after the signing shows how difficult the challenge of maintaining calm in this region will be. DC Javedullah Mehsud and members of his security detail came under attack in the Bagan area on Saturday. Reportedly, a protest was underway in the locality, and the attackers were amongst the demonstrators, the KP government spokesman said. Luckily, Mr Mehsud survived the attack and was rushed out of the area. However, the question arises: if the state cannot protect one of its senior functionaries, how will it keep Kurram's ordinary citizens safe from violence and terrorism?

Fortunately, the peace deal has held despite the attack on the DC, while the KP government has promised to apprehend the perpetrators. Arrests have reportedly been made, while a meeting held to review the situation in Kohat, headed by the KP chief minister, decided that the provincial administration will take punitive measures against those who breach the peace. Notably, it has been decided that anyone carrying a weapon will be considered a militant. It is clear that there are elements in Kurram who do not want to see peace prevail in the district. The state, backed by the local tribes, must isolate and punish those malignant actors so that the fresh cycle of bloodshed in Kurram can be brought to a close.

The recently concluded peace deal offers a roadmap to lasting calm, but it can only work if the state has the will to enforce it, and the local tribes agree to abide by all its points. The primary criteria for calm in Kurram is a need to downsize the district, and neutralise all militant and sectarian groups active in the area. This includes keeping a close eye on the Afghan border, from where terrorists can and do infiltrate. Moreover, there must be freedom of movement across the district, and there cannot be any 'no-go' areas closed off to certain tribes or sects. The blockade of upper Kurram has created a grave humanitarian situation, and the state must guarantee the district's people have access to food, fuel, medicines etc at all times. Also, those who have lost loved ones, as well as those whose property has been destroyed in the recent clashes, must get justice. And the land and water disputes that have long fuelled tension in the area must be addressed judiciously. None of this will be easy in a tribal area which has seen decades of on-again, off-again skirmishes, exacerbated by sectarian differences and geopolitical factors. But the state cannot ignore the suffering of Kurram's people.

Captive power cut

THE IMF's refusal to relax its demand for discontinuation of massively subsidised gas supplies to mostly inefficient captive power plants owned by wealthy textile producers, in order to eliminate cost distortions between power supply from the national grid and in-house generation, is understandable. Where power supply is a problem, captive power producers would be asked to pay additional Rs1,700-1,800 per mmBtu on top of prevailing LNG prices to strip them of the cost benefits of in-house generation. The condition, one of the key structural benchmarks of the ongoing \$7bn funding programme, is aimed at compelling the government to wean the industry off energy subsidies, and encourage factory owners to shift to the national grid to stem falling power production — a major reason for soaring capacity payments to IPPs and unaffordable consumer tariffs. The electricity price subsidies for the industry have mostly been withdrawn under IMF oversight.

On the face of it, the condition appears harsh for exporters, as it would somewhat raise the cost of textile exports. But it isn't. Generous energy and other subsidies doled out to textile exporters over the past several decades have made them inefficient, preventing product diversification and value addition. Once they are weaned off subsidies, we may see some inefficient industries close down, with others investing in new technologies to stay competitive in the international markets. This action will also give small and medium textile exporters, who can't afford captive power to slash their production costs, a fair chance to compete with the large producers in the market and grow bigger. It should also help divert gas to the much more efficient RLNG-based power generation plants, reducing the burden of growing capacity payments on the national exchequer and consumers. Indeed, the gas utilities have concerns about the drop in their sales amidst "250 surplus RLNG cargoes" that Pakistan must procure under long-term contracts with suppliers. The concerns aren't totally misplaced, but the growth in demand from the on-grid power sector is expected to significantly offset the gas companies' projections of losses due to the decrease in demand from the captive power sector. No doubt, it's a complex situation where stabilisation of one segment of the energy sector is affecting the other. Yet these challenges need to be confronted head-on, sooner rather than later.

National embarrassment

PAKISTAN has utterly failed in protecting its children from polio, a preventable disease that has been eradicated nearly all over the world. With 68 cases reported in 2024 compared to Afghanistan's 25, we find ourselves in the embarrassing position of being the worst performer among the only two countries where polio is still endemic. Officials from Pakistan's polio programme point to our superior reporting mechanisms and suggest that Afghanistan's numbers may be underreported. However, this can in no way excuse our dismal performance. The fact remains that Pakistan, with its considerably stronger infrastructure and institutional capacity, should not even be in the same conversation as war-torn Afghanistan when it comes to public health metrics. Polio in our parts has spread to 83 districts. Our environmental surveillance has detected the virus in 591 sewage samples across 106 sites. These are scary numbers. Security challenges in erstwhile Fata, Karachi, and Peshawar have indeed hampered vaccination efforts. Yet, this narrative of perpetual hurdles is wearing thin. Pakistan's polio eradication programme, active since 1994, has lately been hurt by mismanagement, vaccine refusals, and gaps in immunisation coverage. Despite nine vaccination campaigns and mapping efforts, 12pc of our infected children had zero doses of the oral polio vaccine. This failure cannot solely be attributed to external factors; it underscores systemic inefficiencies and lack of political will.

The formation of a new team by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, including local person Ayeshia Raza Farooq and national coordinator Arwaid Haq, suggests recognition of the crisis — but we have seen similar initiatives before with little lasting impact. The programme's officials must adopt innovative strategies to overcome resistance, improve access, and ensure accountability at every level. The global eradication of polio is within reach, and Pakistan has no excuse to remain an outlier. It is time to end this national disgrace once and for all.

OPINION

BY ARIFA NOOR



A woman silenced

The authors point out how the Mustafa Zaidi case was given more attention than the events of East Pakistan.

AROUND a decade ago, when digital media was still a thing of the future, *The Serial* hit the market and captured imaginations. An investigative podcast that looks into an earlier murder of an 18-year-old high school girl in the United States, the episodes take the listener to the murder, its investigation and the trial. Her boyfriend was convicted of the murder. The podcast taken a deep dive into the case, raising questions and pointing out loopholes in the prosecution's case that convicted the young boy.

The podcast was an instant sensation. In a period of two years or so, the podcast had been downloaded 80 million times, setting a still continuing trend of true crime podcasts. Since then, other than the podcasts itself, we have also been treated to a TV series, *Only Murders in the Building*, which is based on the popularity of the trend, as well as books. For instance, a young adult's book, *A Good Girl Guide to Murder*, (which has now been turned into a show by Netflix) is clearly not just inspired by the investigative journalism but also the original case.

Sadly, journalism in Pakistan rarely spares time for any issue other than high politics, even crime is a sideshow in our little world. Be it papers or television, crime rarely ever makes it into the top headlines or the front page, and even less frequently does it lead to in-depth reporting.

But recently, two women journalists took the decision to delve into a 50-year-old crime. Tooba Masood and Saba Inayat began with a podcast into an old but famous case from Karachi and later turned it into a book, which I included in a single day.

Titled *Sleeping Girl*, the book follows the death of poet and civil servant Mustafa Zaidi in Karachi, in united Pakistan. The 40-something-year-old was found dead in his home, while a young married woman was also present there in a state of unconsciousness. She

was later accused of his murder and then acquitted. But from the time the body of Zaidi was discovered to the acquittal, the case, according to the authors, became a staple for the newspapers of those days, from the English to the Urdu, from the broadsheets to the more sensationalist evening papers.

Following a trail that has been cold for 50 years, the authors have their work cut out for them, and while they provide a detailed account of the events and most of the evidence available on record, as in the case in real life, the mystery of Zaidi's death remains a mystery. Neither are they really able to tie up any of the loose ends, thrown up by their own narration of the story. But what they have done is turn their account of the case into a commentary of acts on the socio-cultural environs of Karachi in which both Mustafa Zaidi and the young woman, Shahmar Gul, socialised, as well as the larger political context.

In the account of Mustafa Zaidi's early years and his multiple attempts at suicide, the two authors lead into a short discussion about mental health and the ignorance about it. Shahmar's move to Karachi along with her husband and their social life allows them to discuss the life of the city's elite, from club memberships to the nightlife provided at hotels such as the Metropole. And the trial leads to a discussion of how the newspapers turned this into a witch hunt of a young woman, even though there was little evidence of the death being murder.

The two journalists provide a wonderful account of how the newspapers turned the entire saga into one of a 'sinful' woman, Zaidi and Gul were both married to other people and seemed to be having an affair; they were both found (one dead and one alive) in odd circumstances, and despite Zaidi being known for his infidelity, it was the woman who was targeted by the press and the society at large. Even the fact that Zaidi

had flowers printed with Gul's name, calling her Pakistan's Christine Keeler, led to questions about her rather than the toxicity of his act. (Christine Keeler is the woman who was at the centre of the Profumo affair in the UK.)

The case is covered in such lurid detail that the authors are at pains to point out how it was given more attention than the events of East Pakistan. At one point, even Zulfikar Ali Bhutto cited it in a speech to gain brownie points, by promising not to let the accused leave the country.

But by the end of the book, one is struck not just by the singularity of the times but also the impact it had. The book paints a picture of a complicated man, who is brilliant, talented, complicated and perhaps toxic. His friends speak of him, as do his relatives, and there is his poetry, which also reveals his thoughts.

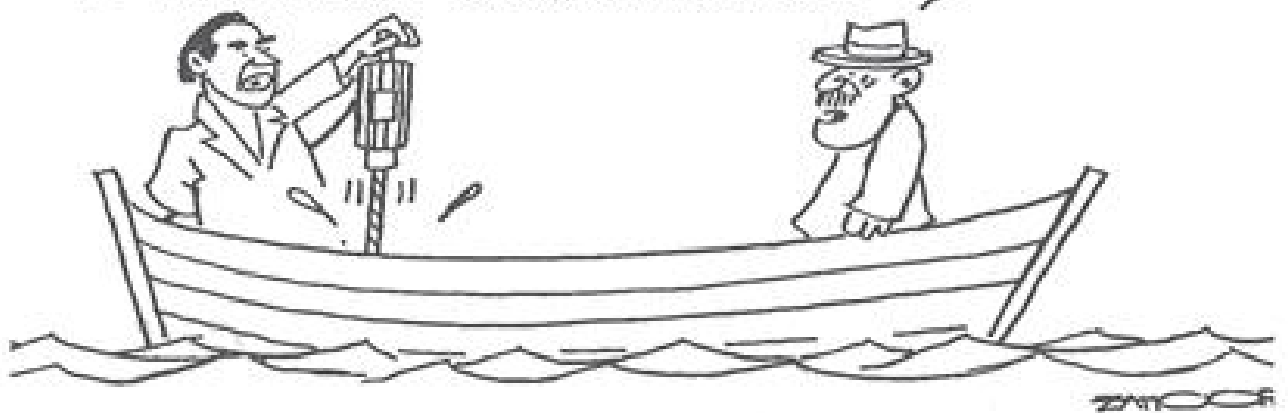
And on the other side there is a silent woman. The family didn't speak to the authors of the book and, during the case, Gul simply gave one 'interview'. Other than that, there is perhaps a statement or two that she gave to the police during the investigations. Women friends and others who socialised with her or saw her at court either focus on her looks or mention her lack of intellect. One of them even calls her 'psycho'. It is as if she had no personality, no thoughts, no desires or needs.

At one level, a woman who was embroiled in a scandal of those proportions 50 years ago perhaps could not afford to do anything but stay quiet. But the fact that those who were acquainted with her could also not add any flesh and blood to her was hard to digest long after I finished reading.

The woman was silenced in so many more ways than we realise. While the man wasn't, not even after his death. ■

The writer is a journalist.

PPP TAKES OFFENCE TO ANOTHER PML-N MOVE



BY JAWED NAQVI

Prometheus or Dr Frankenstein?

DR Manmohan Singh, who passed away at 92 last week, will be remembered in contrasting ways. As finance minister and as prime minister, he condemned 'left wing extremism' as the biggest internal security threat to India. The setback-backed right wing agreed.

Consequently, too many leftist intellectuals and academics are in jail over unfounded claims that they posed a threat to Indian democracy. By the time it was Singh's turn to hand over the baton to Narendra Modi, which he grudgingly but refused to see as a logical outcome of his economic policies, Singh was warning that Hinduism posed the real threat to India.

In the end, it was too late to head the correct warning. The threat to Indian democracy was either posed by the left or by the right. It couldn't be coming from both, unless they had ganged up as they did self-servingly against India Gandhi's brief recourse to emergency.

Dr Singh is thus hailed as India's economic Prometheus, after the Greek legend who defied the Olympian gods by taking fire from them and giving it to humanity.

Praise is showered on him for opening India's economy, which strived to unleash the complex nation's hidden energies. In some versions of the Greek myth, Prometheus is also credited with the creation of humanity from clay, a description the ever-well-offering former PM would probably frown on.

Many respected him for his cultural roots and not for his politics. Of his three daughters, one is an author who has also written extensively on social issues such as forest conservation in Myanmar. Another daughter is a history professor, with seminal work on Indian history to her credit. The third daughter, Anvita Kaur, is a respected human rights lawyer in New York. We just heard her singing *India* in a tribute to her father. She constructed *Vidua* (sanskrit for widow) with an emotionally vivid allusion that helped discern the gentle notes of Raag *Jaigra* in Mahesh Bhasin's falsetto composition of the poem.

One remembers how early in Manmohan Singh's outings as prime minister his party president, Sonia Gandhi, went searching for *Raghu* (Jethu), an out-of-stock book about legendary monarchs by Sheria Durr, herself an accomplished classical singer and raconteur. Sonia Gandhi came to know that Singh's wife, Gursharan Kaur, wanted the book. Sonia recovered fully

tracked it and gave the prime minister's wife the precious gift of a book, one that would have made Nehru smile approvingly. Recalling similar uplifting stories should help dispel the cultural darkness gripping the country since Narendra Modi began advising citizens on how to fry pakoras on lower gas stoves.

The second view about Manmohan Singh's interventions as finance minister (1991-96) and as prime minister (2004-2014) places him as the protagonist in the 19th century Gothic novel about a scientist's tricky experiment that goes horribly wrong. Dr Victor Frankenstein's monster in the Indian context has been nourished by the economic experiment that Dr Singh was asked to begin in 1991. The Congress was in a crisis following the assassination of Rajiv

Manmohan Singh's policies shored up business captains who ganged up to promote Narendra Modi as prime minister.

Gandhi in May that year.

The vanishing of the Soviet market and the oil price shock saw India barely staying afloat by pouring its gold reserves. What followed was the rise of a Frankenstein-like middle class, much of which thrives on hate of its progenitors. Worse still, Singh's policies shored up business captains who ganged up to promote Narendra Modi as prime minister.

In other words, the logic of Singh's reforms dictated the dissolution of the democracy that enabled the tycoons to become super rich and which left the poorer masses living in hope of the bonanza trickling down into their dingy homes. One shudders to see crisis-stricken Pakistan picking up the discredited IMF model, which has led to the dilution of democracy in India and elsewhere.

But let us begin at the beginning, or somewhere around there, to assess Dr Singh's fraught experiment. A major earthquake in Maharashtra in

1993 required me to cover the devastation for a Western news agency. Several instructive lessons lay in store; one such was watching Shiv Sena cadres removing with bare hands and unmatched dedication the rotting bodies and animal carcasses.

It was the same Shiv Sena, remember, that had violently targeted Muslims in the '92-93 Mumbai carnage after the destruction of the Babri masjid. Isn't it the same with rightwing groups in Pakistan, where, too, the government is compassed by the Jamaat or Jamiat cadres in rescue missions; say, in the flood-ravaged mountains? A starker lesson in the latter visit was articulated to the earthquake-burned, Maharashtra's then chief minister Sharad Pawar met me over several evenings after he retired from the daily press conferences to his makeshift office.

Pawar was India's defence minister when he met then Chinese premier Li Peng. Pawar said Li was worried about Dr Singh's reforms, as his coalition government had not taken the last man into confidence.

Pawar said China hadn't taken the last man into confidence either about its reforms. Li said China's one-party system could handle any resultant turbulence with ease, while India, given its democracy, would struggle. Michael Gorbachev, he said, bore a closer resemblance to India's problems.

"Gorbachev blundered by introducing perestroika and glasnost simultaneously," Li said to Pawar. Perestroika, or radical restructuring, and glasnost, understanding an open society, don't go together, Li said. Sure enough, the Rao government needed to bribe a bunch of MPs to win the vote for Singh's reforms. Besides, Singh had to give a fake address in Assam to qualify for a Rajya Sabha seat from there.

Additionally, the Supreme Court rejected journalist Kudip Nayyar's petition against allowing the rules for election to the Rajya Sabha, initially designed as the council of states. The court broke the constitution and allowed citizens of any state to be elected to the Rajya Sabha from any other state. Singh never got elected to the Lok Sabha, so it was a barely court ruling. ■

The writer is Dawn's correspondent in Delhi. jamshedn@gmail.com

OPINION



BY ANJUM ALTAF

Nasty outcomes

WHAT a difference 20 years make. I am thinking of Richard Holbrooke. Before he became familiar to us as the diplomatic face of the AIPak operation during the American intervention in Afghanistan, he was worried about the appropriateness of democracy in illiberal countries. With reference to the upcoming elections in Bosnia in 1996, he posed the following dilemma: What if elections are free and fair, and those elected are racists, fascists, and separatists?

What, indeed, now that the shoe is on the other foot? Americans have elected, for the second time, a man we can identify with so easily — indicted for a crime and once even his supporters won't deny is a liar, a racist, and a sexist. Someone who believes elections can be stolen, refuses to concede, and incites an insurrection to overturn the verdict. Someone on record telling voters that if they elected him they would never need to vote again.

As long as such unpleasant outcomes occurred elsewhere, Americans were generous enough to restore decent governance with economic to benevolent regime change. Of course, the offenders need not only be racists, fascists, and separatists; anyone who wouldn't play ball with the Washington Consensus was a legitimate target — how could anyone be decent who refused to play ball with the inhibitors of the Enlightenment? But how does one exact regime change at home? Mr Holbrooke is no longer around to offer a remedy for the new dilemma pressing in from all sides.

In its infancy, America never put in place a guardian institution to nip such nasty domestic outcomes in the bud, or negate them in the national interest by nailing offenders, kicking them up, or sending them into exile. In gross enough situations, countervailing institutions could even save the country by dividing it into more manageable units. Alas, such blessings are reserved only for the divinely chosen, and America, with its lack of sufficient faith, thinking a mere Electoral College would suffice, is paying the price.

America is not the only country facing this conundrum; almost all those who were so recently proclaiming proudly the end of history are now sprouting leaders intent on kicking away the electoral ladder once they have used it to clamber to the top. The stark bottom line is that the modern democratic experiment, less than 250 years old if one dates its beginning to that of the oldest democracy in 509, is in deep trouble.

Why may this be so? In terms of a palpable phenomenon, certainly because democracy has failed to deliver what the

majority of voters expected from it. Opinions differ, but 1976 is a good year to date the beginning of the discontent that has been festering ever since. Right or wrong, there is the growing sense that the system as it exists is unresponsive to the needs of the majority and that the only way forward is to turn it upside down, even if it takes unsavoury characters to do so.

Leading up to this outcome are less obvious causes. Most important is the transformation of the political equality of one-person-one-vote to the oligarchic inequality of one-dollar-one-vote. Over the last century, the economy evolved under capitalism from small owner-operated firms without market power, to giant transnational corporations with more muscle than many countries.

The year 1976 was when the state ceded its regulatory control to the free market dominated by corporate power. And, in 2010, the American judiciary removed all limits on the use of corporate funds to influence elections.

Add to this globalisation, the financialisation of capital, and the removal of controls on its movement. Industrial jobs started to disappear across borders in search of low wages, while inequality went through the roof at home. Not surprisingly, the number of people with tenuous connections to the economy, living from pay cheque to pay cheque, began to grow. All they had left was the vote and an anger ready to be tapped by those promising to restore the past. Countervailing appeals to maintain the status quo in order to "save" democracy rang hollow, because democracy could neither put food on the table nor restore the loss of dignity.

Here, then, is the supreme irony. After decades of being told that East Asia would surely become like the West, the transition is headed in exactly the opposite direction. The West is becoming more statist and authoritarian by the day. Liberal democracy is under siege and ceding ground. It was only the president few who could discern what was coming; who went along with the pretence of democracy, all the while keeping the rubber in their all-knowing and all-seeing control.

The writer is the author of *Pakistan: Clash of Ideas*, Asia Publications 2024.

BY M. SHAHRUKH SHAHNAWAZ

Financial crimes

FOLLOWING the 26th Constitutional Amendment, the criteria for appointing high court judges have been framed under the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (Appointment of Judges) Rules, 2024. This has provided an opportunity to consider appointing judges who have background and expertise in dealing with financial crimes cases, such as money laundering, terrorism financing, tax fraud, and so on.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) finally removed Pakistan from its "grey list", under which it clunky monitors countries for money laundering and terrorism financing. In 2023 — four years after the country was placed on it, it was a hard-won relief. However, without an effective law enforcement mechanism and criminal justice system, along with measures to ensure adequate judicial supervision when dealing with financial crimes, Pakistan may once again end up being placed on the FATF grey list or facing similar sanctions.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has included combating terrorism financing, money laundering and proliferation financing (funding for weapons of mass destruction) in its mandate, while the World Bank has formulated the National Money Laundering/Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment Tool kit. The IMF's involvement in Pakistan's debt crisis has also created an urgent need for improved tax collection, which requires the judiciary to play a robust role. In April 2023, the IMF asked Pakistan to amend its tax laws to prevent massive fraud and introduce the General Anti-Avoidance Rule by December 2024. Pakistan's perceived risk of default had declined 88 per cent.

Recently, however, the Supreme Court of Pakistan upheld the Lahore High Court's view in the Taj International (Pvt) Ltd case, that no criminal proceedings are justified if there is no prior assessment of sales tax. While some are appreciating this verdict, others have been critical and of the opinion that both criminal and civil litigation can proceed simultaneously. Critics have worried that the verdict may adversely affect tax collection, while others have suggested that such verdicts and legislation seem to facilitate the rich even though the poor continue to face higher probabilities of incarceration and never-ending litigation. It is recalled, for example, that many individuals were named in the Panama Papers scandal, yet there never was any proper prosecution nor any legislation against offshore companies involved in money laundering. A judge of the LHC named in the Panama Papers simply resigned to save himself from accountability.

In a separate case, the Federal Investigation Agency, after registering a case against the Surim Surmy Welfare Trust for child trafficking, also decided to register a case for money laundering after obtaining relevant evidence. This suggests linkages between predicate offences like human trafficking and the larger crime of money laundering. Likewise, a leaked internal report from the Sindh Food Department stated that from 2022 to 2024, around 4,000 tonnes of wheat were stolen in connivance with officials of the department. An effective criminal justice system can help prevent such cases, provide protection against financial fraud, create conducive conditions for foreign direct investment, instil confidence in the business community, and allow effective checks over private and public companies constituting tax fraud, money laundering and similar crimes.

"Green" crimes are directly linked to corporate crimes; private and public corruption can cause widespread and long-lasting environmental

destruction without being held accountable for it. The 1984 Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India, and the 1986 Chernobyl Power Plant meltdown are cases in point. A parliamentary panel placed responsibility on government and private operators of the Tokyo Electric Power Company for the 2011 Fukushima nuclear plant accident in Japan, instead of solely blaming the tsunami that caused it. Meanwhile, a private company has raised billions of litres of water in Pakistan but has never been held accountable. Judges from the district judiciary ought to be specially trained for such cases so they can be properly utilised when they are eligible for elevation to the high courts.

Pakistan has amended several laws, especially the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2010 and the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, to meet FATF's criteria. However, the courts must now be equipped to deal with cases of financial crimes. Both the high courts and the Supreme Court need special benches to hear such cases, and they can start by appointing specialist judges who are able to deal with them.

The writer is an advocate at the Sindh High Court and faculty at the Department of International Politics, University of Karachi.

FROM THE PAST PAGES OF DAWN

1975 | Fifty years ago

Bhutto thanks USSR

KARACHI: Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has expressed "deep appreciation of the invaluable assistance" being provided by the Soviet Union to Pakistan in her efforts to bring about fundamental changes in the country's economy, according to a Press release of the Soviet Embassy. In a message to weekly "Moscow News" — Mr Bhutto recalled his recent visit to Moscow, and said that his discussions with Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev and Premier Alexei Kosygin reflected "mutual conviction that the development of friendly and good-neighbourly relations between Pakistan and the Soviet Union was completely in accord with the interests of the Soviet and Pakistani peoples and served the cause of strengthening peace and security in Asia and throughout the world".

[Meanwhile, as reported by news agencies from Rawalpindi,] the United Arab Emirates today [Jan 6] pledged an amount of rupan 8 crore (8 million dollars) as a high-level meeting here assessed damage caused by the recent earthquake in Svat and Hazara districts. — The UAE Ambassador in Islamabad, Mr Abdullah Darwish, called at the Foreign Office — to convey his Government's decision to the Government of Pakistan.

1950 | Seventy-five years ago

Historic session

KARACHI: Epoch-making measures, the longest ever single sitting stretching over four and a half hours, dramatic speeches characterised as "ball talks" and "fury words" and two divisions made Friday's [Jan 6] session of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly historic. The Assembly adopted the State Negotiating Committee report after a stormy debate and passed Mr Liaquat Ali Khan's motion to allot one seat each to Bahawalpur and Khairpur and one seat jointly to the Baluchistan states and to ask the governments of those states to nominate their respective representatives.

Never before in the history of the Constituent Assembly, had the Opposition pressed for two divisions in one session as on Friday when two Opposition amendments to the Government of India (Amendment) Bill were put to vote. Both the Amendments were defeated by 20 votes to 12. The Bill was passed.

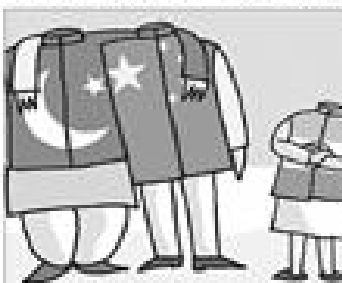
The historic amendment to the Indian Independence Act seeking to restore the name "The Punjab" to which, what was described as the West Punjab in the Act, was "legally and morally" entitled to was unanimously passed by the Assembly amid loud cheers. — Staff correspondent

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@dawn.com

Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All letters should carry the writer's address, CNIC and phone numbers.

A treaty with China, Bangladesh needed



A FEW weeks ago, Bangladesh received its first formal trade commitment from Pakistan, marking an improvement in ties between the two countries. After the political upheaval in Bangladesh, the people there have shown great affinity towards Pakistan which is a positive development in terms of both bilateral and regional cooperation. All this has happened mainly because not only the people, but the Bangladesh government has shown a pro-Pakistan stance.

The alarms going off in India and the increasing rift between Dhaka and New Delhi is, indeed, a golden opportunity for Pakistan. Islamabad must strive hard to restore improved trade and security relations with Dhaka.

As India becomes a de facto protector of American interests in the region, causing trouble to Pakistan and China, and the emerging Bangladesh, there is an ever more need to cut India to its actual regional size.

A three-pronged alliance focusing on economic, diplomatic and security parameters involving Pakistan, China and Bangladesh would be an effective way to counter India in the region. This would be a countermeasure to India's interventionist and pro-American policies.

In case of any Indian aggression, the Shigarri Corridor, also known as the Chicken's Neck, can be blocked, effectively blocking India's seven sister states from mainland India.

The Indian government has shown its concerns over Pakistan's trade coming into Bangladesh with reference to the ongoing tension in India's northeastern states, and has directly threatened the government in Bangladesh. This attitude needs to be countered effectively.

It is evident that the Bengali majority still has sentiments of love for Pakistan. We must cash in on this opportunity to secure Bangladesh's interests as well as counter the mounting Indian hegemony in the region that is threatening the interests of both Pakistan and China.

Pakistan and Bangladesh need each other, and there might not come such a golden chance for many decades to come.

Muhammad Islamabad

Pathetic plan

THIS is with reference to the report 'Four govt schools, colleges to introduce Cambridge system from April' (New 23). It is rather unfortunate that we have not been able to develop our own education system.

With society already polarised, one fails to understand why we want to create further wedge between the lettered and the unlettered, between the privileged and the underprivileged, between the Urdu medium and the English medium. Why can we not adopt one system for everyone?

According to information gathered, approximately 100,000 candidates appear for O level examinations every year. The examination fee for eight subjects in O level comes to Rs211,000 approximately. Thus, in just one session of O level examinations, Britain will take Rs21 billion from Pakistan.

The examinations are held twice a year, thus foreign exchange worth Rs42 billion will move out of Pakistan. Compare this with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) budget for the entire year, which used to be Rs45 billion, and has now been reduced to Rs25 billion.

Further, no tuition fee will be charged to the student at the four designated schools/colleges where the Cambridge system is being introduced. Who is going to foot the bill for the examination fee? Is the government going to pay that as well?

This is worrisome as there are no guarantees that the beneficiaries of this privilege will even come back to the country once their studies are over. There is every reason for the officials concerned to revisit the entire scheme, and do some brainstorming before implementation.

Muhammad R. Sufi Islamabad

New beginnings

THE year 2024 in Pakistan was marked by political upheaval, constitutional controversies and economic struggles. In 2025, Pakistan must address challenges related to both domestic and foreign policy fronts. The focus should be on political stability, economic resilience and global engagement.

Political unrest should be defused through dialogue, transparent governance, and respect for democratic principles, while ensuring judicial independence and

upguarding freedoms to rebuild public trust. Economic priorities should include steps to diversify exports, reduce trade deficit, attract foreign investment by addressing systemic barriers, and reducing reliance on external financing to regain fiscal sovereignty.

Diplomatically, Pakistan should foster regional stability through improved ties with neighbours, like India, Afghanistan and Iran, and engage constructively with global powers, like the United States, Europe, Russia and China, for economic and strategic gains.

Improving governance, reducing corruption, and upholding justice and freedoms are critical to the task of elevating Pakistan's global rankings and international image.

By implementing these measures with due professional accountability, Pakistan can achieve sustainable progress and enhance its standing on the world stage.

Qasim Bashir Islamabad

Quota for the disabled

THE implementation of five per cent quota for physically-challenged people in Sindh government jobs faces challenges. Despite being a positive initiative, the implementation is hindered by corruption, nepotism and lack of transparency.

Many deserving disabled individuals are denied opportunities due to political interference. Additionally, recruitment platforms and processes are often inaccessible, limiting their participation. There is also a lack of awareness among the disabled about their rights and available opportunities.

These issues undermine the purpose of the quota, turning it into a challenge rather than a solution for empowering disabled individuals.

To ensure effective implementation of the quota for disabled individuals in Sindh government jobs, strict enforcement measures must be adopted. This should be followed by regular audits and penalties for non-compliance.

Transparent, merit-based recruitment processes should be monitored by independent oversight bodies to eliminate corruption and nepotism. Accessibility must be prioritised by creating inclusive job portals and physically accessible workplaces.

Additionally, vocational training programmes should be introduced to enhance the skills and employability of disabled individuals. Besides, public awareness campaigns are essential to educate disabled persons about their rights and available opportunities, alongside establishing grievance mechanisms to address all the complaints effectively.

Ahmad Moin Karam Khan Unpublished

A lucrative 'business'

THE begging industry has flourished, becoming a lucrative business that has spread to all major cities, including Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad. These criminals get hold of vulnerable individuals, including the poor, the disabled and the young, from underprivileged areas and force them into begging. Most or all of their earnings go to the handlers. From being a means for the poor to survive, beggary has now evolved into a business that is controlled by a powerful mafia.

While walking down a street recently, I noticed a black car with tinted windows stopping to drop off children at various locations. Shortly after, I observed these children starting to beg. I was shocked to witness this. It was evident that the driver was part of an organised begging network, likely exploiting and grooming these children for begging. This and reality highlight a grim aspect of our society, where distorting factors between the truly needy and those manipulated by organised crime has become increasingly difficult.

The government should take strict action against the begging industry. Additionally, there should be a social boycott of these professional beggars to discourage this exploitative practice.

Safiah Udd Din Kahar Quetta

Traffic campaigns

RECENTLY, the Sindh government has legislated the imposition of heavy penalties on the owners of motor vehicles using their cars without registration. The registration of vehicles has always been a legal requirement, and violators are supposed to face the consequences of law. What is it that has made the police launch a campaign now?

Karachi traffic police department has a peculiar characteristic. It selects an item, launches a campaign for its enforcement, violators are penalised, and soon the campaign comes to an end. From fancy number plates to tinted glasses and so on, the items keep changing and police campaigns keep getting launched. There is no consistency in the enforcement of traffic laws.

What is even worse is that motorcyclists are completely exempted from following the traffic rules. They are allowed to drive without helmets, break the 'no entry' rule, and stretch lanes without limitation, causing confusion and chaos on the roads. Rickshaws are being driven without registration number plates. Public buses are not using the designated bus stops. Who will ensure that traffic rules are followed by everyone in the city?

S. Zafar Hassan Karachi

► **TELEPHONE BILLS:** I have opted to receive a hard copy of the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) bill, and pay Rs100 because I have no online banking account, nor do I want to have one due to increasing online banking frauds. For other utility services, I regularly receive paper bills without any extra charges. Despite the charge, PTCL remains whimsical in its approach to dealing with customers. The bill is either not delivered or delivered after the due date. This month, the bill has not been received yet, and I will have to pay the penalty for late payment. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) should take notice of the matter. **Muhammad Qasim Karachi**

► **LOCUS OF CONTROL:** Truly, when we wish to evade responsibility, we find excuses to do so. When we start thinking that things are not within our control, we unconsciously embark on the steep slippery slope of mechanism that they are determined by external circumstances. But when we believe otherwise, we exercise our free will by taking both responsibility and action. We start developing an internal locus of control; the philosophical versus psychological perspective that things are within our control. It is like a self-fulfilling prophecy. **Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Qasim Chitral**

► **GWADAR HOSPITAL:** The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Hospital lacks many facilities, including essential equipment required for conducting even simple blood tests. It continuously suffers from shortage of doctors, limited financial resources, power outages, water shortages, and inadequate emergency services. Due to unavailability of such basic facilities, the hospital is unable to provide essential healthcare services to the people of Gwadar and its surrounding areas. Unfortunately, people remain frustrated and are compelled to seek treatment elsewhere. The provincial government must take immediate action to address these issues, and provide due facilities at the hospital. **Yaseen Waheed Turbat**

► **External Ombudsman:** Veteran journalist Muhammad Ali Siddiqi is Dawn's External Ombudsman (DEO). His duty is to attend to our readers' complaints, and to respond to them professionally. DEO is the investigating authority to whom all complaints can be referred, and it is DEO who takes notice of any alleged violations of Dawn's code of ethics, and informs the Editor for appropriate action. **Emrah ahmedombudsman@gmail.com**

BUSINESS

ECC bans ozone-harming materials

Committee decides to discontinue PM's subsidy scheme at Utility Stores

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet decided on Monday to immediately ban ozone-depleting insulation and flammable materials — polyisocyanurate (PIIC) and polyisocyanurate (PIIC) — due to climate concerns.

The committee also approved supplementary grants totalling Rs10 billion.

The meeting of the ECC, presided over by Finance Minister Muhammad Asim, also repeated its Aug 15, 2024, decision that approved the grant of industry status to the warehousing and logistics sector.

The meeting did not allow continuation of the PM's subsidy scheme for Utility Stores Corporation.

The finance minister expressed displeasure when the summary on warehousing and logistics sector was brought up and showed concern over the non-implementation of the ECC's previous decision even after a passage of almost five months.

"The ECC reiterated its previous decision made on Aug 15, 2024, whereby the summary containing proposal of declaring warehousing as industry was approved," an official statement said.

As head of the ECC, the finance minister instructed the participants over the importance of "timely policy measures to address critical economic, energy and industrial needs with a focus on transparency and efficiency in implementation."

The committee also approved the ECC to ban the import of polyisocyanurate (PIIC) and polyisocyanurate (PIIC) because of its adverse impact on environment. These materials are in vast use in the refrigeration, insulation and flammable sectors and many countries had banned their use two to three decades ago.

The meeting was told that alternative materials were available in many countries and since a number of domestic industries had also graduated to these materials, there would be no problem for the market to make adjustments.

Therefore, the ECC approved the ban with effect from the end of this month, but directed that all legal and procedural requirements be completed within two weeks. The committee also instructed the ministry of climate change to consult the ministry of industries and production to ensure that there was sufficient time for the industry concerned to be properly informed.

The meeting decided that "no new letters of credit (LCs) for the banned chemicals shall be opened" any longer.

The ECC approved eight supplementary grants worth Rs10bn. The list included an unspecified grant of Rs1.945bn allocated to the defence ministry.

The meeting also approved a grant of Rs2.276bn to the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), which involved the reallocation of funds from the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR). The funds would be purportedly used for women empowerment and gender equality.

Money for PSEEP projects

The ECC approved a request by the information ministry for a Rs2.662bn grant to facilitate the execution of 15 projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for 2024-25.

The ministry came up with a proposal to clear outstanding liabilities for the "Korean Culture Week" event and the 2nd Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHOG) meeting held in Islamabad last year.

Due to insufficient budgetary allocations under operational heads, liabilities amounting to Rs25 million for the culture week and Rs95.822m for the SCO CHOG meeting remain unpaid.

The ECC approved the Rs120.822m grant.

The committee gave its approval to a request by the ministry of interior for a Rs150.157bn grant to cover security arrangements and maintain law and order during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit, repair safe city cameras damaged during violent protests, and address of law enforcement needs.

The meeting approved a Rs1.5bn grant to the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to increase the salaries of faculty members under the Tenure Track System, which had not been revised since 2021.

The committee dropped a payment of \$6.170m (about Rs7.28bn) to Huawei Technologies Co of China through a supplementary grant by the interior ministry to clear the remaining Five Star cost of the contract cost for the Safe City Project Islamabad, as directed by the Islamabad High Court.

The ECC rejected a request by the Ministry of Industries to continue the Prime Minister's Relief Package through the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) in 2024-25. "The ECC approved a payment of Rs1.679bn to cover expenses incurred by USC between June 30 and Aug 18, 2024, on condition that the subsidy is budgeted for this year, and no further expenditure would be carried beyond this period," a statement said.

Banks advance record Rs1.9tr to private sector

By Shahid Iqbal

KARACHI: The private sector borrowed a record Rs1.9 trillion from banks during the first half of FY25, registering a surge of 365 per cent from the same period last fiscal year.

The latest data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday indicated that banks have been extending advances to the private sector despite existing risks posed by sluggish economic growth and political uncertainty.

In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, the bank advances were much lower, but the steep fall in the interest rate encouraged the private sector to go for the relatively cheaper money. Since June 2024, the State Bank has slashed its policy rate by 900 basis points to 11pc from an unprecedented level of 22pc, which had stifled the growth.

The sharp deceleration of Consumer Price Index-based inflation, which hit almost a seven-year low at 4.3pc in Dec 2024, was the key reason that compelled the country's monetary policy managers to slash the rate gradually.

The falling inflation has created space for more rate cuts in the upcoming monetary policy reviews, making financing cheaper for the private sector but denting the banks' income.

As a strategy, the government has been borrowing through long-term treasury bills and Pakistan Investment Bonds, which are lower than the maturity amount.

The SBP data showed that the private sector borrowed Rs1.907tr during July-December FY25 against Rs1.21tr in the same period of last year, a surge of 56pc.

The main reason for higher lending to the private sector was the massive increase in advances during December, as banks feared till the last moment of 2024 that the government would impose a 15pc incremental tax if they failed to reach a 50pc advance-to-deposit ratio (ADR).

The banks also pumped a record Rs1.354tr into the Non-Bank Financial Institutions (NBFI) during July-December 2024-25 against Rs851m in the same period last year with a core objective to meet the ADR limit.

Conventional banks lent Rs1.112tr to the private sector during the first half of FY25 compared to Rs230m in the same period of last fiscal year.

Similarly, the Islamic banks' lending rose to Rs730m compared to Rs230m in the same period last year.

However, the Islamic branches of the conventional banks remained low-key and advanced Rs1.2m against Rs55m in the same period last year.

The State Bank reported that the banks' total credit to the non-government sector during the first half of the current fiscal year was Rs1.21tr compared to Rs382m in the same period last fiscal year.

Oil industry seeks role in framing of deregulation policy

ISLAMABAD: The oil industry has expressed concern about its exclusion from an official working group tasked with developing a roadmap for deregulating the downstream oil sector.

In a letter to the Petroleum Division and OGRA, the Oil Companies Advisory Council (OCAC) — an association of over three dozen oil companies and refiners — has said it had requested the government in November last to include major private sector stakeholders in the working group for consultation on deregulation.

However, this remained a dream. "It is concerning to note that private sector refiners and oil marketing companies (OMCs), which play a pivotal role in the downstream oil industry, have not yet been included in the consultation process," wrote OCAC's chairman Asif Khattak to the secretary petroleum.

He said the oil industry was already facing existential challenges due to the exemption of sales tax on petroleum products, smuggling of petroleum products, delay in revision of OMC's margins and other challenges highlighted repeatedly by the industry.

Mr Khattak demanded that the private sector be involved in the consultation process to develop a fair, sound and workable deregulation policy for the country. "Any unilateral decision on such a critical matter in haste will have severe ramifications for the oil industry and could intensify the existing challenges faced by it," the OCAC wrote.

The letter followed a three-day deadline given last week by Petroleum Minister Dr Musaddik Malik to the petroleum secretary for a working paper on deregulation devised by the Prime Minister's Office and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). The secretary had to travel abroad the next day, and the deadline expired again, like many others in the last two years.

Mr Khattak, also the chief executive officer of Attock Refinery, said the Petroleum Division had been avoiding consultation for deregulation and revision of the pricing mechanism of petroleum products, and the oil industry's requests in this regard were going unheeded.

He said the 2024-25 budget was making normal operations unsustainable and jeopardising the implementation of the Brownfield Refining Upgradation Policy.

"While the sales tax issue will remain unresolved in spite of numerous meetings and directives of the prime minister and SIFC, taking up revision of petroleum products' pricing mechanism at this stage is not only ill-timed but non-inclusion of private sector stakeholders in consultation can lead to complications as we have witnessed in the formulation and implementation of the Brownfield Refineries Policy over last five years", Mr Khattak said.

He said that despite instructions from the prime minister and the finance minister for consultations with industry, "members in the Petroleum Division think otherwise or maybe they feel more comfortable working with public sector companies only", he deplored.

The government had taken in hand the process for deregulation of oil prices more than a year ago but had not moved beyond deadlines for working papers and presentations. In April last year, the Petroleum Division asked the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) to share a presentation on the analysis and implications of deregulation of petroleum products within three days.

The paper shared by the regulator kept piling up dust in the petroleum division until the PM Office recalled the issue in July. Even then, there was no progress on the ground as the minister and secretary of petroleum remained at arm's length.

The government has been criticised for high petroleum product prices, even though it was not at liberty to change fixed tax rates on various products under the donor-dictated pricing mechanism. It wanted to get out of the process while the prices were now relatively lower.

The government's only role is now limited to announcing fortnightly fuel prices calculated by OGRA to pass on the impact of the international market and exchange rate to consumers.

The oil industry has also been criticising the government for doing little to stop the massive smuggling of low-quality and cheaper products, particularly from Iran. —Khaleeq Kiani



KABUL: Labourers load sacks of coal onto a truck bound for Pakistan, at a coal yard on the outskirts of the Afghan capital, on Monday. —AFP

Higher petroleum imports widen trade gap with ME

By Mubarak Zeb Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East increased 3.86 per cent to \$5.514 billion in the first five months of 2024-25 from \$5.309bn due to the rise in petroleum imports.

According to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan, the widening trade gap would concern policymakers mainly because of the rising arrival of petroleum products from the region.

Petroleum consumption has risen in the current fiscal year because the crude oil import surged 17.81pc in quantity in the first five months of the current fiscal year.

In FY24, the imbalance with the Middle East narrowed by 20.47pc to \$13.094bn from \$16.365bn over the preceding year, mainly due to lower petroleum imports and falling consumption owing to rising local prices.

Exports to the Middle East rose 8.52pc to \$1.149bn in July-November from \$1.243bn over the same period last year. In FY24, the exports to the region grew 35.23pc

to \$1.555bn compared to \$1.133bn in the preceding year.

At the same time, Pakistan's imports from the Middle East also saw an increase of 4.71pc to \$6.863bn in July-November from \$6.552bn over the same period last year. In FY24, the imports declined 13.53pc to \$16.104m compared to \$18.608m in the same period the preceding year.

Pakistan has recently signed a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to minimise its trade imbalance with the region.

The demand for Pakistani products surged in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and Qatar during the period under review.

Exports to Saudi Arabia rose 10.88pc to \$393.42m in July-Nov from \$354.42m over the last year. In FY24, exports to Saudi Arabia rose 49.98pc to \$710.35m from \$503.87m in FY23. The imports from the kingdom saw an increase of 26.47pc to \$1.496bn against \$2.034bn in the same period last year.

In FY24, imports from Saudi Arabia declined by 8.01pc to \$4.49bn against \$4.90bn in the preceding year.

Exports to UAE increased 13.17pc to \$525.59m in July-Nov from \$467.85m over the last year. In FY24, exports to the UAE surged 41.15pc to \$2.082bn from \$1.473bn in FY23, primarily due to a significant rise in exports to Dubai.

Pakistan's top export products to the UAE include rice, bovine carcasses, men's and boys' cotton ensembles, gloves and margins. In July-Nov, the imports from UAE also witnessed an increase of 20.32pc to \$1.228bn from \$1.026bn over the last year month.

Exports to Bahrain declined by 22.47pc to \$22.65m in SMFY25 from \$29.04m in the corresponding period last year. The imports from Bahrain increased 132pc to \$75.09m in SMFY25 from \$32.27m.

Exports to Kuwait saw a decline of 9.65pc to \$37.53m in SMFY25 from \$41.54m over the previous year. However, imports increased by 41.67pc to \$634.32m from \$447.71m.

Pakistan's exports to Qatar saw a negative growth of 22.4pc to \$50.55m in the first five months of the current fiscal year against \$69.63m over the corresponding months of last year.

Blocked US Steel deal could hit investments, warns Japanese PM

TOKYO: Japan's prime minister on Monday urged Washington to dispel concerns that a decision by Joe Biden to block Nippon Steel's takeover of US Steel could impact future investments.

The US president's announcement last week cited a strategic need to protect domestic industry, a move that drew sharp criticism from both companies and Tokyo.

A US government panel had failed to reach consensus on whether the \$14.9 billion acquisition threatened national security, shifting the decision to Biden in the waning days of his presidency.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the veteran Democrat's decision had sparked worries over future Japanese investments in the world's largest economy.

"It is unfortunately true that there are concerns being raised within Japan's industrial world over future Japan-US investment," Ishiba told reporters.

"It's something we have to take seriously," Japan and the United States are each other's top foreign investors.

"It would be inappropriate for the Japanese government to comment on the management of an individual company that is under review as per US domestic law. But we will strongly call on the US government to take steps to dispel these concerns," said Ishiba.

"They need to be able to explain clearly why there is a national security concern, or else further discussions on the matter will not work," he added. —AFP

Stocks falter on economic, security situation

By Muhammad Kashif

KARACHI: After seeing a record peak in the overnight session, the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) became bearish as news flow on political and economic fronts turned investors jumpy, triggering profit-taking, forcing the benchmark KSE 100 index to close in the red on Monday.

Ahmad Mehmood of Arif Habib Corporation said stocks remained under pressure amid political uncertainty, and the IMF's strict focus on industrial captive power plants led to institutional profit-taking.

He added that subdued economic growth at 0.70pc for the July-September quarter and concerns about the outcome of critical economic reforms to qualify for the second \$1bn tranche in March dampened investor sentiments.

Topline Securities Ltd said the PSX experienced a profit-taking day as investors

PAKISTAN STOCK EXCHANGE

THE TOP FIVE		
GAINERS	LOSERS	LEADERS*
Muzee Brewery 63.00	Raffian Mills 138.96	Changrio PK 83.16
JDW Sugar Mills 44.25	Hatmark Co 103.85	Fajal Foods 47.30
Sapphire Fibres 30.65	Service Industries 44.15	WiredCap Telecom 41.29
Engro Housing 21.63	Al-Ghazal Tractors 42.04	Fast Gables 41.20
Lucky Cement 20.80	Abbott Lab 31.81	K-Electro 37.35

INDICATORS	Monday	Previous	Change
KSE 100-SHARE INDEX (Points)	119,280.12	117,888.88	↑ 1,391.24
KSE 30-SHARE INDEX (Points)	38,600.39	37,065.05	↑ 1,535.34
MARKET CAPITAL (\$billion)	14,642.742	14,438.014	↑ 204.728
TRADING VALUE (\$billion)	38.324	39.420	↓ 1.096

opted to cash in on recent gains. The index exhibited significant volatility, recording an intraday high of 1,148 points and a sharp intraday low of 1,145 points, ultimately closing at

119,255 points, marking a decline of 1,331 points or 1.11 per cent day-on-day.

The day's bearish sentiment was primarily influenced by concerns in the gas sector following

reports of a significant rise in circular debt. This development dampened investor confidence, leading to widespread profit-taking across the board.

The cement sector

extended its downward trend as investors chose to book profits, spurred by reports of disagreements among cement manufacturers. While some advocate for an increased market share, others favour adjustments in geographic sales to secure higher retention prices.

Key contributors to the upward trajectory included Engro Holdings, Habib Metropolitan Bank, Adani Insurance, MCB Bank, and Murree Brewery, collectively adding 355 points. Conversely, substantial declines in OGC, PAF, Fast Services, Engro Fertiliser, and Southern Gas Pipelines weighed heavily on the market, accounting for a combined loss of 659 points.

Ah Nagma, Head of Sales at Insight Securities, said the deteriorating law and order situation in Balochistan, the finance minister's comment on state-owned energy companies' financials not up to the mark, and the considerable increase in PAF's receivables weighed down the market sentiment, particularly in oil and gas sector.

US DOLLAR BUYING RS278.19 SELLING RS280.00	EURO BUYING RS267.20 SELLING RS269.24
GBP BUYING RS246.25 SELLING RS248.15	UAE DIRHAM BUYING RS76.67 SELLING RS76.20
INR BRYAL BUYING RS73.97 SELLING RS74.45	GOLD SOLA RS275,000 10 GMS RS235,758

Bangladesh issues second arrest warrant for Hasina

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court has issued a second arrest warrant for ousted former leader Sheikh Hasina, this time for her alleged role in enforced disappearances, the chief prosecutor said on Monday.

Dhaka has already issued an arrest warrant on charges of crimes against humanity for 77-year-old Hasina, who fled to old ally India in August after she was toppled by a student-led revolution. Her 15-year tenure saw widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killings of her political opponents.

Tajul Islam, chief prosecutor of the domestic International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), said the second warrant relates to enforced disappearances during her rule. More than 500 people were allegedly abducted by Bangladeshi security personnel, with some detained in secret facilities for years.

Victims have begun coming forward since Hasina's ouster with harrowing accounts of their ordeals. "The court issued a warrant against Sheikh Hasina and 11 others, including her military adviser, military personnel, and other law enforcement officials," Islam told reporters. Bangladesh asked India to December to send Hasina back to face trial, a demand to which Delhi declined to respond. Islam said the court wanted to go ahead with the trial.

"We want to ensure the trial concludes as soon as possible, but that doesn't mean we will break the law or impose a verdict without due process," he told reporters.—AFP

Macron urges 'realistic' expectations from Ukraine on territory

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron called on Ukraine on Monday to have "realistic" expectations on territory as its fight against the Russian invasion heads into a fourth year, saying he saw no "quick and easy solution" to the conflict.

Outlining France's foreign policy for the coming year, Macron also took aim at Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of social media platform X and close ally of US president-elect Donald Trump, accusing him of supporting "a new international reactionary movement". Russia, which invaded Ukraine in February 2022, is currently occupying about a fifth of its territory. "There will be no quick and easy solution in Ukraine," Macron said in a speech to French ambassadors gathered at the Elysee Palace.

But he also warned that Ukrainians needed to have "realistic discussions on territorial issues", clearly saying Kyiv for the first time to consider territorial concessions. Trump has promised to bring a swift end to nearly three years of fighting, without offering any concrete proposals for a ceasefire or peace deal. Both sides are looking to secure a better position on the battlefield before Trump's January 20 inauguration.

"The United States of America must help us to change the nature of the situation and convince Russia to come to the negotiating table," Macron said. Europe will have to offer "security guarantees" for Ukraine, he added.—AFP



SEOUL: Demonstrators protest against the impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol near his official residence, on Monday. Investigators sought an extension of a warrant to arrest the president as visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reaffirmed confidence in the key Asian ally's handling of the political turmoil.—Reuters

European leaders retort angrily to Musk's tirade

Starmier slams those 'spreading lies and misinformation' after days of incendiary posts by Musk

LONDON: European leaders expressed growing frustration with tech billionaire Elon Musk on Monday, as a major row escalated between members of Britain's government and US president-elect Donald Trump's key ally.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer slammed those "spreading lies and misinformation" following days of incendiary posts by Musk on his X platform over historical sex offences against children in northern England.

Musk, who is set for a role in Trump's administration, then accused the centre-left Labour leader of being "deeply complicit in the mass rape" and "utterly despicable".

European leaders, including

French President Emmanuel Macron, have also weighed in against Musk. The French leader said the SpaceX boss was "directly interfering in elections", including in Germany where Chancellor Olaf Scholz has condemned the Tesla boss for backing an extreme-right party.

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said he found it "worrying" that someone with so much wealth and influence was getting involved in the politics of European countries.

Much of Musk's focus in recent days has been on Britain and his tirade scandals involving grooming gangs that first emerged during Starmer's 2008-2013 tenure as chief state prosecutor for England and Wales.

The comments pose a major challenge for Starmer's government, as it tries to fend off growing support for the far-right while also seeking to maintain good relations with Trump's incoming administration.

Musk's tirade, which included demands for a new public inquiry

into the scandal, has prompted some UK opposition politicians to join in the criticism and call for a fresh national probe.

"Lies"

The issue has long been seized upon by far-right figures, including Tommy Robinson, one of Britain's best-known far-right agitators, whom Musk has praised and said should be released from jail.

Responding to media questions on the topic, Starmer insisted he was "not going to individualise this to Elon Musk" but said "a line has been crossed" with some of the online criticism.

"Those that are spreading lies and misinformation as far and as wide as possible, they're not interested in victims, they're interested in themselves," Starmer told reporters, without naming Musk.

"I'm prepared to call out this for what it is. We've seen this playbook many times: the whipping up of intimidation and threats of violence, hoping that the media will amplify it."—AFP

Trump asks court to delay hush money sentencing

WASHINGTON: US president-elect Donald Trump on Monday urged a judge to delay the sentencing set for Friday in his New York hush money case, as he prepares for his historic White House return.

Juan Merchan ruled last week that Trump's sentencing should go ahead despite the Republican's inauguration in two weeks, rejecting his argument that his election victory should spell an end to the case.

Trump's attorneys said in a filing that they are appealing Merchan's ruling upholding Trump's conviction by a Manhattan jury and argued the judge must pause the case in the meantime.

"By virtue of President Trump's filing of appellate proceedings raising his claims of presidential immunity, all proceedings in this court are automatically stayed by operation of federal constitutional law," Trump's legal team said.

"In the alternative, even if such a stay were discretionary, the court should grant such a stay." The filing was made public as Trump set to be certified as the winner of the 2024 presidential election on Monday, four years after his supporters rioted at the US Capitol as he sought to overturn his 2020 defeat.

Trump's lawyers asked Merchan to notify the parties by 2pm whether he will accept the sentencing and said they would be filing two appeals in state court. Trump, the first former president ever convicted of a crime, has been permitted to appear either in person or virtually on Friday.

He was convicted in May of 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up a hush money payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels on the eve of the 2016 election to stop her from revealing an alleged 2006 sexual encounter.—AFP

Spanish tourist killed by elephant at Thai sanctuary

BANGKOK: A "panic-stricken" elephant killed a Spanish tourist while she was bathing the animal at a sanctuary in southern Thailand, police said on Monday.

The 23-year-old woman was hit by the stressed animal's trunk at the Koh Yao Elephant Care Centre in Phang Nga province, according to police. "A female tourist was killed while bathing an elephant," Jaran Rungasert, the local police chief said.

Authorities have contacted the Spanish embassy to confirm the victim's identity.

The sanctuary declined to provide details of the incident when contacted. Wild elephants have killed 227 people, including tourists, in the past 12 years, according to the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation.

An elephant killed a 49-year-old woman at a national park in Loei province in northern Thailand last month. While encounters between villagers and wild elephants are common, attacks at sanctuaries remain rare.

Bathing elephants is a popular activity among visitors in Thailand, where about 2,800 elephants are held for tourism purposes across the country, according to World Animal Protection.

However, animal rights groups argue that bathing elephants can cause them distress and some sanctuaries in the country do not allow it.—AFP

What is the latest science telling us about climate change?

AFTER another record-breaking year for global temperatures in 2024, pressure is rising on policymakers to step up efforts to curb climate change. The last global scientific assessment on the phenomenon was released in 2021 through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, but scientists say evidence shows global warming and its impacts have since been unfolding faster than expected.

Here is some of the latest climate research:

Critical point

The world may already have hit 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 F) of warm-

ing above the average pre-industrial temperature — a critical threshold beyond which it is at risk of irreversible and extreme climate change, scientists say.

A group of researchers made the suggestion in a study released in November based on an analysis of 2,000 years of atmospheric gases trapped in Antarctic ice cores.

Scientists have typically measured today's temperatures against a baseline temperature average for 1850-1900. By that measure, the world is now at nearly 1.3 C (2.4 F) of warming. But the new data suggests a longer pre-industrial baseline, based on temperature data spanning the year 10 to 1700, which put warming at 1.49 C in 2023, the study published in the journal *Nature Geoscience* said.

Ocean changes

The warming of the Atlantic could hasten the collapse of a key current system, which scientists warn could already be spooling. The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), which transports warm water from the tropics to the North Atlantic, has helped to keep European winters milder for centuries. Research in 2018 showed that AMOC has weakened by about 15 percent since

1950, while research published in February 2024 in the journal *Science Advances* suggested it could be closer to a critical slowdown than previously thought. In addition, with the world in the throes of a fourth mass coral bleaching event, the largest on record, scientists fear the world's reefs have passed a point of no return.

Scientists will be studying bleached reefs from Australia to Brazil for signs of recovery over the next few years if temperatures fall.

Extreme weather

Ocean warming is not only fueling stronger Atlantic storms, it is

also causing them to intensify more rapidly, with some jumping from a Category 1 to a Category 3 storm in just hours. Growing evidence shows this is true of other ocean basins. In October 2024 Hurricane Milton needed only one day in the Gulf of Mexico to go from tropical storm to the Gulf's second most powerful hurricane on record, slamming Florida's west coast. Warmer air can also hold more moisture, helping storms carry and eventually release more rain. As a result, hurricanes are delivering flooding even in mountain towns like Asheville, North Carolina, inundated in September 2024 by

Hurricane Helene.

Forests and fires

Global warming is drying waterways and sucking moisture from forests, creating conditions for bigger and hotter wildfires from the US West and Canada to southern Europe and Russia's Far East. Research published in October in *Nature Climate Change* calculated that about 13pc of deaths associated with toxic wildfire smoke during the 2010s could be attributed to the climate effect on wildfires. Brazil's Amazon in 2024 was in the grip of its worst and most widespread drought since records began in 1950.—Reuters



TOKYO: Members of a firemen's association practice traditional fire-breathing techniques as they balance on the top of bamboo ladders during an annual fire brigades exercise, on Monday.—AFP



HELECINE (Belgium): Firefighters cut branches on a tree during yellow alert for heavy winds, on Monday.—AFP

NEWSMAKERS



STUDENTS receive lunch plates on the first day of a free meal programme at a school in the Indonesian capital, on Monday.—AFP

Indonesia launches free meal programme to combat stunting

JAKARTA: Indonesia launched an ambitious \$4.3 billion free meal programme on Monday to combat stunted growth due to malnutrition, a key election promise of President Prabowo Subianto.

Prabowo has pledged to provide nutritious meals free to tens of millions of schoolchildren and pregnant women, saying it would improve their quality of life and boost economic growth.

"This is historic for Indonesia for the first time conducting a nationwide nutrition programme for toddlers, students, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers," presidential spokesman Hassan Nasrullah said late on Sunday.

At least 150 kitchens run by third-party catering services opened nationwide, including some run by military bases, and were busy preparing meals from midnight before distributing them

to schoolchildren and pregnant women. The government has allocated 10,000 rupaiah (0.02 US cents) per meal, with kitchens preparing rice, protein, vegetables and fruit for students.

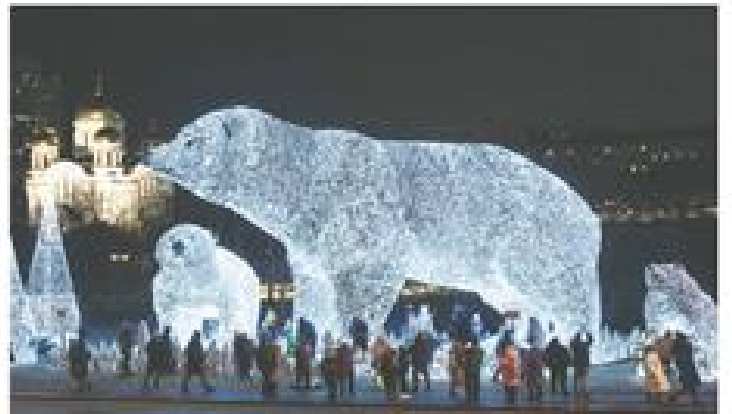
The programme has a budget of 71 trillion rupiah (\$4.3 billion) for the 2025 fiscal year and is set to deliver meals to almost 83 million people by 2029.

The free meal programme is designed to tackle stunting, which affects 21.5 per cent of children in the archipelago of some 282 million people. The Southeast Asian nation aims to reduce the rate to 5pc by 2045.

Prabowo has championed the programme since last year's presidential campaign and his team has said the poorest and most remote areas of the Southeast Asian archipelago would be prioritised.—AFP



LAS VEGAS: A new robot — the Enchanted Tools Mitral — is on display at the Consumer Electronics Show, on Sunday. Gadgets, robots and vehicles infused with artificial intelligence will once again vie for attention at the show, as vendors behind the scenes seek ways to deal with tariffs threatened by US president-elect Donald Trump.—AFP



MOSCOW: Spectators walk in front of light sculptures of polar bears set up for Christmas holidays. Since Russia follows the Orthodox Asian calendar, it will celebrate Christmas on Tuesday (today).—AFP

Maoists kill nine Indian troops

Decades-long insurgency has claimed over 10,000 lives

RAIPUR: Indian Maoist guerrillas killed nine members of the security forces on Monday by detonating a roadside bomb that tossed their vehicle into the air, police said.

Photographs published by Indian media showed a deep crater ripped into the road by the blast.

More than 10,000 people have died in the decades-long insurgency waged by the rebels, who say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised indigenous people in India's resource-rich central regions.

Government forces have stepped up efforts to crush the long-running armed conflict, with some 287 rebels killed in 2024, according to official figures.

The attack on Monday in the central state of Chhattisgarh took place as soldiers were returning from an anti-Maoist operation on Saturday, where four rebels and a police officer were killed.

"Eight security forces and a driver were killed today when the vehicle in which they were travelling came in contact with a landmine," said Vivekanand Sinha, chief of the state police's anti-Maoist operations.

The rebels, also known as Naxalites after the district where their armed campaign began in 1967, were inspired by the Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong.

Around 5,000 suspected Naxalites were arrested and 837 surrendered during 2024.

Amrith Shah, India's interior minister, warned the Maoist rebels in September to surrender or face an "all-out" assault, saying the government expected to crush the insurgency by early 2026.

Shah, a close confidant of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, repeated his promise after the latest attack on Monday: "I promise that this sacrifice of our men won't go to waste," Shah said in a statement.

"We will wipe out naxalism from our country by March 2026," the powerful minister added.

The movement gained in strength and numbers until the early 2000s when New Delhi deployed tens of thousands of security personnel against the rebels in a stretch of territory known as the "Red Corridor".

The insurgency has been drastically restricted in areas in recent years.

Authorities have since invested millions of dollars in local infrastructure and social projects to combat the Naxalite appeal.—AFP

Erdogan warns against division of Syria

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday he would order an intervention to prevent any splintering of Syria, a warning aimed particularly at the country's Kurdish forces.

"We cannot accept under any person that Syria be divided and if we notice the slightest risk we will take the necessary measures," the Turkish head of state said, adding that "we have the means".

Erdogan's warning in the latest aimed at the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces and its United States, which backed the SDF's offensive against the militant Islamic State group. Türkiye said that it was "only a matter of time" before Syrian Kurdish fighters — seen by the West as essential in the fight against the IS group fighters — will be wiped out. "Conditions in Syria have changed. We believe it's only a matter of time before PKK/YPG is eliminated," Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told a news conference in the capital Ankara.

Türkiye sees the People's Protection Units (YPG) — the main component of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) — as a terror group linked to its outlawed domestic foe the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Saying there is no room for "terror" in Syria, Erdogan said that "should the risk present itself, we could intervene in one night".—AFP



MAKKAH: Submerged cars on a flooded road after heavy rains, on Monday. The Saudi Red Crescent Authority has heightened its preparedness after the National Centre for Meteorology issued warnings of heavy rains. Several regions in Saudi Arabia have been hit by freak rain recently.—AFP

Three Israelis killed in West Bank shooting

Tel Aviv imposes a cordon around all villages in the area to search for suspects

JERUSALEM: Three Israelis were killed and several injured on Monday in a shooting attack on a car and bus near the settlement of Kalkhedim in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Israel's national ambulance service Magen David Adom (MDA) said.

The attack, on a major road used by both Israelis and Palestinians, comes amid a diplomatic push for a deal to end the 15-month-old conflict in Gaza and return Israeli prisoners home and may pose another obstacle to sealing such a deal before US president-elect Donald Trump takes office on Jan 20.

Footage posted on Israeli news sites showed at least two men emerge from a car and apparently open fire on nearby vehicles near the Palestinian village of al-Fun-diq, just down the road from Kalkhedim.

Israel's finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, who lives in the settlement where the attack took place, called for an urgent cabinet meeting "to discuss a shift in strategy and to genuinely eradicate terrorism".

The northern West Bank cities of Nablus and Jericho "should look like Jabalia", he wrote, referring to a town in the north of the Gaza Strip that has been completely destroyed by repeated Israeli bombardment.

Smotrich, on the far right of Israeli politics, has for years called for Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank, which is land that Palestinians want for a future state.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met senior military and security officials to discuss the situation and approved measures to capture attackers as well as "a series of additional offensive and defensive actions" in the West Bank. "No one will be spared," he posted on X.

There was no immediate comment from the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank.

Hamas, which has run the Gaza Strip and has a presence in the West Bank, praised the attack as a "heroic response against the occupation's continued crimes (including the war of genocide in Gaza)". But it did not claim responsibility. The West Bank has been transformed by the rapid growth of Jewish settlements since Netanyahu returned as the head of a far-right nationalist coalition two years ago. During that time, a surge in settler violence has led to US sanctions.

Since the Oct 7, 2023, raid by Hamas on southern Israel that triggered the conflict in Gaza, the violence in the West Bank has escalated, with hundreds of Palestinians and several Israelis killed.

Israel's defence minister Israel Katz said he had instructed the military to "act forcefully" in response to Monday's attack.

Israeli Army Radio said the military had imposed a cordon around all villages in the area to search for the suspects, who it believes fled to a nearby Palestinian village.

MDA said two women in their 60s and a man around 40 years old were pronounced dead at the scene, while eight passengers were wounded including a 43-year-old male bus driver who is in serious condition.

Hamas spokesman Alaa Uthaid said in a post on Telegram that "Israel will never enjoy security" unless the Palestinian people also have security.

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have settled in the West Bank since Israel captured the territory in a 1967 war. Most countries consider the settlements illegal, although Israel disputes this, citing historical and biblical ties to the land.

Palestinian security forces moved into Jericho, in the northern West Bank, last month in a move they say is aimed at suppressing armed groups of "outlaws" who have built up a power base in the city and its adjacent refugee camps.

On Sunday, Israeli forces killed a 17-year-old man in a town south of Jericho after opening fire on his home, while a 17-year-old was killed in an Israeli raid in Askar camp in Nablus, according to Palestinian officials.—Reuters

Trudeau to step down once successor chosen

Continued from Page 1

plans to impose tariffs on Canadian imports. The evolving trade tensions and domestic economic challenges, such as inflation and housing affordability, have put additional strain on the Liberal government's agenda.

First elected as Liberal leader in 2013, Trudeau has been a dominant figure in Canadian politics, combining charisma with a progressive policy platform that resonated with many voters. His initial victory in 2015 was seen as a repudiation of the Conservative government under Stephen Harper, but subsequent elections in 2019 and 2021 returned minority governments, reflecting a more divided electorate.

"This has been one of the most difficult decisions of my life," Trudeau said as he concluded his remarks. "But I know it's the right one for my family, for my party, and for the future of this country."

Three slain in fresh spate of terror attacks

Continued from Page 1

about the attack on police officials, residents armed with weapons also came out of their homes to hunt down the attackers.

In the ensuing operation, one militant commander was gunned down by the law enforcers and villagers. In the ensuing gun battle, the police with the help of the CTD commander and armed villagers eliminated a militant commander in the area," he added.

A Rescue 1122 official said that they immediately dispatched a medical team, along with an ambulance vehicle, to the venue of the attack when the control room received information about the incident. He said that the bodies of martyred cops were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital Tajana for medical formalities. The coffins were later taken to the police lines in the District Headquarters Complex, where last rites were performed and the bodies were dispatched to the Kherakhel Panna area for burial.

Two injured in Banna

In Banna, a Frontier Constabulary camp located near the airport in Bakhkhal and a police post in the Bargatoo area of Wair subdivision came under attack on Sunday night. A police official said that two FC soldiers were injured in the attack and shifted to a hospital.

"Their condition is stable," he said, adding that the Frontier Constabulary personnel effectively responded and forced the assailants to flee. He said the police also reported a terrorist attack on a post in Bargatoo, in the Wair subdivision.

"Terrorists armed with light and heavy weapons attacked the post in a bid to breach it, but the police deployed there exhibited unprecedented bravery and repelled in the same manner," he added.

One killed in attack on cash van

In a separate attack in Lakki Marwat, a cash van owned by a private security company came under attack on the busy Marginala road. Police and revenue officials said armed men targeted the van with grenades and rockets, killing the driver and injuring others.

They said the driver was identified as Muhammad Ashraf, a resident of Karak, and the injured included Naeem Khan of Banna and Saadul Rehman of Karak. A rescue official said the deceased and the injured were moved to the Government City Hospital. The wounded were later referred to Banna due to their critical condition.

Security was beefed up both in Lakki Marwat and Banna after the attacks, with the police having increased patrolling and searching the suspected hideouts of miscreants and criminals in the area.

Narco-musical Emilia Perez, immigrant drama Brutalist win big at Golden Globes

BEVERLY HILLS: Surreal narco-musical "Emilia Perez" and epic immigrant drama "Brutalist" were the big winners at the Golden Globes on Sunday, as prizes were shared widely across an international crop of movies at the year's first major showbiz awards gala.

French director Jacques Audiard's Mexican-set "Emilia Perez" took four prizes, including best comedy or musical film, while "The Brutalist" was named best drama and also picked up best actor for Adrien Brody, who plays a Hungarian Holocaust survivor.

"Emilia Perez," about a drug lord who transitions to life as a woman, had entered the night with the most nominations at 10.

It won for best non-English language film and best original song, while Zoe Saldana took best supporting actress from Cuba, nudging out her co-star Selma Gomez.

"You can maybe put us in jail, you can beat us up, but you never can take away our soul, our resistance, our identity," said Karla Sofia Gascón, the film's star, who is transgender. She added: "Raise your voice... and say, 'I won. I am who I am, not who you want.'" Big wins at the Globes can help movies earn new audiences and build vital momentum toward the Oscars in early March.

Sunday also proved an important night for "The Brutalist," which shrugged off concerns over its sprawling runtime to earn best director for Brady Corbet. "I was told that no one would come out and see it," said Corbet, of his epic about a Jewish architect who survives Nazi persecution and emigrates to the United States.

"No one was asking for a three-and-a-



ADRIANA PAZ, Selma Gomez, Karla Sofia Gascón, and Zoe Saldana, winners of the best picture award for Emilia Perez, pose at the Golden Globe Awards ceremony, on Sunday.—Reuters

half-hour film about a mid-century designer... but it works," he added. In one of the night's biggest upsets, Brazil's Fernanda Torres won best actress in a drama film for "I'm Still Here," which chronicles a family ripped apart by the country's military dictatorship in the 1970s.

Comedies

Brody's win was one of the night's remarkable career comebacks, more than two decades after he became the youngest ever Oscar best actor winner for "The Pianist," in which he also played a Holocaust survivor.

"There was a time not too long ago that I felt that this may be a moment never afforded to me again," he said. "This story... is very reminiscent of my mother's, and my ancestral journey of fleeing the horrors of war and coming to this great country." And there was another late-career triumph for Demi Moore, who won best actress in a comedy for body horror flick "The Substance," which takes a satirical and often grotesque look at the pressures placed on women by society as they age.

Accepting her prize, Moore reflected on how decades ago, she had been told by a Hollywood producer that she was

"a popcorn actress." "I bought in, and I believed that, and that corroded me over time," said the now 62-year-old "Ghost" star.

But "I had this magical, bold, courageous, out-of-the-box, absolutely bonkers script come across my desk called 'The Substance,' and the universe told me that 'you're not done.'"

Origins

The always controversial Globes are in year two of a revival, following a Los Angeles Times expose in 2021 that showed that the awards' voting body — the Hollywood Foreign Press Association — had no Black members.

Now under new ownership, and with the HFPA disbanded, organizers were hoping to consolidate on a ratings bump registered last January.

Comedian Nikki Glaser hosted the ceremony, kicking off the gala with an irreverent, well-received monologue. "Welcome to the 82nd Golden Globes, Oscar's biggest night," she quipped, referring to the weight loss drug that has proven wildly popular in famously looks-conscious Hollywood.

Among the dramas, "Conclave," a fictionalized account of high-stakes Vatican horse-trading, depicting how the death of a pope sends the church's various factions into battle for its future, took the award for best screenplay.

In comedy, Sebastian Stan won the best actor for "A Different Man," in which he portrays a man who undergoes experimental treatment for a disfiguring facial condition, but comes to rue the consequences. "Our ignorance and discomfort around disability and disfigurement has to end now," said Stan.—AFP



DEMI MOORE poses with her award.—Reuters

Moore says 'I'm just in shock'

BEVERLY HILLS: Demi Moore won her first acting award in a career spanning five decades on Sunday, scooping a Golden Globe for the body-horror film "The Substance".

The 62-year-old beat Amy Adams, Cynthia Erivo, Mikey Madison, Karla Sofia Gascón and Zendaya to win best actress in a musical or comedy film, a category that had been considered very competitive.

"I'm just in shock right now," Moore said in her acceptance speech. "I've been doing this a long time, over 45 years. This is the first time I've ever won anything as an actor and I'm just so humbled and so grateful." Moore, who began her acting career in the early 1980s, is known for films like "St. Elmo's Fire," "Ghost," "Indecent Proposal" and "Strip-tease".

Visibly surprised by her win, she said she had once been told by a producer 30 years ago that she was a "popcorn actress".

"At that time, I made that mean that this wasn't something that I was allowed to have, that I could do movies that were successful, that made a lot of money, but that I couldn't be acknowledged," Moore said.

"I bought in and I believed that, and that corroded me over time to the point where I thought a few years ago that maybe this was it, maybe I was complete, maybe I've done what I was supposed to do," Moore, who was twice nominated for a Golden Globe in the 1990s, said she received the script for "The Substance" when she was at "a low point".

"And the universe told me that you're not done," she said, adding her thanks to writer-director Coralie Fargeat and co-star Margaret Qualley.

In the movie, Moore plays an ageing TV fitness instructor who signs up for a mysterious medical regime that promises to create the perfect version of herself.—Reuters



SEBASTIAN STAN poses with his award.—Reuters

List of key winners

BEVERLY HILLS: Here are the winners in key categories for the 82nd Golden Globe Awards, which were handed out on Sunday.

Surreal narco-musical "Emilia Perez" led all films with four awards, including best comedy or musical film. "The Brutalist" was named best drama film, one of five three Globes.

Film

Best film, drama: "The Brutalist" Best film, musical or comedy: "Emilia Perez" Best director: Brady Corbet, "The Brutalist" Best actor, drama: Adrien Brody, "The Brutalist" Best actress, drama: Fernanda Torres, "I'm Still Here" Best actor, musical or comedy: Sebastian Stan, "A Different Man" Best actress, musical or comedy: Demi Moore, "The Substance" Best supporting actor: Kieran Culkin, "A Real Pain" Best supporting actress: Zoe Saldana, "Emilia Perez" Best screenplay: Peter Straughan, "Conclave" Best non-English language film: "Emilia Perez" Best original song: "El Mal" from "Emilia Perez" Best original score: Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross, " Challengers" Best cinematic and box office achievement: "Wicked" Best animated feature: "Flow"

Television

Best drama series: "Shogun" Best drama actor: Harvey Keitel, "Shogun" Best drama actress: Anna Karen, "Shogun" Best musical or comedy series: "Hacks" Best musical or comedy actor: Jeremy Allen White, "The Bear" Best musical or comedy actress: Jean Smart, "Hacks" Best limited series or TV movie: "Baby Reindeer" Best limited series or TV movie actor: Colin Farrell, "The Penguin" Best limited series or TV movie actress: Jodie Foster, "True Detective: Night Country" Best performance in stand-up comedy on television: Ali Wong, "Ali Wong: Single Lady"—AFP

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US Congress certifies Trump's election victory

• Certification clears the way for president-elect to be sworn in on Jan 20 • Quadrennial ritual stands in sharp contrast to four years ago when Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol

WASHINGTON: The US Congress formally certified Republican President-elect Donald Trump's November election victory over Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris, clearing the way for him to be sworn in on Jan 20.

The certification of the election results on Monday in the 50 states and the District of Columbia was accomplished in a brief, formal ceremony during a joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate. It was presided over by Harris, acting in her vice-presidential role as president of the Senate.

The quadrennial ritual stood in sharp contrast to four years ago when a mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in a failed bid to block the certification of then-President Trump's 2020 loss to Democratic President Joe Biden.

Trump continues to falsely claim that his 2020 defeat was the result of widespread fraud, and had warned throughout his 2024 campaign that he harbored similar concerns until his Nov 5 defeat of Harris.

"Congress certifies our great election victory today — a big moment in history. MAGA!" Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social on Monday.

The joint session of Congress preceded even as a winter storm hovered over the nation's capital, dropping about 6 inches (15cm) of snow and stifling travel.

The final certification backed up preliminary findings that Trump won 312 Electoral College votes to Harris's 226.

Republicans control White House, Congress

Republicans also captured a majority in the US Senate and held a narrow edge in the House in November's election, which will give Trump the party support he needs to implement his planned agenda of tax cuts and a crackdown on immigrants living in the country illegally.

Democrats did not try to block certification of Trump's victory on Monday.

"We must renew our commitment to safeguarding American democracy," No.

2 House Democrat Katherine Clark said in a statement earlier in the day. "As elected leaders, our loyalty must be to the Constitution, first and always. We are here to honour the will of the people and the rule of law."

Security inside and outside the Capitol was heightened in preparation for the certification and was expected to remain in place through Trump's swearing-in.

The Capitol grounds were ringed by metal fences hundreds of yards from the US Capitol, and accessible only via checkpoints guarded by uniformed police officers.

Corveys of black police vehicles were on hand, led by a 10-wheel Baltimore police mobile command centre. New York Police Department reinforcements were also patrolling the area.

Inside, extra teams of uniformed US Capitol Police officers were checking IDs at entrance sites including doors and underground tunnels leading to the House and Senate chambers.

Trump has said he plans to pardon some of the more than 1,500 people charged with taking part in the Jan 6, 2021, assault on the Capitol, when a mob fought with police, smashing its way in through windows and doors and chanting, "Hang Mike Pence," referring to Trump's then-vice president, in a failed bid to stop Congress from certifying Biden's victory.

In the 2021 melee at the Capitol, rioters urged past police barricades, assaulting about 140 officers and causing more than \$2.8 million in damage. Multiple police officers who battled protesters died in the weeks that followed, some by suicide.

As a result of that day's violence, Congress passed legislation late in 2022 bolstering guardrails to ensure that the certification process is administered in a legal manner.

Many of these changes were directly in response to Trump's actions leading up to and including Jan 6, 2021. For example, the new law asserts that the vice president's role is largely ceremonial.—Reuters



WASHINGTON: Members of the House of Representatives assemble at the US Capitol before the start of a joint Congress session to certify President-elect Donald Trump's electoral college win over Vice President Kamala Harris in the Nov 5 election.—AFP

LHC orders steps to fight worsening air quality in Multan

Seeks implementation of 2020 order for tree plantation along motorway

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Lahore High Court has issued directives to relevant authorities to combat the worsening air quality in Multan, emphasising the need for tree plantation and climate justice.

The air quality index (AQI) in south Punjab's largest city reached the hazardous level of 700 in November 2024, the worst ever witnessed in the city and the highest in the country at the time.

The court directed relevant authorities to expedite urban forestry initiatives and implement climate-proof policies. It highlighted the role of tree plantation in combating air pollution and improving public health, particularly in urban areas like Multan, which are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation.

The court underscored the responsibility of government departments, citing Rule 10 of the Punjab Government Rules of Business, 2011, which mandates secretaries to ensure efficient administration and adherence to laws. It further emphasised the implementation of its 2020 order for tree plantation along the Lahore-Islamabad Motorway (M-3) to improve environmental conditions.

In its detailed judgment, the court referred to landmark cases emphasising climate justice and

LHC Justice Jawad Hassan, while hearing a petition filed by a concerned citizen, took a proactive stance in response to the alarming air quality index (AQI) levels which reached a hazardous 700 in November 2024 in Multan.

The case, Tahir Jamal vs. Government of Punjab, highlighted the critical need for immediate environmental action.

The court approved incorporation of six new respondents, including the additional chief secretary and heads of various south Punjab departments, to ensure accountability and expedited measures to address the crisis.

The court underscored the responsibility of government departments, citing Rule 10 of the Punjab Government Rules of Business, 2011, which mandates secretaries to ensure efficient administration and adherence to laws. It further emphasised the implementation of its 2020 order for tree plantation along the Lahore-Islamabad Motorway (M-3) to improve environmental conditions.

In its detailed judgment, the court referred to landmark cases emphasising climate justice and

inter-generational equity. It reiterated the constitutional right to a clean and sustainable environment under the newly inserted Article 9A, which guarantees every citizen the right to healthy ecosystem.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had previously declared an environmental health emergency in Multan in November 2024, introducing measures such as shifting educational institutions online, banning construction activities and restricting heavy transport and suspending brick kilns and furnace-based industries.

However, the court observed that these efforts, while commendable, were insufficient without long-term solutions such as urban forestry.

The judgement echoed global calls for climate resilience, emphasising the judiciary's role in mitigating effects of climate change.

Drawing from national and international precedents, the court stressed the importance of sustainable development, urging authorities to prioritise policies that protect biodiversity and combat air pollution.

Legal community opposes civilians' trial in military courts: Hamid Khan

By Waqar Ahmad Sheikh

LAHORE: Senior bar leader Senator Hamid Khan on Monday said the lawyers share a unanimous opinion against trials of civilians by military courts.

Speaking at a press conference in the auditorium of the Lahore High Court Bar Association, he said that the sentiment announced by the military courts in cases related to the May 9 events were unconstitutional.

He pointed out that there was already a decision by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court on this matter.

He said the seven-member bench of the Supreme Court has

deeply disappointed the legal fraternity.

"By allowing the announcement of the decision by the military courts, the Supreme Court has let us down," Senator Hamid said.

He stated that the lawyers did not consider military courts as legitimate and did not accept their decisions.

He said that the decision to allow military trial verdicts was a stain on the Supreme Court.

He said the military courts were only meant for trying military personnel and taking civilians' trials to military courts was unconstitutional.

Senator Hamid Khan further said that the cases related to the 26th Amendment should be heard by a bench

comprising all judges of the Supreme Court.

"We all demand that these cases be presented before a full court," he added.

He said the so-called constitutional bench was a product of the 26th Amendment.

He claimed that the constitutional bench has no right to hear cases against the amendment.

The PTI senator also demanded the case against the 26th Amendment should be broadcast live, saying the Supreme Court proceedings have been broadcast live in the past as well.

LHCBA President Asad Manzoor Butt and other leaders of the Professional group of lawyers were present at the press conference.

Pakistan faces major nutrition, food security challenges

By Armin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan faced significant challenges in nutrition and food security in 2024, and despite some progress, the country still struggles with high rates of malnutrition and food insecurity, the latest nutrition sector bulletin says.

High food prices, climatic shocks, and reduced livelihood opportunities contribute to acute food insecurity.

Around 22 per cent people are facing high levels of acute food insecurity. This situation is expected to improve slightly post-harvest season, according to the bulletin, published by the ministry of national health services, regulations and coordination.

The country faces major challenges in meeting the food security and nutrition targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Only 38pc of children are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. Over 40pc of children under five years are stunted; 17.2pc are wasted; 28.9pc are underweight, while more than half are anaemic and suffering from deficiencies in essential nutrients and vitamins such as iron (28.4pc), zinc (38.4pc), vitamin A (51.5pc) and vitamin D (62.7pc).

The National Nutrition Survey 2018 had revealed persistently high rates of undernutrition along with an emerging trend of being overweight and obese. Wasting is extremely high in Pakistan, with several areas in the country considered to be at emergency levels of wasting.

PIA expands international, domestic operations

Flag carrier adding new flights to Kuwait, Bahrain, Doha, Dammam and Jeddah

By Mohammad Asghar and Zafar Nadeem

RAWALPINDI/

LAHORE: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has announced plans to expand both its domestic and international operations by launching new flights starting in January. The national flag carrier is adding flights to Kuwait, Bahrain, Doha, Dammam and Jeddah.

A spokesperson for PIA said the airline has introduced new international routes to Kuwait, Bahrain and Doha, in addition to expanding its services to Dammam and Jeddah. The airline is also expand-

ing its domestic network with additional weekly flights between Karachi and Peshawar. A third weekly flight from Karachi to Peshawar will be part of the schedule beginning January 25.

The spokesman said PIA would resume its weekly two-way flights between Lahore and Kuwait from January 25. In addition, two new weekly flights from Lahore to Dammam will begin in January 22.

He said additional flights would be operated from Sukkot to Jeddah from January 20. A new two-way weekly flight from Sukkot to Doha will begin on January 21. These new flights are part of the airline's efforts to restore and introduce international services to and from various cities in Pakistan.

The spokesman emphasised that PIA is committed to enhancing connectivity and ensuring convenient travel options for its passengers, both

domestically and internationally.

This expansion follows the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) decision to lift the ban on Pakistan's flights to EU countries. After this, PIA has also resumed its services to Europe and the United Kingdom.

As part of its fleet rejuvenation efforts, PIA is working on bringing back aircraft that had been grounded for extended periods. Recently, an ATR aircraft, which had been in long-term storage, was reintroduced to service. With the addition of this ATR, PIA has strengthened its domestic operations, particularly on routes to Gilgit, Skokor, Turbat and Gwadar.

The PIA management is focused on ensuring punctuality, with an on-time performance target set at 90 per cent, the spokesman said, adding that the airline is currently meeting this target consistently on a daily basis.

First major US winter storm of year hits mid-Atlantic states

• Emergency declared in several states; hundreds of schools closed • Over 250,000 customers without power • Airlines cancel over 1,300 flights

WASHINGTON: The first major winter storm of the new year swept into the US Middle Atlantic states on Monday, closing down federal offices and public schools in Washington, DC, after dumping more than a foot of snow in the Ohio Valley and Central Plains.

The nation's capital can expect accumulations of six to nine inches before the system pushes out to sea on Monday evening, the US National Weather Service said. Governors in several states, including Kansas, Kentucky, Arkansas, West Virginia and Virginia, have already declared states of emergency.

In the wake of the storm, frigid Arctic air was filling the mid, bringing freezing rain and icy conditions to a

swath of the country stretching from Illinois through Maryland and Virginia. Treacherous driving conditions are expected in many areas.

The Central Plains, where the storm dumped heavy snow over the weekend, were already in a deep freeze. Parts of Kansas experienced bitter cold wind chills, with values from five to almost 25 degrees Fahrenheit below zero (minus 15 to 32 degrees Celsius) overnight. The cold air will persist, with daytime highs only in the mid-tens to lower 20s.

In Washington, the storm will not keep the US Congress from meeting on Monday to formally certify Republican Donald Trump's election as presi-



CFRWS work before dawn to clear snow from the steps of the US Capitol as a winter storm slammed Washington on Monday.—AFP

dent, House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Sunday. But federal offices in the nation's capital will be closed, the Office of Personnel Management said.

Hundreds of schools announced in advance that they would not open on Monday due to the storm, including public schools in Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Washington and Philadelphia.

Over 250,000 homes and businesses in central and the southern US were without power on Monday, data from PowerOutage.us showed. The storm is expected to move offshore late on Monday, but it will be replaced by Arctic air, lowering daytime temperatures significantly, the National

Weather Service said.

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) on Sunday announced a weather watch from Jan 6-10, citing anticipated cold weather across its region, which is expected to increase electrical demand and could reduce reserves. However, grid operations are forecast to remain normal during the ERCOT weather watch.

Energy India reported the highest number of affected customers, with 53,457 clients without power, followed by Appalachian Power Company in West Virginia, with 31,242 clients without power.

Flights cancelled

Airlines in the United States cancelled more than

1,300 flights on Monday.

A total of 1,306 flights were canceled and 414 flights were delayed, as of 5.31am ET, according to flight-tracking website FlightAware.

Airlines canceled 264 flights, the most among carriers, followed by American Airlines at 176.

Carriers, including Southwest, American, United Airlines and Delta Air Lines, also issued travel advisories warning about an impact due to the storm.

The Federal Aviation Administration had warned on Friday that gusty winds, snowfall and some freezing could impact travel in the Northeast and Mid Atlantic regions.—Reuters

SPORT

Marseille hit five to close gap on leaders in Ligue 1

PARIS: Olympique de Marseille closed the gap on leaders — Paris St-Germain — to seven points at the top of Ligue 1 after crushing strugglers Le Havre 5-1 at the Velodrome on Sunday as the season approaches the halfway point.

Valentin Rongier, Bilal Nadir, Neal Maupay, Ugo Walz and Oussama Garcia scored the goals for Roberto De Zerbi's team, who also moved three points clear of third-placed AS Monaco with the victory.

Marseille have won five and drawn one of their last six outings in all competitions, and have scored nine goals in two matches either side of the first night-long winter break.

Rongier drove in the first from distance on 25 minutes and Nadir fired a low shot into the far corner to make it two, the 23-year-old scoring his first senior goal on just his second Ligue 1 start.

Maupay, who is on loan from Everton in a deal that will become a permanent transfer at the season's end, headed in Marseille's third goal before the interval.

Nadir, who was starting in the absence of the ill Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, did not reappear for the second half as Marseille added a fourth goal on 66 minutes when Moussa Greenwood scored for substitute Walz to tap in.

Garcia, also on from the bench, completed the scoring for the home side as De Zerbi's men scored five in a Ligue 1 game for the third time this season.

Le Havre, who are in the relegation zone, pulled one back late on when forward Andre Ayew headed in.

Elsewhere on Sunday, Champions League revelations Brent changed to a 2-0 defeat away at Arsenal, a result which leaves them 12th in Ligue 1 as the season reaches its midway stage next weekend.

Toulouse were surprise 1-0 winners at RC Lens thanks to a Zakaria Aboukhadija penalty, while Strasbourg came from behind to beat Auxerre 2-1 in Ligue 1. Olympique de Lyonnais, Nice and Saint-Etienne also won over the week end. —AFP



PARIS St-Germain players celebrate with the French Super Cup trophy after defeating AS Monaco at Stadium 974. —Reuters

Last-gasp Dembele strike earns PSG French Super Cup victory over Monaco

DOHA: A stoppage-time goal by forward Ousmane Dembele earned Paris St-Germain a 1-0 win over AS Monaco in the French Super Cup on Sunday as the Ligue 1 champions lifted the trophy for the third consecutive season.

Record 13-time winners PSG, who faced last season's Ligue 1 runner-up Monaco after the Parisians had won both the league and the French Cup, won the competition for the 11th time in the last 12 years.

"It was a great game between two teams who play good football," said Luis Enrique. "The result is well deserved and reflects our domination, against

one of the best teams in France and in Europe."

In a lively encounter at Doha's Stadium 974, made from 954 recycled shipping containers for the 2022 World Cup, PSG had 27 chances — nine of them on target — without breaking the deadlock.

But Dembele ensured the game did not go to penalties when he sealed the win for the French champions two minutes into injury time, setting inside the far post after Florian Rivit fed him with a neat pass across the face of the goal.

Summer signing Desire Doucoure was close to giving PSG the lead in the ninth minute but hit the

bar while Leo Kantigi was denied by Monaco goalkeeper Philippe Kochen with an effort from distance in first-half stoppage time.

Dembele and Vitorino also tested Kochen in the opening 45 minutes while Monaco's Maghnes Akhouche and Takumi Minamino forced Gianluigi Donnarumma into saves, with the PSG keeper returning to the side after recovering from a face injury.

"A goal in the last minute always feels like being stabbed in the back," said Monaco's Austrian coach, Adi Hutter. "But being honest, PSG deserved to win. They had more chances."

No goals were scored in the first half of a French Super Cup for the first time since 2010 when Olympique de Marseille beat PSG 5-4 on penalties after the match ended goalless.

PSG, who beat Nantes and Toulouse in the previous two editions, won 4-2 at Monaco last month in Ligue 1 with Dembele scoring a second-half brace.

Four-time winners Monaco last lifted the trophy in 2000. They were runner-up in 2017 and 2018, losing both times to PSG.

PSG return to league action next Sunday when they host St-Etienne while Monaco visit body Nantes on Friday. —Agencies

Indonesia sack coach Shin, citing World Cup target

JAKARTA: Indonesia sacked coach Shin Tae-yong on Monday with the country's football chief saying the team needed stronger leadership as it battles for a place at the 2026 World Cup.

Tens of millions of people in the Southeast Asian nation are passionate football fans, but Indonesia's sole World Cup appearance came during Dutch rule in 1938 and the country has rarely threatened a return since independence in 1945.

Erick Thohir, who heads the Indonesia Football Association (PSSI), said Shin's work with the team had "ended" and his replacement, whom he declined to name, would arrive in Indonesia on Jan 11.

"We need a leadership that implements strategies as agreed with the players, communicates better, and implements better programmes for our national team," Thohir told a press conference.

Indonesia are third in their World Cup group after six of 10 matches, one point behind Australia in the battle for the second automatic spot in the finals.

If they finish third or fourth, they could still get to the finals in North America through further rounds of qualifying and an

intercontinental playoff.

Thohir, who said he had interviewed three candidates to replace Shin during a recent trip to Europe, was not concerned that changing coaches in the middle of the campaign would disrupt the team.

"It's normal. Lots of countries switch coaches during World Cup qualifiers," he added.

"This is something we've been discussing for many months back, but I think the moment is right, because we still have 2 1/2 months preparation for next games."

"We will have four matches and we want to get as many points as we can," —Reuters

appointed by the board," he urged.

The coaches warned that if the current pattern of non-merit-based selections persists, private universities may be discouraged from maintaining their cricket teams, as the sport requires significant funding. This, they believe, could hinder the development of young talent who are eager to pursue both academic and sporting careers.

The coaches also criticised the PCB's policy of allowing players who have participated in its domestic tournaments to be eligible for selection in the HEC cricket team, further questioning the integrity of the selection process.

Kasatkina, Badosa roll into Adelaide second round

ADELAIDE: World number nine Daria Kasatkina swept into the Adelaide International second round on Monday but Paris Olympic silver medalist Donna Vekic crashed to her third straight loss of the season.

Spain's Paula Badosa also narrowly avoided defeat, battling for nearly three hours to complete a 6-2 (5/7), 6-1, 7-5 comeback win over American Peyton Stearns.

"I'm so tired, I went through all the emotions," said Badosa, a former world number two, now ranked 12.

Russia's Kasatkina, runner-up at the last two editions of the Australian Open warm-up event, broke Austria's Olivia Gadecki five times to advance 6-2, 6-1.

"I think Adelaide is the tournament I've played most in my career," said the 27-year-old, who made six WTA finals last year and won two titles.

"It's the beginning of the season, I'm happy to be back."

"My tactic today was to turn on my legs and win as many points as possible and play aggressively when I had the chance."

The match featured four service breaks in the first five games as third seed Kasatkina got re-acquainted with the Memorial Drive centre court.

She will meet last year's Australian Open and Wimbledon junior runner-up Emerson Jones, a wildcard entry who scored an impressive 6-4, 6-0 win over China's Wang Xinyu.

Croatia's Vekic, a Wimbledon semi-finalist last year, saw her Australian Open build-up go from bad to worse with a 6-2, 6-3 defeat to Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva.

The world number 19 was also beaten in two group matches in Perth at the United Cup.

Victory moved Putintseva into a second-round clash against either American fourth seed Danielle Collins or Tunisian wildcard Ons Jabeur, a three-time Grand Slam finalist.

"Today I played great, I was focused all the way through," said Putintseva. "We've played so much and know each other's games well. There are no secrets on the court."

In other matches, 2021 US Open finalist Raylah Fernandez was eliminated by Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova in three sets, with her record a clash against American world number eight Emma Navarro, who had a bye.

The first Grand Slam of the year begins in Melbourne on Sunday. —AFP



SPAIN'S Paula Badosa hits a return against Peyton Stearns of the US during their match at the Adelaide International on Monday. —AFP

University teams' coaches raise concerns over selection of HEC cricket team

By Our Sports Reporter

LAHORE: The cricket coaches from the University of the Punjab (UP) and Central University of Punjab (UCP) have raised concerns over what they claim is a flawed selection process for the Higher Education Commission (HEC) cricket team, set to compete in the upcoming Pakistan's Trophy First-Class tournament, starting Wednesday.

The coaches have called on both the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the chairman of the HEC to investigate the matter and take appropriate action.

UCP coach Akhtar Mianfar

Bati, speaking at a press conference on Monday, stated that both UCP and UP had performed well in the recent inter-university cricket tournament in Peshawar, with UCP finishing second and UP securing third place. Following the tournament, 33 players were invited to attend the final selection trials. However, Akhtar pointed out that the trials were held in Karachi instead of Peshawar or Islamabad, where the HEC's head office is located.

"But when the trials were held in Karachi, 70 to 80 players showed up, and surprisingly, many of those who had not participated in any of the inter-university matches were selected for

the final squad of 20," Akhtar explained.

UP coach Mudassar echoed these concerns, adding that some selections appeared questionable. "Among the selected players in Peshawar, the son of Pakistan's former captain Moinuddin Haque, who did not play a single match in the inter-university tournament nor had any notable performances in other domestic events. Yet, he has made the final squad."

The coaches have raised alarms over the selection of at least eight players who did not feature in the inter-university matches, suggesting that merit had been overlooked in favor of other factors.

"We protested to the HEC chairman about this issue, but our concerns went unheard. Now, we are appealing to the PCB chairman to take notice of the situation," said the coaches.

Akhtar, a well-respected domestic cricket organizer and coach, also highlighted doubts surrounding the semi-final match between Peshawar and Bahawalpur universities. He questioned how Peshawar University, the eventual winner, managed to score 52 runs in the final two overs of their innings, leading to suspicions about the fairness of the contest.

"We request the PCB to investigate this matter as the matches were officiated by umpires

appointed by the board," he urged.

The coaches warned that if the current pattern of non-merit-based selections persists, private universities may be discouraged from maintaining their cricket teams, as the sport requires significant funding. This, they believe, could hinder the development of young talent who are eager to pursue both academic and sporting careers.

The coaches also criticized the PCB's policy of allowing players who have participated in its domestic tournaments to be eligible for selection in the HEC cricket team, further questioning the integrity of the selection process.

Ranieri's Roma claim derby honours against Lazio

ROME: AS Roma triumphed 2-0 against local rivals Lazio on Sunday to give Claudio Ranieri his biggest win since the veteran coach took charge of his boyhood club for the third time.

Lorenzo Pellegrini and Alois Rastlemaekers netted in eight first-half minutes which gave Roma the points in a fraught atmosphere at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome.

Ranieri's team are up to 10th on 23 points, still 12 points behind Lazio who sit in the final Champions League spot but now have some breathing space between them and the relegation zone.

Six points separate Roma from Lazio, who sit just inside the bottom three and drew 0-0



ROME: Alois Rastlemaekers of AS Roma (second R) scores against Lazio during their Serie A match at Stadio Olimpico. —Reuters

with Genoa earlier on Sunday, as Ranieri slowly gets the capital club going back in the right direction.

"It's so great to be able to make these fans happy," said defender Gianluca Mancini, who did his post-match interview in a long coat after giving his shorts and shirt to jubilant supporters.

"Derbies are always a match apart, but we're still only talking about three points, it's not like we've won the league or anything."

Roma were in such disarray when Ranieri became their third coach of the season in November that relegation was not beyond the realm of possibility.

But after an encouraging draw at AC Milan last weekend, Sunday's display was another sign that a talented squad is starting to emerge

itself, as well as being the 73-year-old's fifth win against Lazio in as many matches.

Roma did not have it all their own way, however, and were cramped in their own half after the break as Lazio pushed hard to get back into the match.

Valentino Castellanos and the impressive Nuno Tavares both went close to pulling a goal back while Leon Tchaouane's stuffed finish leaped into the crossbar just before the hour mark.

Castellanos was then sent off deep in stoppage time as Lazio ended a painful defeat with a pitchside scuffle instigated by Roma defender Mats Hummels' exaggerated contact with

the Argentine striker.

Pellegrini's agonie came nine minutes into his surprise start in Roma's attack alongside Paulo Dybala and Artem Dovbyk as the 28-year-old had been out of favour and often booed by fans despite being a local boy and club captain.

Roma fan Pellegrini had been accused by angry supporters of being among a clutch of players who pushed for Daniele De Rossi to be sacked in September.

But he kissed the badge of his boyhood club after brilliantly whipping home his first league goal of the season following a lightning breakthrough.

"On the bus to the ground he said he would score and he did, I'm really happy for him

because he's had a tough time," said Rastlemaekers.

"But he's a big player for this team and we're all behind him."

Eight minutes later Roma took a surprise early two-goal lead through Rastlemaekers, who after being put through by Paulo Dybala forced a fine save from Ivan Provedel and their capped home the colours.

Pellegrini was given a standing ovation when he was replaced by Stephan El Shaarawy midway through the second half, a sign that he has won supporters back to his side and that some normalcy is returning to Roma after largely awful opening half to the season. —AFP

KARACHI

Sunset 05:59 pm
Sunrise (tomorrow) 07:57 am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 9°C
Maximum 28°C
Humidity 42%
Outlook Sunny

METRO South



SA sweep series despite Pakistan's improved batting show

Pg.18 SPORT

Mullah Nisar acquitted 'for want of evidence' in encounter case

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: A sessions court acquitted a suspected gangster for lack of evidence in a case pertaining to the assault on police in an alleged encounter in 2014.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Abdul Zahir Chaudhry, who is also the presiding officer of the Gender-Based Violence Court (GBVC), acquitted Nisar Ahmed alias Mullah Nisar as the prosecution failed to prove charges against him for allegedly attacking the policemen.

The court directed the jail superintendent to release the accused if he is not required in any other case. However, Nisar will remain imprisoned as he is implicated in multiple cases.

Highlighting lacuna in the investigation, the court noted: "A review of the evidence presented at trial revealed significant deficiencies in the prosecution's case. The testimony of both the complainant and the investigating officer were marred by contradictions and omissions."

The absence of independent witnesses from the area, particularly in a case involving an armed encounter, severely undermined the prosecution's credibility, the court observed.

Additionally, the lack of forensic evidence, as no police weapons were sent to the forensic science laboratory for examination, further weakened the case, it added. "The failure to properly account for the arms and ammunition used by the police and the absence of corroborating evidence from independent witnesses diminished the probative value of the recovered items."

The court ruled that the prosecution failed to meet its burden of proof, and in line with established legal principles, the accused was given the benefit of the doubt.

Regarding the absconding co-accused Faisal Pathan, Shabbaz Kamran and Nazam Lohori, the court ruled that the case file remained dormant until they were arrested and produced before the court.

According to the prosecution, the complainant testified before the court that on March 10, 2014, while serving as a Sub-Inspector at the Khatkor police station, he was patrolling with his subordinates when he received information about the presence of "notorious gang members" including Faisal Pathan, Shabbaz Kamran, Mullah Nisar, Nazam Lohori, and others at Ghanchi Gali in Unnao.

The informant stated that the gang members were allegedly preparing to commit

Continued on Page 14

Opposition raises concerns over boy's drowning in open manhole

• Minister urges collective action to prevent children from falling into uncovered gutters • Says KWSC placed covers on 32,000 manholes last year • House passes resolution to pay tribute to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on birth anniversary

By Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly on Monday echoed with the opposition's concern over the death of a minor boy, who drowned in an open manhole in Shah Faizal Colony a day before, as it criticised the authorities for being "inefficient" while Local Government (LG) Minister Saad Ghani appealed to the public to 'take action' against conspicuous elements involved in stealing the covers.

At the outset of the proceedings, Leader of the Opposition Ali Khurshid of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan, on a point of order, took up the issue of manholes that lack covers and asked the government to ascertain who was responsible for such negligence.

Mr Khurshid said that there were thousands of open manholes across the city, which posed danger to the public, and demanded that assistance be announced for the deaths that occurred due to lack of sewer covers.

Referring to Friday's protest by the opposition in the house, he also said that the controversial removal of the sewer exams in Karachi was an important issue. He said that the students would have to bear the impact of the poor results as they would not be able to get admission in public universities and professional colleges.

Responding to the opposition leaders' concerns over uncovered manholes in the city, LG minister Saad Ghani said that the provincial government, relevant civic agencies and the public had to play their due role in preventing fatalities of children falling into open sewers.

Mr Ghani told the house that the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC) in the last year had placed 32,000 covers in



PPP leaders Faryal Talpur, CM Syed Murad Ali Shah, former CM Syed Qam Ali Shah and others cut a cake to commemorate the birth anniversary of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at the Sindh Assembly building, on Monday. —PPF

the metropolis and added that there were around 400,000 utility holes in the city.

The LG minister said that every union committee in the city had been asked to keep 50 to 100 manhole covers ready for the uncovered gutters in their respective jurisdictions.

He told the house that the covers were either stolen or broken by 'conspicuous elements' retrieving steel from them.

He appealed to the public to take action against persons involved in stealing and smashing of manhole covers.

Tribute to Bhutto

Members from both sides of the aisle also lauded the political acumen and vision of the founding chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto, as the house unanimously passed a resolution to pay tribute to him on his birth anniversary.

Senior parliamentarian and PPP Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khachroo tabled the resolution after Speaker Syed Anis Shah suspended all other business on the agenda to discuss the resolution on the request of the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Zia Larja.

It said the house acknowledged Bhutto's first national role in shaping Pakistan's history, notably in establishing the country's nuclear programme, promoting socio-economic development and introducing its first constitution of 1973.

"Shedeed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's unwavering dedication to democracy and parliamentary

supremacy continues to inspire generation of Pakistanis. His selfless efforts to support Pakistan during a critical period have left an indelible mark on the nation," the resolution said.

Speaking on the resolution, Mr Khachroo said that the greatest achievement of Bhutto was giving the country a unified constitution.

The PPP MPA, who is also chairman of the assembly's Public Account Committee, said that it was also necessary to implement the Constitution that the nation was proud of. "After the Constitution was made, we were able to show our face to the world," he said.

He said that Anis Zardari, Faryal Talpur and other party

Continued on Page 14

SHC issues notice on plea challenging judges' appointment rules

Judges' nominations must come only from judicial members of JCP to protect public trust in judiciary, bench told

By Sumair Abdullah

KARACHI: A division bench of the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Monday issued a notice to the deputy attorney general in a petition challenging the rules for appointing judges in the superior courts.

The petition was filed by lawyer Maham Ali, through his

counsel Ibrahim Rafiquddin, before a regular bench of the SHC, seeking to declare Rule 5(1), related to nominations for appointment, and Rule 10 (5), which states that the Secretariat shall not include the names of the members proposing the nominations in the two consolidated lists of nominees for the commission's consideration, under the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (Appointment of Judges) Rules, 2024, as unconstitutional.

After the preliminary hearing, the division bench headed by Justice Zafar Ahmed Rajput put the deputy attorney general on notice for Jan 22.

The counsel for the petitioner submitted that on Dec 12, 2024, the Judicial Commission of

Pakistan (JCP) approved the rules in a meeting. He stated that Rule 5(1) allowed any member of the JCP to nominate a candidate for appointment as a judge in the superior courts.

Referring to the composition of the JCP before and after the 29th Amendment to the Constitution, the counsel argued that the executive, having a majority, could vote for its 'favoured nominees' and appoint them as judges of the superior courts.

Regarding the composition of the names of members who make nominations under Rule 10 (5), the counsel argued that it was an attempt to hide from the public at large whether a nominee was put forward by the executive or a judicial member.

"The mode and manner for the appointment of judges must be transparent, which is an established principle," the petitioner stated.

The counsel asked the court to declare Rule 5(1) and Rule 10 (5) of the judges' appointment rules as ultra vires, arbitrary and unconstitutional on the grounds that granting the executive the authority to make nominations in the JCP could lead to the appointment of individuals who shared allegedly close ties with the executive and were more inclined to cooperate with them.

The counsel pointed out that nominations must come exclusively from the JCP's judicial members to protect public trust and confidence in the judiciary.

PAC summons Wapda chief over stopped RBOD-II work

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: Taking notice of the halted work on the 273-km-long Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD-II) project, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Sindh Assembly on Monday summoned the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) chairman and other officials to explain delay in the key scheme.

PAC chairman Nisar Khushro while presiding over a meeting here also directed the provincial irrigation department to immediately take up the funding and technical matters with Wapda and the federal government to resume the work on the RBOD project.

The PAC formed a committee, comprising officers of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), irrigation department and revenue department, regarding the handover of the records of the RBOD project, which is in the NAB custody.

The committee was asked to receive the records from the NAB and submit a report within 15 days.

The meeting was attended by committee members Qasim Bin Qasim, Khuram Karim Soomro and Mahdood Fakhru Zaman.

NAB Director Abdul Hakeem Siddiqui, Irrigation Secretary Zaid Khoro, Finance Secretary Faryal Jatoi and Senior Member Board of Revenue Haqaulah Umar briefed the PAC about the RBOD project.

The committee was formed after the NAB director told the PAC that the NAB had handed over the records regarding the purchase of land to the revenue officers of Thatta and Jamshoro on Jan 2.

However, the deputy commissioners of Jamshoro and Thatta said that they had not received any record from the NAB.

Mercury drops to 7.9°C in city

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The cold wave turned a bit intense late Sunday night as the mercury dropped to 7.9 degrees Celsius in parts of the city under the influence of a westerly wave.

The Met department's data released on Monday showed that while the city's average minimum temperature recorded was 9°C, mercury dropped to 7.9°C at the Airport area, followed by 10.4°C in Gujistan-I-Jauhar, 11°C in Marigat, 11.3°C in Bin Qasim and 11.5°C on Sharada Faist.

The maximum temperature recorded was 26.5°C. Humidity levels were 63 per cent and 13pc in the morning and evening, respectively.

The minimum temperature is expected to range between 7°C to 9°C on Tuesday night.

According to the department's daily advisory, cold/dry cold and dry weather is likely to continue in the province with fog in the districts of upper and central Sindh during night/morning.

The lowest temperature recorded in Mithi, Sukkur and Mohenjo Daro was 4°C.

WWF mission gives fisherfolk vision to save blind Indus dolphins

Under fund's programme, volunteers educate fishermen about steps to ensure safety of the mammal

By Shazia Hussain

SUKKUR: Quite unlike other dolphins, the Indus river dolphin is a unique species. When coming into the Karachi harbour, people in boats are often pleasantly surprised to find friendly and happy dolphins chasing their vessels as they leap and dance. In contrast the blind and smaller in size Indus dolphin is cautious and quiet.

Guarded in nature, these mammals in the river, seem to know themselves about the dangers around them, which have made them an endangered species. Your boat in the river may be surrounded by several blind dolphins but you only get to see a grey hump disappearing into the water, that too if you are lucky and alert. Still, the small ripples, which

they make as they come out to breathe, carry big effects.

Shir Muhammad is a local community volunteer, working along the river banks. The volunteers, identifiable by their blue badges and caps with the printed message 'Baitan In Action', are part of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, Pakistan's (WWF-Pakistan) programme to empower communities and protect biodiversity.

"Baitan is the local word for the Indus dolphin. "When fishermen spread out their nets to catch fish in the river, we ask them to first make sure there are no dolphins getting caught in them," Shir Muhammad told them. "If they find any dolphins, they are to immediately loose their nets to help them escape," he explains.

Asked if the dolphins understand enough to move out of the net, Shir Muhammad smiled. "They are very smart creatures. They can't see but they can hear, which helps them know and understand all dangers," he added.

"Also, our looking out for them day and night here has helped in increasing their dwindling population," he

said. "Earlier, people used to catch them and kill them to extract oil. We had that practice stopped by spreading awareness that the oil had no medicinal value. It is plain fat," he added.

"The Indus dolphin is my bahti (bestie)," said Najma Khatoon, also a WWF volunteer. "Since our telling people about the endangered creatures, things here have changed so much that if a dolphin gets stuck in a net by mistake, the fishermen themselves cut their nets to help it escape," said Najma.

Apart from explaining to the locals about the importance of saving the dolphins, the programme is also helping them sustain their own livelihoods through other means than fishing. The women have been shown how they can grow vegetables through kitchen gardening. "That way they can use the vegetables they grow in their own cooking and also sell the extras in their village to make a little money," said Haseena Tahirani, a community facilitator for the WWF.

Meanwhile, Taseed Ghani Mahomed, manager, Food and Agriculture Programme for WWF-

Pakistan, said that there are many things aligned with the Indus dolphins. "When a species here is not doing well and is endangered, it also points to river health and environmental degradation. That's when conservation of the environment becomes necessary. You need to act to save your planet," he pointed out.

It was explained how in the last 50 years or so, while building a concrete jungle we started killing the real jungle. We have unfortunately lost 73 per cent of our biodiversity, which is apparent with the disappearance of so many plants, insects and animals and the increased frequency of natural disasters.

Muhammad Imran Malik, coordinator conservation for WWF-Pakistan, said that there are some 2,000 dolphins, of six species, from Jinnah to Sukkur Barrage. While pointing out the many reasons behind the high mortality rate of the dolphins, the biggest of which was entanglement in fishing nets and getting stuck in canals, he said that saving wildlife not just needs patience, but also funding.

He mentioned some of the programmes for the same such as the



COMMUNITY member for WWF Haseena Tahirani (left in pink scarf) and community volunteer Najma Khatoon (in white), along with other volunteers, discuss how they have helped improve the dwindling population of the Indus dolphins through their work along the banks of the Indus. —Photo by the writer

'Shoolan Doot Programme for Community Engagement', which engages around 200 fisherfolk for dolphin sighting and threats related data collection and 'Youth Engagement Stewardship', which establishes nature clubs in schools for student education and develops awareness toolkits with interactive

games for engaging children. Besides, there are also capacity building programmes where community members are trained as eco-guardians for dolphin watch boat safaris. Fishing boats have also been converted to eco-tourism boats with joint branding of WWF-Pakistan and Bank Al Habib for this purpose.

MoU signed
for setting up
new research
lab at KU

days from the date of notice, failing which any claim or objection shall be deemed to have been waived and the transaction of the said property shall be considered as those of an absolute sale.

GDA leader granted bail

By Our Correspondent

LARKANA: The district and sessions judge on Monday granted interim bail to former GDA MPA Mouazzim Ali Abbasi against a surety of Rs60,000 in a case registered against him, his son and others at Civil police station.

The application for bail confirmation would now be heard on Jan 13, according to Advocate Javed Buledi, counsel for the former MPA.

Abbasi told media persons in a brief talk at the court that the FIR was merely a tool of political victimisation. Abdul Ahad Magri, who was nominated in the FIR, had voluntarily surrendered but police were not producing him in the court and were still unnecessarily pressurising his father, he said.

He appealed to Chief Justice of Sindh High Court, judges of Sindh circuit court Larkana, Sindh chief minister and KGP Sindh to intervene and ensure Magri was produced in court for removal in accordance with law.

However, efforts of PPP MPA Saeed Khan Chaudhri, chairman of Chaudhri clan, and Maulana Hashid Mahmood Soomro bore fruit in the shape of a settlement, he said.

Mouazzim Abbasi was accompanied by GDA general secretary Dr Saeed Abbasi, of JUI-F Sindh chapter general secretary Maulana Hashid Mahmood Soomro, Jassy Sindh Mahaz-Riaz chairman Riaz Chaudhri and others.

Inquiry into rift between former Sukkur DIG and Ghotki SSP completed

By Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: The inquiry team formed by Sindh Inspector General of Police Ghulam Nabi Memon on last year's serious rift between the Sukkur DIG and Ghotki SSP has submitted its findings to KGP with members of the team having different viewpoints.

The KGP said that competent authority would look into it to proceed with the recommendations as per law.

The inquiry was instituted in October 2024 following the October 16 letter addressed by DIG Pte Mohammad Shah to the KGP and somehow leaked to the media. The leak exposed the harassment of Ghotki SSP Dr Hafiz Bagti against the DIG.

The DIG had accused the SSP of "breeding a dangerous and unprofessional path" by engaging with notorious criminals involved in multiple business activities, including killing of policemen, kidnapping for ransom and looting police weapons.

SSP Bagti had shared his views with the media against DIG Shah over a letter after SIO Shadman Lakho's arrest while also accusing Hyderabad DIG Tariq Raza Durrani for pressuring him to release Lakho in the wake of the October 14 killing of an alleged dacoit, Umar Shah along with Ali Mohammad Shah, a cousin of former PTI MPA Shaharyar Shah. Shaharyar had remained unhurt.

The KGP removed the two officers following the controversy and formed the team to probe the whole episode. Since

then the two officers were posted in Central Police Office (CPO) Karachi. The inquiry team had submitted its findings last month but the KGP returned it with the observations that it was not drafted in line with the relevant terms of references (ToRs).

The committee consisted of Insan Yaqoob Minhas, Additional IGP Counterterrorism Department, as its chairman, Amir Farooqi, DIG Crime & Investigation Sindh, and Tanveer Alam Odho, DIG Finance, as members.

It was asked to inquire into the contents of the DIG's letter against the SSP, to inquire into allegations levelled by SSP in the media, to ascertain conduct of the DIG and SSP in the aftermath of incident of firing on ex-MPA Shaharyar Shah, to ascertain working relationship

and differences between the DIG and SSP regarding ongoing anti-dacoit operation in Ghotki.

Source privy to the probes confided to Dawn that Minhas and Farooqi had found fault on both officers' ends as far as 'official line of police professional working' was concerned whereas DIG Odho had mostly talked about uncalled for conduct of SSP Bagti.

When contacted, both DIG Pte Mohammad Shah and SSP Bagti declined to offer any comment saying that they were restrained by the hierarchy from discussing anything in the media. The officers have given their viewpoints before the inquiry team, and Dawn has learnt that the two officers were heard in person jointly for well over two hours.

Shirazis stay away from ZAB birth anniversary event

By Ghulam Hussain Khwaja

THATTA: Consistent

absence of influential Shirazi group from a large gathering held to mark the 95th birth anniversary of Zafar Ali Bhutto in Durrani, Rajawal district, on Monday laid bare internal rifts within the Pakistan Peoples Party's chapters of Thatta and Rajawal districts.

Former PPP MNA Arbab Wazir Memon, who organised the event in collaboration with Shirazi group's rival factions within the party, said in a fiery speech there was "no Pte, Mir,

Wadera or Syed in the PPP, we are all equal as party workers and committed to the vision of Z.A. Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto".

Memon reaffirmed the party's trust in the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and strongly defended Ashiq Hussain Zardari, son of current PPP MPA, from Thatta's coastal constituency Haji Ali Hassan Zardari, and said Ashiq Zardari's critics must recognise his deep-rooted presence in the politics of lower Sindh.

A large number of development projects had been spearheaded by Haji Ali Hassan Zardari in the area, he said. The Shirazi brothers had been

long opponents of PPP in past, especially during military rule of Gen Pervez Musharraf, but they jumped the ship ahead of 2018 general election and joined the PPP, securing afterwards notable victories in 2018 and 2024 general elections as well as 2023 local body polls.

Supporters of the Shirazi group accused Memon and provincial minister Muhammad Ali Malikani of trying to undermine Shirazis in order to bolster political prospects of Ashiq Ali Zardari.

They alleged that attempts were being made to damage ties between mainstream PPP leadership and Shirazi group, which

contradicted core democratic principles of the party.

Good Agar Shah Shirazi, PPP MNA from Rajawal district, dismissed the attempts to marginalise his group and said "We are not intimidated by such tactics and will continue to serve people."

He accused local PPP leadership of pursuing personal ambitions by trying to stifle and limit Shirazi group's influence.

In his address, Memon hinted at past rivalries, remarking that many former opponents of Haji Ali Hassan Zardari now stood by him as his allies. "People vote for the party of Z.A. Bhutto, not for any feudal or spiritual leader," he

asserted.

The event also witnessed speeches by Deputy Speaker of Sindh Assembly Rehman Laghari, provincial minister and district president of PPP Rajawal Muhammad Ali Malikani, chairman of district council Danish Malikani, PPP Thatta general secretary Insan Qureshi, former MPA Ghulam Qadir Palijo, River Sindh, Iqbal Memon and Ashiq Zardari.

The change in political dynamics signals potential shifts within PPP's Thatta-Rajawal chapters, with new alliances and rivalries likely to shape the party's future in the coastal region.

Dr Kunbhar's family expresses 'no trust' in police probe

UMERKOT: The family of Dr Shahmawar Kunbhar, who was killed in police custody on Sept 19 last year, has demanded a transparent judicial investigation into his death amid violent reaction from several religious entities and burning of his body by charged extremists.

The demand was made before a delegation comprising activists of different civil society organisations that visit of the bereaved family's home in Jafferia village of Umerkot district on Monday.

Headed by leaders of the Sindh Association of North America (SANA), the delegation comprised Dr Ejaz Turk, Tahira Abdullah, Jami Chaudhri, Amar Sindhia and other civil society activists.

Bereaved Kunbhar, speaking on behalf of his family, told the visiting activists that the bereaved did not have trust in the ongoing police investigation. He said that it must be conducted under a sitting judge of the Sindh High Court.

He also alleged that the CCTV camera footage of Dr Kunbhar's arrest in Karachi and all other related happenings in Mirpurkhas, Umerkot and other places were destroyed. The aim was to save the police officers and other people involved in the whole episode from being taken to task, he said.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Sindh government had recommended a judicial probe by the SITC way back on October 16 last year but no headway has been seen since then.—Correspondent

Goods transport strike hits Larkana

LARKANA: Goods transport operators observed a strike in Larkana on Monday against imposition of a ban on the entry of their trucks and other heavy vehicles into the city.

Condemning the ban that resulted in losses to them and disruption in bringing in supplies from all other parts of the country, they held a demonstration at the main office of city's truck stand.

Leaders of the Goods Transport Owners Association, speaking to the media, demanded free movement of the vehicles as per the decision taken by the civil administration in 1998.

Haji Momtaz Ali Sarhio, the

patron-in-chief of the association, explained the adverse effects of the new ban.

The leaders pointed out that over 400 daily wage earners engaged in loading and unloading of goods were suffering due to the ban. The goods arriving here from different parts of the country also could not be delivered to the consignees, they added.

They said that the piling up of loaded goods would undermine the trade and commercial activities and labourers' livelihood.

They said a religious party was opposing the presence of trucks' shops in the area on the "harm excuse" that frequent and

unlawful movement of heavy vehicles was causing traffic snags.

They attributed the move to lack of efficiency of the police.

It is learnt that the Larkana Assistant Commissioner, Raja Khan Qureshi, realising gravity of the situation, convened a meeting in his office on Monday evening to sort out the issue.

Secretary Regional Transport Authority Ajaz Ali Sarhio, DSP Paraz Bakhtani, mukhtarkar and senior traffic police officers attended the meeting.

The transport secretary pointed towards the traffic congestion and said that heavy vehicles were problematic.—Correspondent

TENDER NOTICE

The Director General Health Services invites bids from eligible bidders for supply of following items. TSE-242512615011 Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements at GDS Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, it is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of SPPRA/GDS.

S.No.	Class of Object	Bid Security
1	Medical Equipment and Accessories (Total Items/Count: 37)	2%

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 1. Assignments of similar nature and complexity 45,000,000 in Previous 2 years Turn over of at least 80,000,000 PKR in 2 Subsequent Previous Years. Presence in Active Tax Payable List Sales Tax Certificate The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. JV is not permissible. Submission of the required Bid Security in case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be declared as ineligible and non-responsive. Submission of the required Bidding document Fee. The Bidder must have functional corporate office in Quetta. Manufacturer must be registered at FBR as Manufacturer / Manufacturing (for Hospital Furniture & Instruments) and ISO Certification 9001 / 13045 An affidavit of PKR: 100/- from Bidder having following undertaking: a) Bid Validity Certificate (90 Days) b) Delivery Period Compliance (90 Days) c) Non-Black Listing d) Price Reasonability e) Compliance of warranty period. f) Agreement with all terms & conditions g) Agreement of operations of plant during the warranty period. Provision of Sample for Local Manufacturer's items within defined time frame (only from eligible bidders). The bidder must be submit delivery compliance certificate i) undertaking to supply the goods to the concerned health facility throughout Balochistan as mentioned District (Quetta, Awaran, Pishin, Pungur, Dera Bugti, Musa Khail, Zibo, Waziristan, Gila Bata, Turbat, Khat, Mandera, Khuzdar etc. Affidavit on stamp paper of Rs. 100/- duly attested to the effect that the bidder has submitted the correct and complete information along with the bid/offer. If any document / information is found forged / engineered / fake / bogus at any stage, the bidder may be declared as blacklisted in accordance with law and the performance guarantee and payment, if any, may be forfeited. Exclusive Authorization / Sole Agent Certificate by the Manufacturer / Endorsement for Sub-distribution by the Manufacturer as distributor for Balochistan. Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Deposit at Call of 2 % specified above in the name of the undersigned from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The MS & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.sppra.gov.pk. Issuance of tender Documents: Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.sppra.gov.pk. Last Date of bid submission: Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 21 January, 2025 10:45 AM through supplier dashboard. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 11:45 AM in EPPS System. Address: DG Health Services Quetta. Phone no: 0910211340 Email: dghs@balochistan.gov.pk

DIRECTOR GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES BALUCHISTAN

PRQ No. 270058-1-2025

FOREVER LOVED - FOREVER MISSED

SYED NAZRUL HASHAM NAQVI
(March 5, 1948 - January 5, 2025)

ذکرِ بے غم نہ ہو کہیں یہ کہنے کی
کہ جس نے کبھی یہ جانے نہ دیا کہ

Please visit Sarah Fatima

SHAHEED BENAZIR BHUTTO
University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Sakrand.
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Tel: 0244-323151, 0244-322154, Email: info@sbbuas.edu.pk

No. A Date: SBBU/VAS/NIT/OW/LE/C/1/2025 & 03/01/2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through EPADS)
TENDER: SBBU/VAS/NIT/OW/LE/C/1/2025 & 03/01/2025

All eligible Contractors, Firms, Suppliers, Manufacturers and Sole Distributors meeting the eligibility criteria are invited to participate online/electronically through EPADS System for percentage/term rate tenders for the following works. Manual bids will not be considered. The eligibility criteria include registration with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for Income Tax and Sales Tax (in the case of procurement of goods), registration with the Sindh Revenue Board (SRB) for procurement of works and services, and undertaking that the firm is not blacklisted by any procuring agency or authority.

Sr #	Name of Work	Tender Fee	Completion Time	Earnest Money	Date of Purchase	Date of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
1	Supply and Installation of Laboratory Equipment at SBBU/VAS Sakrand	5,000	03 Months	05 %	08-01-2025 to 22-01-2025	23-01-2025 Up to 11:00 AM	23-01-2025 Up to 11:45 AM
2	Supply and Installation of Desktop Computers with All Accessories at SBBU/VAS Sakrand	3,000	03 Months	05 %	08-01-2025 to 22-01-2025	23-01-2025 Up to 12:00 noon	23-01-2025 Up to 12:30 noon

The Terms & Conditions are given as under:-

- The tender documents can be obtained through the SPPRA EPADS platform, as per the schedule, mentioned above from the website, <https://portal.sindh.gov.pk> and the University's website, www.sbbuas.edu.pk, upon payment of the Non-refundable fee specified above via Pay Order or Demand Draft, in favor of SBBU/VAS, Sakrand. The online tenders must be submitted on the prescribed platform to the aforementioned EPADS website, along with the Earnest Money (as specified above) based on the total Bid amount, in the form of a Pay Order in favour of SBBU/VAS, Sakrand.
- The Method of Procurement is "Single Stage - Two Envelope" procedure.
- Any conditional or un-attached of the Bid Security with financial proposal, partial and incomplete bids will not be considered.
- Bid validity Period: 90 days, as per SPPRA.
- The Bidder should have the Valid Registration with Chamber of Commerce License (if applicable).

The Procuring Agency reserves the right to reject any or all bids subject to relevant provisions of SPP Rules-2010 (Amended) 2018 and may cancel the bidding process at any time, prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal under Rule-25 of said Rules.

DIRECTOR WORKS
Shaheed Benazir Bhutto
University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Sakrand Tel: 0244-323151, 0244-322154 Email: info@sbbuas.edu.pk

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

(Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed, to Him we return.)

It is with deep sorrow yet complete submission to the will of Allah (SWT) that we announce the passing of our beloved

ZOHRA ANVERALI RAJPAR

Daughter of Mr. Anverali M. Rajpar and Sister of Mr. Mohammed A. Rajpar, in Dubai on Sunday, 5th January 2025. She has returned to her Creator and is now reunited with her dear mother in the eternal realms.

We humbly request all her loved ones and well-wishers to remember her in your prayers and supplications, asking Allah (SWT) to grant her the highest place in Jannah and ease her journey into the hereafter.

The funeral is scheduled for Tuesday, 7th January 2025, at 4:00 PM (Dubai Time) at Jafferiya Cemetery (Main), Dubai.

Details regarding the arrangements for offering condolences in Karachi will be announced soon.

BEREAVED

Anverali M. Rajpar
Yasmeen & Mohammed A. Rajpar
Arifa & Moonaver Dhanani
Ali Rajpar & Ayla Rajpar
Shafina & Muslim Jaffer
Reshma Rajpar & Mehreen Rajpar
All Members of Rajpar, Merali & Dhanani Families

Email : condolences@gsa.com.pk

SUDOKU ALPHA

QUICK

A4935

TRICKY

B4935

	9							
7		8				5	3	6
1			4			6		
				2	3		8	9
		6			8			7
	1	7					6	4
6				3				1
3	4	9	6					

6			2			5		
			6				9	
8		5			3	2		
		3	5	4				
			9		6		7	
							8	1
2			1	7				3
7	6					9		6

To solve this puzzle each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9. While the rules may be simple, there are numerous strategies to help you solve sudoku. For hints and information visit www.sudoku.org.uk.

Credited by Peter Rimmer (C) PZL.com

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

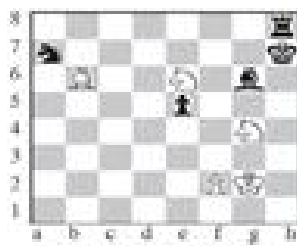
- 2 Nonsense (8)
9 Creature (6)
10 Sheet of glass (4)
11 Long story (4)
13 Suggest (5)
14 Luff under (imag.) (9)
16 Jewish minister (5)
19 Woodwind instrument (4)
20 Declare (4)
21 Stern (8)
22 Keep for later (3,5)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9							
10					11		
		12			13		
14					15		
16		17			18		
19					20		
			21				
22							

DOWN

- 1 Experiencing ecstatic joy (9)
3 Passenger ship (5)
4 End of a prayer (4)
5 Peace-lovers (8)
6 Harvest (4)
7 Fisherman (5)
8 Act in a dishonest or unfair way (4,5)
12 Make possible (8)
15 Furious (5)
17 Boxing contest (4)
18 Indian garment (4)

CHESS



WHITE'S BEST MOVE?
HINT: BETTER THAN BKA7

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DAWN JOURNAL
LONDON

TARGET

I	X	E
D	M	R
A	Y	T

HOW many words of four letters or more can you make from the letters shown here? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each must contain the same letter and there must be at least one more letter word. No plurals or verb forms ending in "s".

TODAY'S TARGET

Good 34;
Very good 61;
Excellent 88 (or more).
Solution tomorrow

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS

QUOTIDIAN

anti audit audition aunt auto descent diet donut idot into lots quaint quest quiet quinda quif quon quoda QUOTIDIAN load lura unit unto

HELP

EMERGENCIES

Police Help	15 999/9999/99 999999
OPIC	102 999999
Fire Brigade	15 999999/999999
Boat Disposal	999999
Oil Complaints	102
Telephone complaints	102
Railway Enquiry	999999-40
NSM Night Enquiry	999999/999999
	999999/99

HOSPITALS

Alford Medical	999999-02
Out Hospital	999999/999999
Joseph Hospital	999999-999999
MCVD	999999-0
Agri-Hospital	999999
Windsor Hospital	999999-02
India Hospital	999999
Talbot	999999/999999
Davidson Hospital	999999/999999
Ston Cancer Hospital	999999-02
Unipol Medical	01-455-455/999999
Marion Medical	999999-02
A.O. Clinic	999999/999999-02
Royal Hospital	999999/999999
St. Mary's Hospital	999999/999999
Paul Hospital	999999
South City Hospital	999999
Kidney Cancer Institute	999999-02
Kennedy Hospital	999999/999999
Walter Memorial	999999/999999

AMBULANCE

Eds	102 999999/999999
Onions	102
St. Mary's	102
St. John's	999999/999999
Red Crescent	999999/999999

BLOOD BANK

Eds	999999/999999
Eds	999999-02
Eds (Eds)	999999/999999

WORD GAME

By Matthew Davis

TODAY'S WORD TREFOIL

(TREFOIL, TREFOIL, TREFOIL. A game that has three leaves.)

Average mark 44 words
Time limit 60 minutes

Can you find 52 or more words in TREFOIL?

The list will be published tomorrow.

SOLUTIONS

YESTERDAY'S WORD —

PALTER

pale	plate	tape
paler	plike	tapet
pale	pleat	late
part	prate	tap
pate	start	teal
peal	alter	teal
pear	aper	trap
pearl	aper	teal
peal	late	rate
peal	late	rate
peal	late	rate
peal	late	rate
peal	late	rate
peal	late	rate

RULES OF THE GAME:

- Words must be of four or more letters.
- Words that require four letters by the addition of "x" such as "bax" or "dax" are not allowed.
- Additional words made by adding a "t" or an "x" may not be used. For example, if "bake" is used, "baked" or "baker" are not allowed, but "bake" and "baking" are acceptable.
- Proper nouns, slang words, or vulgar or sexually explicit words are not allowed.

YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

ACROSS

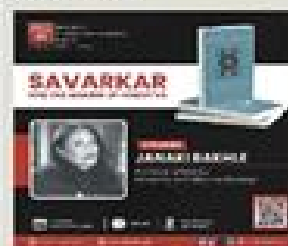
Feedline	Feedline
Ordnal	Ordnal
Feedline	Feedline
Four	Four
Age	Age
Lineage	Lineage
Web	Web
Rest	Rest
Transfer	Transfer
Excess	Excess
Housework	Housework

DOWN

Fortwith	Fortwith
Arms	Arms
Loans	Loans
Boogerline	Boogerline
Eat	Eat
Range	Range
Swart-talk	Swart-talk
Maroon	Maroon
Let go	Let go
Reve	Reve
Excess	Excess

METRO EVENTS

LECTURE



A lecture on 'Savarkar and the Making of Hindutva' by Professor Janaki Savarkar from UG Bunkley, is being held at RMA, City Campus, at 5pm.

MEETING

A meet & greet event with fashion designer Mahmood Dhadi is being held at Arts Council of Pakistan, at 4.30pm.

EXHIBITIONS

A solo show of Barkha Wages Khan opens at Canvas Gallery at 4pm. The show titled 'The Radiant Star' will remain open till Jan 16, daily from 11am to 7pm (Excluding Sunday).

Life reimagined opens at Art Chowk Gallery at 4pm. The show will remain open till Jan 16, daily from 11am to 6pm.

DISCUSSION

A panel discussion 'Navigating a Career in Pakistan' is being held at the auditorium Block B, Iqbal University, North campus, at 3pm.

HOROSCOPE

By Georges Nivens

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

*** You will need to be patient today, especially if you have difficulty dealing with your kids or a romantic partner. Power struggles are likely. In fact, later in the day, power struggles about money or something that you own also might arise. Keep your head down and your powder dry. Tonight: Money discussions.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

*** This afternoon the Moon moves into your sign, which gives you a little edge over all the other signs — a little bit of luck. Nevertheless, power struggles with parents and authority figures are likely. Therefore, give these people a wide berth. Don't even go there. Tonight: You win!

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

*** Money squabbles with a friend or a group might occur today. Whatever happens might make you feel disgruntled in a quiet way. You feel you can't speak up now, but your disappointment is still there, simmering beneath the surface of things. Hey, this is gone by tomorrow. Relax. Tonight: Enjoy solitude.

CANCER (June 21-July 20)

*** Conversations with bosses, parents and authority figures are difficult, especially this morning. As the day wears on, it doesn't get easier, because power struggles with friends and members of groups might occur in the afternoon. Is there no mercy? Tonight: Enjoy friends.

LEO (July 21-Aug. 22)

*** Avoid pointless arguments or debates about politics and religion today. They will resolve nothing. In the afternoon, however, power struggles with a parent or boss will also gain you nothing. Think about what your long-term objective is. Stick with that. Tonight: You're not out!

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

*** Avoid financial squabbles or discussions about different values. We all have different values in subtle or big ways, in the same way as we have different appetites for different things. Don't get hung up on this. Avoid controversial subjects today. (You'll be glad you did.) Tonight: Explore!

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

*** Today you might find yourself at odds with partners, close friends, parents and bosses, especially this morning. Try not to get involved. Ironically, later in the day, you also might be at odds with kids about finances or how to share or divide something. This is a challenging day! Tonight: Check your finances.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

*** Take the high road at work this morning if you have difficulty with someone, especially someone from another culture or country. Everyone is having communication difficulties this morning. Ironically, this afternoon, partners and close friends might disagree with you. "What?" It's the truth. Tonight: Listen.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

*** Financial disputes or disputes about who is responsible for what might occur today, especially related to your kids. Possibly these disputes will arise with a romantic partner. Later in the day, work squabbles, which are really power struggles, also might occur. Run away! Tonight: Get organized.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

*** Do what you can to keep the peace at home this morning, because family squabbles can ruin everyone's day. Ironically, in the afternoon, powerful exchanges with your kids or a romantic partner might be challenging as well. It's one of those days. We all have them. Tonight: Socialize.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

*** Pay attention to everything you say and do today, because this is a mildly accident-prone day for you. An accident doesn't have to happen, but you could be distracted because of an argument or angry feelings. Later in the day, family power struggles might take place. (Yikes!) Tonight: Relax.

PISCES (Feb. 19-Mar. 20)

*** Do what you can to keep the peace when dealing with your kids today. Oho! For important discussions with romantic partners. Perhaps disgruntled feelings are what leads to difficulties when dealing with daily contacts later this afternoon. All of this is temporary. This angel is gone by tomorrow. Relax. Tonight: Chatty conversations.

Illustration: David H. Smith. Art: David H. Smith. Art: David H. Smith. Art: David H. Smith.

CONTRACT BRIDGE

Bidding Quiz

By Steve Becker

Look before you leap!

West dealer.			
North-South vulnerable.			
NORTH			
♠ A 9 5			
♥ K Q 10 6			
♦ Q J 8 4			
♣ K 3			
WEST			
♠ J 3 2			
♥ A 5 3			
♦ A 7			
♣ A J 9 8 2			
EAST			
♠ 10 8 7 6 4			
♥ 9 7 4			
♦ 6 5 2			
♣ 6 0			
SOUTH			
♠ K Q			
♥ J 8 2			
♦ K 10 9 5			
♣ Q 10 7 4			

The bidding:
West North East South
1 ♠ Dble Pass 2 NT
Pass 3 NT
Opening lead — five of clubs.
Humans are creatures of habit — and it would be hard to find a bridge player to shun this generally does not apply.
Consider this case where West leads a club against three no-trump. Declarer follows low from dummy, winning East's eight with the ten, and returns a low diamond.
West alertly steps up with the ace of diamonds and plays the ace of clubs followed by the jack. South wins with the queen, but the best he can now do is to

cash three spades and three diamonds and go down one. West scores the last three tricks with the ace of hearts and 9-2 of clubs.
The outcome seems normal, with South appearing to have blown off a 54 more than he can chew. But the fact is that South should have made the contract, and the reason he didn't was that he made a critical error at trick one. Instead of playing the three of clubs from dummy — from force of habit — he should have played the king!
Had South done that, nothing could have stopped him from making at least three no-trump after leading a diamond from dummy at trick two. If West won and persisted with clubs, declarer would score three club tricks instead of only two and would wind up with 10 tricks.
The "tree" club finesse South gets at trick one by playing low from dummy is a snare and a delusion. South should realize that West must have all three missing aces for his opening bid, so that nothing can be gained — but much can be lost — by playing the three of clubs from dummy instead of the king.
The deal provides an excellent example of the principle that no play, however automatic it might seem, should be made before considering its effect upon the hand as a whole. The first priority is to look before you leap.
Tomorrow: It isn't over till it's over.

YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

Quick — A4934

Tricky — B4934

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5	8	4	9	1	2	6	7	3
9	1	6	7	8	2	3	4	5
2	4	3	5	1	8	1	6	9
1	8	7	2	6	9	4	5	3
8	9	6	4	1	2	2	2	2
4	7	1	8	2	3	6	5	9
6	2	5	9	4	7	3	1	8
3	5	8	1	6	4	9	7	2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5	7	2	9	1	6	8	4	3
9	1	6	7	8	2	3	4	5
7	3	4	2	8	1	5	9	6
1	8	9	5	4	7	3	2	6
6	2	5	1	2	4	4	4	2
8	1	6	3	5	4	7	2	9
4	5	2	7	2	6	1	8	3
3	5	7	6	1	5	9	4	2

ISLAMABAD

Sunset 05:18pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 07:10am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 08°C
Maximum 20°C
Outlook Mainly Sunny

METRO North



SA sweep series despite Pakistan's improved batting show

Pg. 18 SPORT



A VIEW of snow-covered Halmat, the fourth last village in Nesham Valley, on Monday after receiving around 1.5 feet of fresh snowfall. Halmat lies in the Gurel area, which starts beyond Rai and ends at Tashraf, the last village of the valley. Residents said the main artery and link roads in Gurel were blocked due to snowfall. However, weather conditions were expected to improve this week. — Text and Photo by Tariq Nageesh

NA body orders hiring of local experts for revision of master plan

Summary moved to federal cabinet for formation of master plan commission, CDA informs committee

By Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary panel on Monday directed the Ministry of Interior to engage local experts, town planners and reputable firms for the timely finalisation of Islamabad's master plan.

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Interior met at Parliament House with Raja Khuram Shabbaz Nawaz in the chair.

The chairman of the CDA briefed the committee and said a summary had been moved to the federal cabinet for formation of the master plan commission.

The previously formed commission had directed hiring of international consultants for the revision of the master plan.

The committee expressed displeasure over hiring of international firms, considering it wastage of taxpayers' money.

The chair emphasised that the Ministry of Interior should engage local professional experts

to ensure timely completion of the master plan.

Daxiadis Associates, a Greece-based firm that prepared the master plan in 1980, had recommended its revision after every 20 years in accordance with the needs of time.

However, successive governments did not bother to make proper revision rather kept focusing on selective changes without any input from professionals, resulting into poor planning in the capital city.

So far, over 50 major changes have been made to the master plan and the incumbent government also made at least seven changes to it last month without getting any input from experts.

In the new changes, at least three sectors have been excluded from Zone I of Islamabad and made residential sectors after changing their original status of half green and half for institutions.

Meanwhile, the committee also expressed displeasure about the imposition of heavy fees on unregistered vehicles, and directed the Ministry of Interior to ensure not only the cancellation of the collected amounts to the public in line with the committee's previous recommendations.

Furthermore, the committee recommended a one-time relaxation for new registrations and a token late fee for three months.

The ministry was directed to consult the relevant departments and stakeholders to revisit the increased slabs and formulate a standardised registration fee structure.

Meanwhile, the director general FIA was directed to brief the committee on the government's current policy and strategies for addressing human trafficking cases.

The chair directed the DG chief to present a legislative draft for stricter punishments for agents involved in human trafficking and to fix responsibility on FIA officials and officers found complicit in such cases.

Meanwhile, the committee considered the 'Naturalisation (Amendment) Bill 2024' (sections 3/5, 11 & 12) and 'The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 2024' moved by Syed Nadeem Hussian, MNA, and recommended that the bills be passed by the National Assembly.

The committee also reviewed 'The Pakistan Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2024' (section 14A) (Government Bill), 'Pakistan Land Port Authority Bill 2024' and 'The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2024' (section 498 A/A) moved by MNA Sofia Saeed Shah and deferred them to the next meeting.

Steep increase in poultry rates upsets residents

By Aamir Yasin

RAWALPINDI

Residents are unhappy with the government over a steep increase in the price of chicken and eggs within one week, saying the administration had seemingly given a free hand to the poultry industry instead of regulating the prices.

The price of live chicken (kg) increased from Rs333 to Rs410 compared to last week whereas the meat is being sold at Rs597 per kg compared to Rs483/kg. People said due to high prices, chicken, as well as other types of meat, had become unaffordable.

Chicken is available at Rs490 per kg in the market while the official price is Rs410 per kg. A dozen eggs cost Rs350 compared to the official rate of Rs330 per dozen. Not just the chicken, the prices of mutton and beef are not regulated as well. Mutton is being sold at Rs2300 per kg against the official price of Rs1500 per kg and beef is being sold at Rs1400-1500 per kg against the official price of Rs800 per kg.

"Chicken meat is available for Rs500 per kg and live chicken is available at Rs490 per kg," said Naeem Ali, a visitor at Raja Bazaar.

Muhammad Khan, a government employee, said his salary was the same but the inflation was very high, making it difficult for him to make ends meet. "It is difficult to pay the utility bills, children's fees, and afford the daily kitchen budget on less salary," he said.

According to the poultry association, the spike is due to the demand and supply in light of the 'wedding season'.

"The price of chicken increased, as there was a gap in the demand and supply. In the last two months, poultry production slowed down, which affected the market," said Hamza Sarosh, an executive member of the Pakistan Poultry Association.

He said that the poultry demand increased due to the wedding season and there was less production, which drove the prices up. To question, he said there was no problem regarding the supply of chicken feed, but due to a decrease in the production of chicken, the prices had increased.

He said that the government should devise some policies to facilitate the farmers to produce more chicken, which would bring down the prices. However, he expected that the prices would not decrease in the coming days.

"Chicken meat is available for Rs500 per kg and live chicken is available at Rs490 per kg," said Naeem Ali, a visitor at Raja Bazaar.

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German diplomat found dead in Islamabad

By Munawar Azeem

ISLAMABAD: A German diplomat was found dead in Diplomatic Enclave on Monday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Thomas Jürgen Betschold, 68, second secretary at the embassy of Germany.

Police said the diplomat was found dead with his eyes, nose and mouth bleeding at his residence located in Karakoram Heights inside the high security area.

The police said the diplomat did not come to office on Monday and also did not respond to phone calls made from the embassy.

In response, the embassy sent an employee to the residence of the diplomat, who did not get any response from inside the house.

Later, officials from embassy reached the residence and broke the locks open and entered the flat without informing the police, and found him dead.

The embassy then informed the police and officials from Secretariat police station who reached the flat and shifted the body to hospital.

The police were told that the diplomat was a heart patient. It was not clear when the diplomat died. However, he had last used his Whatsapp at 7:44pm on Saturday, police said.

Spokespersons for the German diplomatic mission did not respond to Dawn's requests for comment.

NA committee for strengthening social protection system

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety on Monday stressed the need for strengthening social protection system to provide relief to poor segments of the society.

The meeting, chaired by MNA Ghulam Ali Talpur, focused on critical issues related to strengthening social protection systems in Pakistan.

The CEO of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) presented an overview of ongoing initiatives, including micro-insurance schemes for agriculture and livestock, funded through government grants.

These programmes, active in Balochistan and Sindh, support small and medium enterprises and aim to transition 24pc of BISP beneficiaries off social safety nets.

The chair directed PPAF to submit comprehensive reports, including Google Maps locations of ongoing projects, and mandated that NGOs working under PPAF should collaborate with MNAs and public representatives in their respective districts.

The committee expressed its dissatisfaction over the PPAF's briefing materials and directed them to include comprehensive details on donor agencies and address other omissions. The updates on these directives are to be presented at the next meeting.

The committee expressed concern over the absence of government audits for PPAF since 2020. The chair directed PPAF to comply with audit requirements.

Finally, the committee requested a detailed briefing from the ministry on the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) at the upcoming meeting, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening poverty alleviation and social safety initiatives across the country. — Staff Reporter

CDA takes charge of Diplomatic Shuttle Service

10 e-buses allocated by civic body to charge Rs1,000 for each trip

ISLAMABAD: The role of private contractors became a thing of the past on Monday after the Capital Development Authority (CDA) took control of a shuttle service for citizens visiting the diplomatic enclave for their visa applications.

Ten electric buses have been deployed for this service as CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Rana directed the CDA's engineering and design wings to provide the best facilities to visa applicants and upgrade facilities.

The service commenced with 10 buses and Rs1,000 will be charged for a trip. Several officials appreciated the CDA/MCI move to end the role of the contractors and endorsed this service to stop the

exploitation of citizens. "The fare should be decreased from Rs1,000, as instead of focusing on revenue generation, the CDA/MCI should focus on providing services to citizens," said an official.

It is relevant to note that private contractors, who were allowed to get Rs500 to Rs1,000 per trip, had been overcharging the passengers besides running an illegal car service, sometimes minting up to Rs20,000 per trip. Last year, a European diplomat had also informed the then CDA chairman about the overcharging issue faced by visitors to embassies.

Following the complaint, the then chairman of the CDA, Anwarul Haq, chaired a meeting and expatriated DMA officials, prompting them to issue a warning letter to the contractor on September 25.

The bus service has put an end to this practice.

Sources told Dawn that the private parties allegedly in conniv-



THE CDA has deployed 10 electric buses to transport passengers to the Diplomatic Enclave. — File photo

ance with the Directorate Municipal Administration were making all out efforts to remain in charge of the service instead of the CDA.

The said service, which transports citizens from outside the diplomatic enclave to embassies

inside the enclave, is seemingly the most expensive service across the country.

It was launched after the 9/11 attack as a security measure after the federal government banned the entry of private vehicles into the enclave.

The contract, which expired on Friday, was awarded in 2020 for Rs10.6 million per year.

According to sources, some DMA officials wanted the service to "continue" through contractors because they allegedly enjoyed a good relationship with them. Now the CDA buses will charge Rs1,000 per passenger and a computerised fare system will be in place to facilitate the citizens.

"The CDA should run this service permanently to help citizens of this service should be ended for good and visa seekers should be allowed to move freely into the diplomatic enclave of their own country," said an official. It is relevant to note that on December 27, the DMA tried to award a new contract, but at the eleventh hour, the tender was deferred and one of the DMA officials was also suspended.

Sources said that when the matter was brought to the notice of the chief commissioner, he had directed that instead of private contractors, the CDA's buses should be utilised for the services to help citizens.

On the first day of the service, the contractor's staff was still present on the site. However, DMA Director Dr Sania Pasha told Dawn that there was no role of the contractor in running this service anymore.

"Today, some of their staff members were present there to guide the DMA staff about the operations. From now on, they have nothing to do with this project. They are not even allowed to enter the premises," she said. — Kashif Abbasi

Unicef provides seven 4x4 vehicles to immunisation directorate

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Unicef has provided seven 4x4 vehicles to Federal Directorate of Immunisation (FDI) to ensure that it would get access to remote regions of Pakistan.

"Provision of 4x4 vehicles will help overcome accessability challenges in hard-to-reach areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir."

Vaccination of children is one of the top priorities of prime minister. Special Secretary Health Mirza Nasiruddin Makhdoom Ahmad said during a ceremony to hand over the vehicles.

Funded by GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, these vehicles are pivotal in expanding integrated immunisation services to Pakistan's most vulnerable populations. They aim to enhance service delivery, close immunisation gaps, and target zero-dose children in under-served regions. Unicef's support includes crafting outreach and micro-plans, supplying necessary materials, monitoring progress, and ensuring optimal use of these vehicles.

Mr Makhdoom encouraged donors and partners, GAVI and Unicef, to maintain momentum and explore new strategies for further improving immunisation coverage.

During the opening remarks, FDI Director General of Health Dr Shahana Saleem emphasised the importance of ensuring vaccines reach every child, no matter how remote their location is. She expressed her gratitude to Unicef for their unwavering support, stating, "These vehicles will strengthen our outreach capacity and help ensure that every child has equitable access to life-saving vaccines."

She stated that the government firmly believed that where children remained unvaccinated, both their lives and the health of their communities were at risk.

"This is why the FDI is relentlessly working to vaccinate every child against the 12 targeted vaccine-preventable diseases, ensuring that no community, however remote or challenging, is left behind," she said.

Highlighting Unicef's commitment Dr Gaurav Banerjee said: "We are honoured to contribute to this collective effort to serve Pakistan's underserved communities. With the support of GAVI, the government, and our partners, we are committed to building a healthier, fully immunised Pakistan."

Zafar Iqbal Chaudhry, Director Technical FDI, said it was another milestone in the ongoing efforts to strengthen Pakistan's immunisation infrastructure and achieve universal health coverage for all children.

Ministry asked to appoint PSQCA's permanent DG

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Science and Technology on Monday directed the government to appoint permanent heads of key institutions of the ministry.

The meeting was presided over by MNA Khawaja Sheraz Mahsum.

The meeting's agenda included a comprehensive briefing by the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), which reviewed the authority's past three years' performance.

The presentation highlighted PSQCA's achievements, challenges in achieving its objectives—particularly in technology, innovation, and industrial collaboration — and provided an overview of its operational setup, resource allocation, and structural challenges.

The Standing Committee on Science and Technology stressed the appointment of a permanent Director General (DG) of PSQCA as permanent leadership is critical for the efficient functioning of the authority.

The committee emphasised the need to address this issue promptly.

Furthermore, the committee expressed dissatisfaction over not appointing permanent heads in other key institutions under the ministry of science and technology.

It urged the ministry to expedite the appointment process, emphasising that improved governance and institutional performance rely on permanent leadership.

The committee also recommended that the minister of science and technology attend all future committee meetings to ensure productive discussions and meaningful outcomes.

The standing committee reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening Pakistan's science and technology sector by addressing governance challenges and ensuring effective management of related institutions.

The meeting was attended by MNAs Mohammad Afzal (via Zoom), Shahana Saleem Malik, Irfan Ali Laghari, Rameez Lal, Sher Afzal Khan, Khuram Shahzad Virk, Mian Ghous Mohammad, and Muhammad Moazzam Ali Khan, along with senior officers from the Ministry of Science and Technology and PSQCA.



AN elderly man sits in the cold along a road at Kalsoom Chowk selling balloons in Islamabad on Monday. — Photo by Mohammad Asim

Senate body concerned about pollution in Rawal Dam

Work on circuit house by Punjab govt in irrigation colony should be halted if it is against laws, says chairperson

By Bakhtawar Mian

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Subcommittee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination expressed concern about pollution in Rawal Dam and the construction of a circuit house inside the dam's irrigation colony by the Punjab government.

The committee at a meeting chaired by Shahbaz Durrani discussed environmental issues concerning Rawal Dam,

including the construction of the circuit house by the Punjab Irrigation Department and severe pollution affecting the dam's ecosystem.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the relevant government departments, including Pakistan Environment Protection Agency (Pak EPA), Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) and the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

The circuit house was constructed inside the Rawal Dam Irrigation Colony Zone 3 without permissions from Pak EPA.

The committee expressed displeasure over the performance of various departments dealing with the issue and the violation of laws, rules and procedures.

Senator Durrani said work on the house within the irrigation colony should be halted immediately if it was

being constructed in contravention of laws and regulations.

The committee also reviewed reports on water pollution levels at Rawal Dam which serve as a critical water source for Rawalpindi.

The managing director of Wasa said untreated sewage from Barrigala was being discharged directly into the dam, exacerbating water contamination. Wasa currently provides 55 million gallons of water daily to Rawalpindi, but with rampant unregulated construction the city faces a severe risk of future water shortages.

The director general of Pak EPA called attention to the lack of data regarding the types of waste entering the dam, particularly from various drains feeding into it. It was also revealed that the sewerage systems around Rawal Dam were heavily polluted and very poorly cleaned.

The meeting was told that 44pc of pollution in the dam's water was caused through Islamabad and 36pc from Punjab.

Senator Durrani underscored the importance of addressing the growing environmental crisis.

"The population around the dam is increasing exponentially. How can we continue to allow construction within a two-kilometre radius of a national park?" he asked. The committee also called for daily cleaning of the dam, and the establishment of solid waste management systems that could potentially generate income and even produce electricity.

The committee summoned data from the health department regarding water-borne diseases in the region and called on the CDA to provide a report on its waste management efforts around Rawal Dam.

ECO's cultural heritage offers foundation for regional integration: experts

Pakistan committed to ECO's vision and its role as a bridge between South and Central Asia, says PM's aide

By Nikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: With their rich cultural heritage and diversity of languages and traditions, member states of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) offer a foundation for fostering mutual understanding, regional integration and sustainable development.

This was observed by speakers at a seminar on "Fostering cultural harmony: celebrating diversity among ECO member states," organised by the ECO Cultural Institute, Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, and the Institute of

Peace and Diplomatic Studies.

They said embracing this diversity not only strengthens diplomatic and cultural ties but also paves the way for economic collaboration and social cohesion, positioning the ECO region as a global model for harmony through diversity.

The speakers underscored the vital role of cultural diversity in fostering unity and regional integration. The discussions revolved around leveraging the rich cultural tapestry of the ECO region to enhance mutual understanding, regional harmony, and shared prosperity.

Dr Farhat Asif, IPDS President, emphasised the significance of cultural diplomacy as a bridge connecting the ECO member states and highlighted Pakistan's pivotal role in promoting cultural exchange within the ECO framework, celebrating the nation's rich heritage and its commitment to fostering regional harmony.

Dr Saad Khan, ECO

Cultural Institute President, stressed the importance of preserving the region's shared cultural heritage and pointed out that ECO, as a platform, had nurtured a sense of belonging and cooperation among its member states. He urged for further investments in cultural initiatives that strengthen bonds and celebrate the unique traditions and values of the region.

Hana Ihsan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister, said cultural harmony was a cornerstone of sustainable regional integration and stressed the need for continued dialogue and collaborative efforts to protect and promote the shared heritage of the ECO member states. He also highlighted Pakistan's commitment to ECO's vision and its role as a bridge between South and Central Asia.

Dr Azeem Akhbar, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan, reflected on the historical ties between ECO member states, emphasising that

the shared cultural and historical legacy offers a strong foundation for regional solidarity.

Khaner, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, highlighted Azerbaijan's commitment to promoting cultural diplomacy within the ECO framework and stressed the importance of leveraging the region's cultural wealth as a tool for peacebuilding and fostering sustainable development.

Dr Eynulla Madatli, Executive Director, Institute of Philosophy, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences and former ambassador of Azerbaijan, said interplay between cultural heritage and regional stability is an important aspect, and underscored the need to protect intangible cultural heritage. Nurlan Senagulov, Deputy Head of Mission at the embassy of Kazakhstan, focused on Kazakhstan's efforts in promoting cultural initiatives that highlight the region's diversity. Maple Meskhi, Cultural

Counsellor at the embassy of Iran, spoke about the deep historical and cultural connections between Iran and the ECO member states and emphasised the unifying power of art, particularly calligraphy, as a medium to foster dialogue and understanding across cultural boundaries.

Dr Samina Yasmeen Amin, Chairperson of the Department of Pakistan Studies at AIOL, offered a scholarly analysis of the role of education in promoting cultural understanding and highlighted the need for incorporating cultural studies into academic curricula to nurture a sense of shared identity among future generations of the ECO region.

Mirzaei Rahmonov, Senior Researcher at the Institute of Asian and European Studies, Tajikistan National Academy of Sciences, shared insights on Tajikistan's cultural contributions and the importance of preserving historical artifacts and traditions as a legacy for future generations.



A MAN displays handmade baskets on motorcycles along School Road in Islamabad's F-7 sector. — White Star

Pak-US ties still relevant for regional peace: speakers

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The participants at a roundtable on Monday highlighted the enduring and dynamic relationship between Pakistan and the US and pointed out its strong future potential.

The discussions underscored the continuing relevance of Pak-US partnership for regional peace, stability and security.

NUSI Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS) organised a keynote address on "Pak-US relations" by Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Mirwan Saad Sheikh.

Senator NUSI Dr Mohammad Zahid Latif greeted the honouree guest upon arrival and briefly apprised him about the university's multidimensional knowledge capabilities.

Moderated by Dr Ashfaq Hameed Khan, DG NIPS, the session was attended by statesmen, former senior civil and military officials, veteran ambassadors, public officials, academics, think tank experts, scholars, researchers, and students.

The experts agreed that pragmatic cooperation and mutual respect are key to unlocking long-term opportunities for bilateral ties.

The deliberative exchange emphasised the importance of adopting a forward-looking and merit-based approach to further strengthening the bilateral relations.

There was a clarion call during the discussion for increased academic, think tank, S&T, and innovation-based collaborations between Pakistani and American educational and research institutions.

By leveraging knowledge diplomacy, both countries can deepen common understanding and address pressing global and regional challenges effectively.

The attendees also stressed the significance of increased Pak-US business-to-business exchanges and enhanced trade linkages.

It was agreed unanimously that greater cooperation in the sectors of agriculture, higher education, advanced ICTs, renewable energy, healthcare, and minerals would be mutually advantageous.

The discussions considered that the bilateral dialogue on regional security and stability was a positive development.

The session concluded while stressing the importance of fostering greater bilateral engagement for regional and global growth development, and prosperity.

LAHORE

Sunset 05:17 pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 07:01 am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 06.0°C
Maximum 18.0°C
Outlook Sunny

AQI

Maximum (Yesterday) 250

METRO Central



SA sweep series despite Pakistan's improved batting show

Pg.18 SPORT



GIRLS burn dry leaves and twigs in Loco Shed area to brave freezing cold. The meteorological department forecast fog in some central and south Punjab districts on Tuesday (today). — White Star

Three brothers killed in lock-up as rivals storm police station

Team formed to probe into security lapse amid reports of thin police presence

By Asif Chaudhry and Tariq Saeed

LAHORE/TORA TEK SINGH: In what appeared to be a case of a security lapse, five armed men carried out a brazen attack on a police station in Tandiwarwa, a village in Faisalabad district and allegedly killed three brothers and injured their cousin facing a murder case.

The attackers stormed the Sakhera police station by scaling the walls using a bamboo ladder, killed their rivals in lock-up within a few minutes and fled the scene without any resistance as there were only three policemen out of total 54 posted at the police station when the attack was carried out.

The police declared the incident a result of an old enmity between the two local groups of Tandiwarwa tribal-

Sakhera and Kharral — who had so far allegedly killed eight persons of each other in Tandiwarwa.

Those who lost their lives in the fresh lethal attack were identified as Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Usman and Nadeer Ali, the men belonging to Sakhera group. The injured, Muhammad Anif, was shifted to Tandiwarwa THQ hospital in a critical condition.

These were arrested for allegedly murdering three men of rival Kharral group and a case was lodged against them under 7 ATA and other business charges.

The police inquiries showed that 61 police personnel posted at the Tandiwarwa Sakhera police station had gone to their homes, leaving three suspects, who were on physical remand granted by the anti-terrorism court, almost unattended.

Sources privy to the incident declared it a case of security lapse, holding the divisional SP, DSP and other police officers responsible for the attack and killing of the suspects in custody saying the Faisalabad police high-ups had already conveyed them in writing to keep the

suspects in tight security following the old enmity between the two groups.

They said the police officers blatantly violated the instructions and left the deceased at the mercy of the three policemen.

Faisalabad Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dr Ahsan Khan told Dawn that the assailants brought a wooden ladder and went to the backside of the police station on finding the main gate closed.

He said the armed men went to the roof of the police station and then reached the corridor through the stairs where a police constable, Kaleem Shafiq, fired warning shots on finding the armed strangers.

However, the attackers opened indiscriminate fire, forcing the constable to stop firing and take shelter in a portion of the police building.

The assailants then went to the police lock-up and unleashed massive firing on their rivals, killing three of them on the spot and injuring another critically.

The attackers belonging to the Kharral group fled the scene after completing the task, the RPO said, adding that he

reached the site along with Faisalabad City Police Officer Kamran Asif soon after the attack.

To a question, he said, enmity started between Sakhera and Kharral groups for the first time when the former attacked and injured a man of the latter group in March 2023.

The attacker belonging to the Sakhera group, Muhammad Usman, was declared proclaimed offender (PO) in this case, the RPO said.

He went on saying the armed men from Kharral party avenged and allegedly murdered two men of the rival group in August 2023. A murder case was lodged against the men of the attacking group accordingly.

An litigation was ongoing, Dr Asif said, the Sakhera party carried out an armed attack in October last year and allegedly killed three men of the rival group when they were on way to the district court.

The Tandiwarwa City police lodged a murder case under 7ATA and other

Continued on Page 15

Ramzan Sugar Mills case hearing adjourned

By Our Staff reporter

LAHORE: An anti-corruption court on Monday adjourned the proceedings on the Ramzan Sugar Mills case against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza without any progress.

Judge Sardar Iqbal Dogar was scheduled to hear the case, but the hearing could not take place due to his unavailability.

Prime Minister Shehbaz was represented by his pleader Ayazur Hussain while Hamza Shehbaz once again skipped the hearing due to a back injury. His legal team submitted a request for a one-time exemption from personal appearance.

The next hearing is now scheduled for Jan 13, when the

lawyers of PM Shehbaz and Hamza would present arguments on their acquittal petitions.

On Dec 17, an accountability court transferred the Ramzan Sugar Mills reference to the anti-corruption court due to lack of jurisdiction following amendments introduced in the National Accountability Ordinance 1999.

The NAB, after the amendment, cannot prosecute an alleged offence involving money less than Rs200 million and the offence amount in the mills reference was below the minimum value.

The accountability court was informed that the NAB in its reference made a case of

Continued on Page 15

Rs100bn increase in Honhaar Scholarship funds

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has announced an increase of Rs100 billion in the amount of 'Honhaar Scholarship Programme'.

She also announced an increase of additional 20,000 'Honhaar Scholarships' from next year along with the provision of interest-free loans up to Rs30 million for new businesses and start-ups for the youth. She was speaking at the Sahasrabis Zakariya University, Multan, on Monday.

She said 100,000 vehicles would be given to students from next year along with establishing vehicle charging stations in the universities and

colleges of Punjab.

"If we look after the youth's affairs we can change the destiny of Pakistan. We will remove all obstacles in the path of the youth to ensure a better future for them. I was surprised to see young children learning Artificial Intelligence in China. We will teach our children AI, robotics and other modern IT sciences. Many market-based training programmes have also been launched for the youth. Internship programmes in agriculture, environment and other fields have been started for the students," she said.

Maryam Nawaz said the Punjab government would give loans to the children so that they did not become a burden on their parents by studying and

doing business. "We are shifting the transport culture towards vehicles so that the people of Punjab can breathe clean air. If any child remains deprived of education, I will deem it my failure. Students, especially girls, are being provided buses for their transportation. It is a matter of immense pleasure that girls are getting 40 per cent Honhaar Scholarships."

The Punjab government will introduce a laptop scheme for the children soon and the first batch of laptops has arrived, she said. "We will also give international scholarships to the youth. The Honhaar Scholarships are given 100 per cent on merit."

CM Maryam also chided the

Continued on Page 15

Killing for a 'cause': shooter does it for Umrah tickets

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Sahiwal police have arrested a young man identified as Usman, accused of killing Muhammad Riaz on Jan 1 in exchange for two Umrah tickets and a motorcycle.

A police official stated that the suspect was allegedly hired by Imtiaz, deceased's brother-in-law, over a property dispute. Imtiaz had previously transferred his house in his wife's name but demanded it back after a domestic dispute. His wife refused, stating she would consult her brother, Riaz, before making any decision.

The disagreement escalated and led to heated exchanges. Following this, Imtiaz's wife left his home and moved in with Riaz.

Imtiaz allegedly hired Usman to kill Riaz.

The police tracked the suspects using Safe City cameras and cell data records. The police arrested the shooter and are reading for the arrest of the other suspect, the police official said.

Punjab forms wide-ranging district coordination committees

By Mansoor Malik

LAHORE: In line with the Revised National Action Plan (RNAP), the Punjab government has constituted District Coordination Committees (DCCs) to undertake a host of actions, ranging from curbing smuggling, ensuring registration of madrasahs (seminaries) as well as establishment of District Narrative Nerve Centres (DNNCs) to neutralising hostile narratives against the government.

In pursuance to the decision of the Central Action Committee, presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the RNAP had called for the constitution of DCCs, assigning several functions to these bodies, including execution of policy decisions to

prevent extremism and terrorism and implement decisions made by the federal and provincial apex committees.

The Punjab home department has constituted and notified DCCs to be co-chaired by the deputy commissioners (DCs) of the respective districts across the province.

Each committee, having members not less than 25-30 officers, comprises CCPO (for Lahore)/CPO/DPO; representatives of local formation, heads of all line departments; representatives of special branch, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), Intelligence Bureau (IB), Federal Intelligence Agency (FIA), Anti Narcotics Force (ANF), Inter Services Intelligence (ISI/ISW), Military Intelligence (MI); representatives of Customs (where required) and any other recognised member as required.

The DCCs have been tasked with executing the policy decisions regarding the NAP and apex committees to strengthen the security framework at the district level. The committees have been asked to implement and enforce security policies relating to the prevention of extremism, terrorism and other unlawful activities.

The respective DCCs have also been assigned the task of ensuring registration of madrasahs with the relevant authorities, while implementing the NAP reforms for madrasah education, to bring all religious seminars under regulatory oversight, leading to their contribution to national peace and security.

These committees have also been tasked with establishing District Narrative Nerve Centres (DNNC) to ensure that dissemination

of any information aligns with the policies and narrative of the Punjab government.

The committees will be required to work with traditional and digital social media outlets to ensure widespread dissemination of government narratives and neutralise hostile narratives.

They will also develop and execute rapid response strategies to manage disinformation, besides using tools to track public sentiment and disinformation campaigns, accordingly.

The committees have also been empowered to launch crackdowns on narcotics smuggling, power theft and other illegal activities. The committees have been ordered to target warehouses dealing in smuggled goods and non-custom paid (NCP) items, including vehicles.

The committees will also be required to

shut down illegal petrol pumps and take action against unlawful settlements and unauthorised activities in peri-urban areas.

The committees are supposed to establish direct communication channels between district and provincial authorities for close coordination and liaison to maintain consistency and transparency in security issues and law enforcement. The DCCs will also monitor establishment of Safe Cities Authorities for enhanced real-time surveillance and monitoring to ensure effective law enforcement in all major cities of the province.

It has been made mandatory for the DCCs to meet at least once a month for coordination and to review the progress of ongoing operations, besides updating the Provincial Implementation Committee by sharing key insights.

Non-payment of compensation Police action against protesting labourers

By Our Correspondent

SADIQWAL: The Yamudwala police baton-charged and dispersed 11 labourers protesting over what they claimed, the non-payment of medical compensation for a colleague whose finger was severed while operating a machine at a textile mills near village 63/5-L here on Sunday.

The labourers blocked the highway for over three hours starting at 10:30pm, causing traffic disruption. Three mosques reported a two-kilometre-long traffic jam were eased by fog.

Despite police attempts to negotiate with protest leader Khalid Khokhar, police resorted to baton charge to clear the highway within 10 minutes.

The police registered an FIR under sections 341, 386, 148, and 149 of the Pakistan Penal Code against 11 protesters, including Mr Khokhar, on the complaint of ASI Gulzar Ahmed. However, no arrests have been made.

The incident origi-

nated on Jan 4, when Adnan lost a finger while operating machinery. The mill provided initial medical treatment, but his colleagues demanded full compensation as per labour laws.

Mr Khokhar said there that the demands included fair compensation for the injured labourer and the withdrawal of criminal charges against peaceful protesters.

Services said that the District Labour Department was largely inactive, sending only a field officer to assess the situation without initiating formal negotiations or taking action against the mill for unsafe working conditions.

District Labour Officer Hyder Shah confirmed the worker's injury but provided no details about any steps taken to address the issue.

Tarsoor, the general manager of the mill, stated that the injured labourer had received treatment at both public and private hospitals.

He said that a meeting between the mill owner and the labourers had not occurred, which prompted the road protest.



LAHORE: Canal closed due to annual desilting work. — White Star

Dwindling literary culture of DG Khan in era of smartphones and fast food

By Tariq Saeed Barnani

DERA GHAAZI KHAN: The decline in literary spaces and loss of reading culture in Dera Ghazi Khan city has played a role in promoting intolerant behaviour of its people as is evident from day to day life.

The city once used to host of at least four vibrant book centres where the readers could find literature or books on diverse topics beyond the textbooks. These centres played a vital role in fostering intellectual curiosity and shaping moderate and progressive attitudes among the residents.

Dabistan-e-Sakhar, one of these bookshops, was founded by the late Rasool Akhbar. It stood out as a beacon of literary culture. Akhbar was not only a pioneer in publishing Urdu poetry by the local poets but was also a bold advocate of freedom of thought. His book centre played an active role in nurturing the culture of critical thinking during Gen Ziaul Haq's oppressive dictatorship when certain books were banned or were made

inaccessible.

The Paramount News Corner, originally run by a man known as Charles Ramtani, is now being managed by his son Shamim Ahmed. It offered a range of books alongside newspapers. Other notable names included Allah Bakhsh's Book Centre and Nasir Book Centre. The latter aimed at serving the community but couldn't survive the growing lure of social media and digital distractions.

In addition to these book centres, the city was home to several libraries that were integral to its intellectual life. The Public Library of Company Bagh and the National Centre Library offered readers a world of books. The Postgraduate College Library, now a part of Ghazi University, marketed student memberships. Small private libraries also flourished, offering books on rent and meeting the literary needs of many.

However, with the advent of cell phones and the rise of social media, these literary spaces have dwindled.

Shamim Ahmed, the owner of Paramount News Corner,

attributes the trend to the increasing use of smartphones.

"New technology and smart phones have significantly reduced public interest in books, periodicals and digests. Circulation of daily newspapers is also decreasing steadily. Youngsters now form a minority among book buyers, whereas his father used to tell him that in the 1970s and 1980s, people from all walks of life irrespective of gender used to visit the book stall to buy books, periodicals and digests of their own choice," he says while responding to a query about the decline in the sale of books other than textbooks.

At present, Maktaba Tanzeer-e-Insaniat in Block B, Maktaba Zakaria in Block 10 and book centres established in front of Imambarah Bazaar as well as adjacent to it are fulfilling the reading requirements of the readers but at a limited scale.

The proprietor of Maktaba Zakaria points out higher prices of books as another reason for the decline in reading, explaining that the rising cost of paper has made books unaf-

fordable for working classes. He also blames the internet for contributing to the reduced sales of books.

Rabat Jarwar, a teacher of English literature at the Govt Graduate College, argues that cost is not the only reason, expressing concern at the disappearance of book centres in the city while the apocalyptic growth of fast-food outlets and eateries has reached alarming levels. He notes that the trend reflects more spending by people on food and unhealthy habits, adversely affecting both their physical and mental well-being.

Today, the once-thriving Public Library of Company Bazaar stands neglected, its shelves are gathering dust. The National Centre Library has closed its doors and the library of the Postgraduate College has been absorbed into Ghazi University, losing its independent identity. Private libraries that once rented out books have vanished, leaving no alternative for the book lovers.

The Citykhana has attempted to fill the gap with a small library, but its space and

resources are insufficient. An a library established at the stadium also failed to attract readers, reflecting the lack of interest of the citizens in physical and digital literary spaces.

Mudhiraas were a regular feature of the city. There were literary houses or groups led by poets and writers that used to hold functions regularly to maintain and improve the aesthetic sense of the dwellers of the city.

At present, DGK Arts Council head Nasim Tufail is trying to fill a large gap created by the decline of literary activities but the decline of these centres and libraries mark a significant loss for our city.

Once a community that cherished literature and intellectual growth, the residents of Dera Ghazi Khan are now left with limited options to nurture the minds of future generations. The need for revitalising public libraries and more vibrant literary spaces now is more urgent than ever as they remain essential for fostering critical thinking and preserving cultural heritage.

Man who killed his polio-affected daughter dies

By Our Correspondent

RAILWALPUR: The man who had allegedly killed his polio-affected daughter the other day before attempting suicide in Lodhran expired at the Bahawal Victoria Hospital (BVH) on Monday.

Muhammad Ismail had all the threats of his 23-year-old daughter Musarat and 25-year-old son Khalid before attempting to kill himself with the same knife. He and his son were shifted to the emergency department of Bahawal Victoria Hospital (BVH) where he expired. Ismail was a resident of Rasti Lariwala Acha on Sheeshad Road in district Lodhran.

According to the BVH doctors, Ismail's body was handed over to police after his postmortem while Khalid was still in critical condition.

Lodhran City police, on the complaint of the deceased's second son Ijaz, had registered a murder case against Ismail.

ARRESTED: Lodhran police arrested 50 people on charge of gambling in the suburbs of the city.

According to a district police spokesman, a crackdown was launched in Mohallah Koriwala and Mohallah Qasimwala where gambling was happening along with music at wedding parties.

Police claimed the suspects were betting with LRM, Corthum, Saadi Rayan and dollars.

The police teams seized Rs200,000 besides the foreign currency, a car and a motorcycle. A huge stock of fireworks was recovered from the houses. Those arrested included Marhar Iqbal, Danish, Usman and others mentioned in two FIRs. Besides, police said about 12 unidentified persons managed to flee from the scene.

Meanwhile, police arrested a man on charge of drug trafficking and recovered over one kilogram heroin from his possession. He was identified as Shaukat Bakhsh.

Traders protest Rs6m robbery

GUJRAT: Scores of traders from the city's major mobile phone and accessories market staged a protest on Ramtalai Road after Rs6 million were stolen from five shops by four robbers early on Monday morning.

The incident occurred in the precincts of Lorry Acha police. Reports said that four armed robbers entered Kadamir Plaza near Ramtalai Chowk during the night between Sunday and Monday. They overpowered two security guards and held them at gunpoint, while two of the robbers broke the locks of five different shops.

The robbers allegedly took Rs6 million from the shops and fled.

Led by Nasim Waris, the president of the Mobile Phone Dealers Association, the traders gathered at the crime scene and staged a sit-in. They blocked the road to protest police inaction against robbers in Gujrat city.

The traders accused the police of delaying the registration of robbery cases and failing to curb the rising incidents of theft. Following assurances from the police to register a case, the protesters dispersed peacefully.

Police have since registered a case under section 392 of the Pakistan Penal Code against unidentified suspects and launched an investigation. — Correspondent

Rs100bn increase...

Continued from Page 11

opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf for its 'policy of destruction'. "The youth who set public properties on fire and torture the policemen cannot be the friends of the state. The youth should not be misled or be exploited by anyone. The children involved in vandalism came out of prison after apologising, which is deeply regrettable. Having a dissenting view in a democracy is not forbidden, but one should not abandon the path of morality."

LAND MAPS: The CM has directed the authorities concerned to launch an operation across the province to reclaim government lands from illegal occupiers.

She ordered recovery of all state lands without succumbing to any pressure or political influence.

'Woman poisons husband to death to conceal affairs'

By Our Correspondent

SADIQWAL: Kameer police have booked a woman for allegedly poisoning her husband to death with the help of two sons of a landlord in a bid to conceal her affairs with them.

As per police sources, the suspect, Saima (30) and her husband Ali Hamza (45) worked at the farm of Maqbool Ahmed and lived at his outposts.

They say that Saima allegedly developed relations with Maqbool's sons Ahsan and Sajid.

When Saima's husband got wind of the affairs, he admonished her and threatened to make it public and humiliate her. To conceal the affairs, Saima and the two youths hatched a plan to eliminate Hamza.

As per their plan, Saima allegedly poisoned her husband.

As Hamza's condition deteriorated, he was taken to the

emergency ward of Sadiqwal Teaching Hospital by Saima and the two youths, but he died at the hospital.

Eyewitness say that as doctors confirmed Hamza's death, Saima, Ahsan, and Sajid fled the hospital, leaving the body there, prompting the hospital management to call police.

When Kameer police investigated the matter, they found contrivance of Saima and the two youths, resulting in death by poisoning.

Later on the complaint of Hamza's father, Ali Sheer, the police registered a murder case against Saima, Ahsan, and Sajid under sections 302 and 34 of the PPC. However, none of the suspects has so far been arrested.

SHOT DEAD: A man was shot dead by unknown assailants at Chak 70/11 on Sunday night.

As per police, the victim, Amir Hamza, was shot dead by

unidentified attackers while he was asleep in a pen.

The deceased's body was taken to Sadiqwal Teaching Hospital, but the postmortem examination was delayed for 12 hours due to the unavailability of an "on-duty" doctor.

Angered over the delay in procedure, the victim's family staged a protest at the hospital.

Following the protest, the health CEO sent Dr Usman to conduct the postmortem examination.

WOMAN KILLED: A man allegedly shot his younger sister dead at Chak 14/10-4, for beating his children.

As per police, Ammar, a mason, would often quarrel with his sister Naeem over beating his children.

On Monday, Naeem again beat the children, which enraged Ammar, who allegedly shot her dead. The police arrested Ammar and registered a murder case against him.

Three brothers killed...

Continued from Page 13

heinous charges and arrested the four suspects of Sakhera group in the above-mentioned killings of three individuals.

To a question about security lapse, the RPO said he would not spare anyone and set an example for others.

According to sources, at least 10 individuals of the attacking group had been arrested but police have not so far confirmed their arrests.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Armar took notice of the police's negligence, constituted an inquiry team of three senior police officers to investigate the matter separately to fix a responsibility against those held guilty of security lapse which led to the killing of three in custody murder suspects.

The inquiry officials, including DIG intelligence special branch police Punjab Faizal Raja (head of the committee), additional IG complaints Shamsul Haq Chohan and additional IG operations Zahid Nawaz Marwat have reached Faisalabad.

Ramzan Sugar...

Continued from Page 13

alleged corruption of Rs215 million.

The NAR reference filed in 2018 alleged that PM Shehbaz being chief minister and his son Hamza with the abetment and connivance of each other caused a loss to national exchequer of Rs215m by committing the offence of misuse of authority.

It said Mr Shehbaz had issued a directive for the construction of a drain in Chinai district primarily for the use of Ramzan Sugar Mills owned by his sons - Hamza and Sadam.

Pakistan earns \$20m from kinnow exports

By Sajjad Abbas Niazi

SARGODHA: Pakistan earned \$20 million in foreign exchange from kinnow exports last month, according to Chaudhry Shauq Ali Ahmed Bhatti, director of the Pakistan Horticultural Development and Export Board, Ministry of Commerce.

Speaking about the production of Sargodha's renowned sweetest kinnow, he said over 2,805 containers were exported globally in December. Of these, 1,350 were shipped by sea, with the UAE receiving 450 containers, Indonesia 281, Oman 151, Sri Lanka 150, and the Philippines 97.

Additionally, 1,374 containers were transported by road to destinations including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, and



Afghanistan.

Bhatti said there was a 40% decline in kinnow production due to climate change. He called for the introduction of

new plant varieties. He said that the introduction of improved kinnow strains has extended the crop's availability to eight to nine months.

BANLIFTED: The Malaysian government has lifted its ban on laboratory testing of Sargodha's sweetest kinnow, paving the way for increased exports.

The restriction, imposed in November 2024, had disrupted exports, with shipments halted at Malaysian ports. Sargodha Chamber of Commerce President Khuram Yaqub Quyyum said the issue was raised with Malaysia's High Commission and Federal Minister for Commerce Jam

Kamal Khan. The Food Safety Quality Programme Division of Malaysia's Ministry of Health later rescinded the inspection requirement. Mr Quyyum thanked Trade Investment Counsellor Tahira Javed for her pivotal role in resolving the matter.

ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE: The Sargodha

Municipal Corporation has ramped up its anti-encroachment campaign, demolishing illegal structures, sealing 35 shops, and confiscating goods from encroachers across the city.

Under the supervision of acting chief officer Iqbal Farooq, teams targeted various markets and announced that the operation would continue daily.

On the occasion, the authorities said that strict action was being taken on complaints of encroachment on footpaths and collecting monthly extortion by placing carts and stalls in front of shops.

Mr Farooq said that operation cleanup would continue on a daily basis to clear the city of encroachments. He urged citizens to cooperate with the authorities and remove encroachments on their own or legal action will be taken.

PESHAWAR

Sunset 05:22pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 07:15am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 04°C
Maximum 19°C
Outlook Sunny

METRO
North

SA sweep series
despite Pakistan's
improved batting show

Pg. 18 SPORT



TRUCKS carrying food and other daily-use items parked on the roadside in Thell area wait for clearance for onward journey to Parachinar, Kurram tribal district. — Online

PA again passes Overseas Commission Bill returned by governor

Minister insists legislation will help address expats' complaints against depts

By Umar Farooq

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Monday passed the KP Overseas Commission Bill, 2025, for the second time after Governor Farid Karim Kundi returned it insisting the matters related to overseas Pakistanis fall within the jurisdiction of the federal government.

On Dec 3, 2024, the KP Assembly unanimously passed the bill to establish a commission to address complaints of overseas Pakistanis from the province against government agencies.

The bill, moved by law minister Aftab Alam, said that the commission would "receive and redress the grievances of overseas Pakistanis relating to government agencies, other complaints and suggestions of such overseas Pakistanis concerned and for matters connected therewith or ancillary thereto."

It added that the commission would consist of the chief minister as its chairman and the inter-provincial coordination minister, special assistant to the CM, or adviser to the CM as vice-chairman.

"After enactment, the law will be applicable on any person of Pakistani origin and domicile holder of KP who is either

permanently or temporarily settled outside Pakistan for employment, or for carrying on a business or vacation, or for any other purpose with intention to stay outside Pakistan for an unspecified period."

The assembly again passed the bill when Speaker Rafiq Saleem Sherai, who was in the chair, read a letter from the governor for "reconsideration of the KP Overseas Commission Bill, 2024."

In the letter, the governor noted that welfare and grievances of overseas Pakistanis fell in the Federal Legislative List and that the bill would conflict with the constitutional principle of occupied field as the subject of immigration was already legislated and administered by the federal government, while the provincial governments did not possess the constitutional authority to legislate on matters included in the federal legislative list such as immigration.

"The proposed establishment of provincial commission will create a jurisdictional overlap potentially leading to legal challenges and it would also contravene the Immigration Ordinance 1979 which explicitly places the regulation of immigration under the purview of the federal government. The attempt to create such a commission not only undermines federal jurisdiction but also risks infringing upon the Constitutional mandated separation of powers between federal and provincial authorities regarding immigration related matters," governor's read the letter.

Law minister Aftab Alam Afridi told the house that the law department had already shared its opinion on the bill, whose approval would lead to the resolution of all

complaints of overseas Pakistanis against provincial government departments.

He said the law department answered everything about the bill and that the Punjab Assembly passed the Overseas Commission Act in 2014.

"We regret this [act of the governor]," he said, adding that around 50 per cent of remittances in KP come from overseas Pakistanis.

In its formal opinion, the law department insisted that the governor had rightly pointed out that the subject fell within ambit of the federal legislative list of the Constitution but the scheme provided under the bill was required to be looked into in-depth for the reason that matter mentioned therein provide for redressal of the grievances of overseas Pakistanis relating to government agencies—the agencies of the KP government—a matter purely falling within the legislative competence of KP.

Member of the opposition PPP Ahmad Karim Kundi said bills were always sent to the governor for approval.

He said such letters should be shared with lawmakers as well for consideration and discussion.

"The Constitution says that in case of any inconsistencies in the federal or provincial laws—the federal law will prevail," he said.

The lawmaker said such matters should not be handled in a hurry.

The speaker observed that the law department's reply was clear that the Overseas Pakistanis Commission would deal with matters about provincial government departments.

The house later re-examined the KP Overseas Pakistanis Commission Bill, 2025, before passing it by a majority vote.

Also, the speaker pointed out that the assembly was given the status of a committee to hold talks with the Pakistan Qasbi Jirga over Pakhtunkhwa issues.

He said the committee did a great job by addressing the situation following an attack on a Pakistan Taliban Movement camp in Khyber tribal district.

Mr Swati said that the PQJ, during the talks with the committee had declared that it would submit a list of 63 elders along with its demands for discussion.

"It was decided that the committee will hold deliberations on the PQJ's demands. The recommendations will later be forwarded to the provincial or federal government," he said.

The speaker announced that the committee would meet at the assembly at 2pm today (Tuesday) with Mr Gandapur in the chair.

During the session, MPA Asif Khan Mahsud pointed out that a list of landmine victims from South Waziristan tribal district was shared with the house, but those victims had yet to be compensated. He said that a meeting hadn't been held on the matter for the last six months.

The chair assured the lawmakers of a speedy process of compensating payment.

Also, MPA Muneeb Hussain, who heads a special committee on the police raid on KP House in Islamabad, presented its report in the house. The chair adjourned the sitting until Jan 13.

Several held for festive firing at Bannu musical concert

By Our Correspondent

LAKHIMARWAT: The police on Monday claimed to have arrested several people for firing in the air at a musical concert in Ghoriwala town of the

Bannu district.

A police official said that after receiving information about intense festive firing, a party of Ghoriwala police station reached the Bannu Ghoriwala area, where people had indulged in festive fire at a

musical concert.

He said that the musical concert was arranged in connection with the wedding of a resident.

"The law enforcers arrested several people, and also seized music instruments, motorcycles and a coach from the venue," he

maintained.

The police official said that the arrested men included Muhammad Ayub, Hikmatullah, Hanifullah, Naseeb, Salman, Mir Janat, Siraj, Jaseel, Iqbal Khan, Abdullah, Rashid Khan, Ahmad Nasseb, Sher Ahmad,

Ahmadullah, Sameenullah and Bakhtullah.

"The arrested men were shifted to the police station where a case was registered against them and their fleeing accomplices under relevant sections of law," he added.

'State', govt responsible for sectarian fighting, says Fazl

Says Kurram violence was tribal in nature

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman on Monday insisted that the 'state' and government were responsible for sectarian fighting and inflaming people's sentiments in the country.

During a reception hosted by the JUI-F KP chapter at Nishdar Hall here, Mr Fazl said that the presence of sectarian elements in the country was an undeniable fact.

He added that it was the state institutions and government that fomented sectarian fighting before blaming it on religious groups.

The JUI-F leader said the recent Kurram violence was tribal in nature. He wondered if it was truly a sec-

tarian conflict, then why Hangu and Kohat, where both Shia and Sunni communities lived side by side, were peaceful.

Mr Fazl also said it was puzzling why the Kurram fighting didn't affect nearby districts like Hangu, Kohat, Peshawar and Dera Ismail Khan, as its "heat" was felt in far-off Karachi city and even Iranian capital Tehran.

He said that one such representative addressed a news conference in Islamabad, while those of the other sect did the same in Peshawar.

"Who is pulling the strings of these people and bringing them to the fore?"

The JUI-F chief claimed that his party was approached by both sides in Kurram, and when it came up with a solution, violence erupted the very next day.

Without naming anyone, he insisted that he received a message questioning his role to calm the situation.



JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman addresses a function at Nishdar Hall, Peshawar, on Monday. — Wafa Star

Mr Fazl said that Pakistan's democracy and parliamentary system were not perfect and therefore, they're subjected to criticism.

He, however, said that a system shouldn't be discarded due to its weaknesses and instead, everyone should work for its improvement.

The JUI-F leader said that his party's efforts to strengthen democ-

racy in the country would continue.

He said that leadership of all religious-political parties had worked to promote harmony within the nation.

"Our struggle for democracy will continue," he said.

About a controversy about the new breach bill, Mr Fazl said that while the federal government was talking about mainstreaming seminaries, it was a fact that millions of youth graduating from universities and colleges had been driven for job to post for jobs.

"If the government can't provide these graduates with employment, then what it will offer to seminarians," he said.

The JUI-F chief said that the use of force whether it was against political workers at the D-Chowk or the local government representatives outside the KP Assembly in Peshawar was wrong, and he condemned it.

"Both of these incidents should be treated alike," he said.

Mr Fazl said that those who stole

elections and changed their roads by force should bear in mind that they would face the fate of former Bangladesh prime minister Hasina Wajed or Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, who had to flee their countries due to people's protests.

He said that the federal government did a U-turn on its commitment on the seminaries bill and tried to further complicate the issue, but the JUI-F successfully advocated the cause.

The JUI-F chief said that his was the only party to oppose the 26th Constitutional Amendment as the PTI did not take part in that process.

"We got the original 56 sections of the amendment bill reduced to 22 and inserted five of our own into it, bringing the total to 27," he said.

Mr Fazl also said that his party stopped the government from narrowing the scope of Article 8 of the Constitution and making changes regarding the transfer of high court judges.

Pressure horns, modified silencers removed from vehicles

MANSEHRA: The traffic police have removed a large number of pressure horns, modified silencers and other gadgets from vehicles that contributed to environmental pollution in the district.

"We have seized a large number of pressure horns and modified silencers that caused environmental pollution during a noise-free environment operation launched across the district," traffic in-charge Mohammad Siddique told reporters here on Monday.

He said that the crackdown was launched on the orders of district police officer Shahidullah Khan Gandapur. He said that a large number of such gadgets were seized from vehicles in different parts of the district.

"We have also fined drivers and motorists, and warned others against installing modified silencers and pressure horns in their vehicles as the use of these gadgets significantly pollutes the environment," Mr Siddique said.

He added that a crackdown on vehicles using tinted glass and riders without helmets was also underway in parts of the district.

"We removed tinted papers and glasses from dozens of vehicles, and fined several drivers in Shinkari, Dighi, Balakot and other areas of the district," Mr Siddique said.

Though he said effective measures taken by the police had helped reduce the incidence of underage driving, such cases still existed and traffic wardens were taking strict legal action against such violations on roads.

"We have seized motorcycles driven by young boys and summoned their fathers or guardians to ensure they do not engage in this illegal practice again for the safety of their own and others," Mr Siddique said. — Correspondent

Conference at Governor's House to focus on religious tolerance

Maulana Azad terms decrees issued under Paigham-i-Pakistan initiative milestone for national unity

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Karshi has said that a national conference of religious scholars will be organised soon at Governor's House.

He was talking to chairman of Raza-i-Hilal Committee and Imam of Radhwa Mosque Lahore Maulana Syed Muhammad Ashiq Khushboo Azad, who visited Governor's House on Monday. The meeting was also attended by leaders of London-based Pakistani businessmen.

During the meeting, various national and religious issues were discussed with a special focus on importance and implementation of decrees issued under the Paigham-i-Pakistan initiative. The meeting stressed the need for joint efforts to promote national unity, harmony, and sectarian tolerance.

Maulana Azad termed the decrees issued under Paigham-i-Pakistan initiative a milestone for national unity, pointing out their positive impact.

The governor acknowledged the role of Paigham-i-Pakistan and said that these decrees provided a strong foundation for maintaining peace and eradicating extremism. He said Governor's House was opened to people to address their issues. He said that Governor's House was taking practical steps to promote interfaith and inter-sect tolerance.

He announced that a national conference of religious leaders would be organised soon at Governor's House.

Maulana Azad praised the governor for holding public days at Governor's House. He also appreciated the practical steps being taken to promote inter-sect harmony. He said that the conference focused on religious tolerance would be organised by Raza-i-Hilal Committee at Governor's House in Peshawar.

He also paid tribute to late prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for his services to Pakistan and Muslim world.

The governor recognised Maulana Azad's services and presented a special shawl and gifts to him.

Meanwhile, a special senate meeting of Lakki Marwat University was held at Governor's House.

The meeting was chaired by Governor Faisal Karim Karshi. It reviewed recommendations of Governor Inspection Team's inquiry report regarding the university. The university's constitution and business rules were also presented for approval.

A committee including Higher Education Commissioner, higher education department and university staffs was tasked to review the future of 5,000 students affected by illegal affiliation of 35 colleges. The committee will compile its report within one month.

The meeting also decided to send the inquiry report's recommendations, covering asset distribution, faculty appointments and compliance with HEC guidelines, to the university syndicate for review.

Similarly, the second open day at Governor's House was held and Mr Karshi listened to the grievances of people.

During the event, people from various parts of the province presented their concerns, ranging from administrative issues to local development needs. The governor assured them that their issues would be addressed promptly. — AFP

Employees blast govt over pension cuts

By Our Correspondent

SWAT: Government employees on Sunday regretted that while parliamentarians had been regularly increasing their perks and privileges, their pensions were first curtailed and were now going to be done away with altogether.

Speaking to Dawn on condition of anonymity, employees working in various departments deplored that the ruling elite had pushed the country into economic turmoil, devouring all vitals of the state during the last 25 years.

Teachers of different cadres said that the federal ministry of finance had applied different cuts to pensions. They said the government had abolished multiple emoluments and it was declared that instead of last basic pay now the pension would be calculated on the average salary drawn over the last two years of service.

"With the drastic cuts in pension, the little charm left in the public sector jobs has vanished," said an English teacher, who is retiring in June. "More and more youth looking for greener pastures is because they have no hope of finding a decent job in Pakistan. In recent years the brain drain has accelerated," he noted.

A senior official of the health department said that the pension benefits were curtailed under a well-planned strategy.

Amjad Khan, provincial general secretary of Mahgury Union, a teachers' wing of Awami National Party, said that the government's decision on pension had alarmed the employees. He said employees across the country were expected to start a protest campaign soon.

"A meeting of public sector employees has been convened in Peshawar next week to chart a future course of action," he said.

Hazara, Malakand receive heavy rain, snow

Officials urge people to avoid unnecessary travel in snowbound areas

Dawn Report

MANSEHRA / BATTAGRAM/SHANGLA: With mountainous parts of Hazara and Malakand divisions receiving the heaviest snowfall of the current winter season, plains in the region received downpour on Monday, ending a prolonged dry period.

The snowfall and rain caused temperatures to dip below zero Celsius in some areas.

The snow began falling in the hilly tourist resorts of Shogran, Mir Papp, Suren, Kooch and Kaghan valleys early on the day and continued intermittently all through the day.

Most hilly areas, apart from Shogran and Kaghan Valley including Karsha and Sog valleys in Upper Kohistan as well as Poria Gali, Machal, Danda and Shingalder in Torghar district, received the first snowfall of the winter season.

"We have restricted the mobility of vehicles without chains on the road from Karshi to Shogran due to snowfall, as this route is mostly steep and could cause fatal accidents when icy," district police officer Shafiqullah Khan Gandapur told reporters.

He said the entry of visitors had already been blocked to Kaghan Valley after it received its first snowfall of the season in mid-November last year.

"Visitors should prioritise their as well as their loved ones' safety while traveling to Shogran and use chained four-



A VIEW OF Chakkar Khadeng village, Shangla, after snowfall. — Dawn

wheel-drive vehicles only," he said.

Also, the KDA removed snow from the Shogran Road.

Upper parts of the Hazara division also received downpour, which began in the early hours in Mansehra, Kohistan, and Upper and Lower Kohistan districts, and continued sporadically throughout the day.

The rain exposed the blockage of sewerage lines and drains in the streets and markets along the Karakoram Highway, Abbottabad Road, Shinkari Road and Lari Akhla as garbage and air floated on these roads, causing inconvenience to residents and travelers.

In Battagram, a heavy rain in the plains, coupled with snowfall on the surrounding mountains, led to a drop in temperature in the Battagram district on Monday.

The rain, accompanied by cold winds, lashed several areas, including Battagram, Ajmera, Chappogram, Peshawar, Shamshe, Batamori and parts of Chakkar Khadeng.

Meanwhile, Khapero, Saka and Chail Sar received a drizzle of snow.

The cold increased the demand for warm clothing and dry fruits, with shops reporting

high sales.

The rainfall began early on Monday and continued until evening, bringing much needed relief from dry spell to the area.

A heavy snowfall was reported in several towns of Shangla district that declined the temperature to the freezing point.

It snowed in district headquarters Alper, Yakkatagar, Shangla Top, Ajmera, Kama, Dandhar, Gantol, Chakkar Khadeng, Karsha, Pir Sar, Kagar Banda, Sogri Ghaz, Lakwari, causing cold winds to sweep the region.

The snowfall disrupted traf-

fic on the Bisham-Swar Road, Alper-Poran Road, Karshi-Chakkar Road and Dandhar-Ajmera Road and suspended power supply in the upper parts, inconveniencing residents.

Shangla deputy commissioner Muhammad Farid directed authorities to stay alert and vigilant to handle emergencies and reopen roads in case of their closure due to landslides and snowfall.

He also urged people to avoid unnecessary travel of roads in the district during snowfall and to chain vehicle tyres before using the road in snowbound areas to avoid any mishap.

Chitral TMA workers without salary for five months

By Our Correspondent

CHITRAL: The employees of tehal municipal administration Chitral have not received their salaries for the last five months, according to sources.

An employee of the civic body told this scribe on condition of anonymity that irregular payment of salaries was a perennial issue for them that created a lot of problems for their families, who had no other one to turn to.

He said that most of the employees were laid-off and belonged to sanitation and water supply sections of TMA whose strike had paralysed the civic life last year when they left work demanding payment of their eight-month salaries.

He said that TMA employees were again planning to go on strike as majority of them lost their

domestic electricity connections owing to non-payment of bills and shop keepers denied them commodities of daily use on loan.

The tehal municipal officer could not be contacted despite repeated attempts by this scribe.

ELECTIONS: Dr Hafizullah of botany department was elected president of Chitral University Teachers' Association for a term of one year while Masood Anwar and Karama Bhatgare were elected vice-presidents.

Other office-bearers of the association include Dr Kifayatullah general secretary and Dr Huseinullah Khan finance secretary. Dr Muhammad Saifuddin Khan, Dr Muhammad Ruman and Dr Anis Amir were elected members of executive committee of the association.

Soon after the elections, the new office-bearers were administered oath by the outgoing president of the association, Prof Badshah Hussain.

Over 200 seminaries registered in Dir

LAHORE: So far 209 seminaries have been registered in the district and work is in progress to register the rest of religious schools.

In this connection, a meeting was held in Timergara town on Monday with Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan in the chair. The meeting was also attended by district registration and promotion officer Masud Ali, assistant director of National Programme for Human Development (NCHD) Iqbal Ahmad and assistant director of NCHD Muhammad Asad Khan.

The meeting was briefed regarding registration of seminaries in the district.

The deputy commissioner directed officials concerned to compile data of all registered and unregistered seminaries soon. He said that unregistered seminaries would be registered

with Directorate of Religious Education, Islamabad.

He said that assistant director of local government and all other stakeholders should meet with administrators of seminaries and give them registration forms so that they could complete the process of registration timely.

VISIT: The additional assistant commissioner revenue, Tariq Khan, on Monday visited a cash distribution point of Remedy Income Support Programme (RISP) in Timergara to resolve complaints of people.

He inquired about additional charges from RISP beneficiaries.

The distribution point was sealed when women told him that they were charged extra.

He told journalists that the matter would be referred to higher authorities for further necessary action. The RISP beneficiaries were directed not to pay any extra money to any retailer.

They were told to immediately inform administration if anyone demanded money from them.

Several RISP beneficiaries had complained about lack of facilities at the Timergara cash distribution point established for them by a private bank. They said that veiled women from different parts of the district didn't have a washroom, a waiting room and drinking water at the centers in Timergara and Rabat.

They said that RISP paid them three months' stipend through specific companies. They said that earlier they received their payment through mobile phone outlets only.

Some women said that due to issues with fingerprints, they had to wait for months for receiving payment.

A RISP staffer told Dawn that seven centers were set up for about 52,000 beneficiaries in the district. — Correspondent

Followers of different faiths join Guru Gobind Singh's birthday celebrations

TAXILA: Muslims, Hindus and Christians joined the Sikh community members to celebrate the 355th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th guru of the Sikh religion, at Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hasanabdal on Monday.

The day was spent reciting from the religious scriptures, Guru Granth Sahib, besides singing and chanting holy hymns as part of the Nagar Kirtan procession. The participants wore wearing traditional costumes, multi-colour turbans, holding symbolic swords and raising religious slogans of Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khanda, Wahe Guru Ji Ki Pathi.

Parliamentary Secretary for Salford Asif-ud-Din Bhandara was chief guest on the occasion.

Talking to newsmen, Mr Bhandara said safeguarding rights of religious minorities in the country would be ensured and every effort would be made to give them due status in society.

"We gathered here at Panja Sahib to honour the legacy of Guru Gobind Singh on his birth anniversary by spreading love, kindness and wisdom among the people around us," he added.

He said Pakistan is attaining an identity as a minority-friendly country where all segments of society and followers of every religion would be equally treated. He also said such events would build understanding of traditions and beliefs of minorities and people here had shown a sign of interfaith harmony.

Mr Bhandara said that celebration of minorities' events would help spread love and peace. He said minorities were allowed to practice their religion freely. He expressed his gratitude to the diverse gathering for their enthusiasm and participation in the celebration of Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary. He stressed the significance of such events in fostering unity, understanding and mutual respect among different communities in the country. He said the future of Pakistan was bright and soon its economy will be on the right track.

PPP minority wing Divisional President Jalran Gill said the fact that Muslims and members of the Christian community attended the Gurdwara Panja Sahib event demonstrated that Pakistan was a peaceful nation where people lived in harmony. "The world needs to see the beautiful face of Pakistan," he said.

Sardar Ravinder Singh Jaggi, a local Granthi, said Guru Gobind Singh was the 10th and last Sikh Guru and his greatest achievement was the creation of the Khanda in 1699.

He said Gobind Singh, known in Sikh history chiefly for his creation of Khanda, "the pure" and a catalyst. — Correspondent

CDA takes charge of Diplomatic Shuttle Service

10 e-buses allocated by civic body to charge Rs1,000 for each trip

ISLAMABAD: The role of private contractors became a thing of the past on Monday after the Capital Development Authority (CDA) took control of a shuttle service for citizens visiting the diplomatic enclave for their visa applications.

Ten electric buses have been deployed for this service as CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa directed the CDA's engineering and design wings to provide the best facilities to visa applicants and upgrade facilities.

The service commenced with 10 buses and Rs1,000 will be charged for a trip. Several officials appreciated the CDA/MCI move to end the role of the contractors and endorsed this service to stop the exploita-

tion of citizens. "The fare should be decreased from Rs1,000, as instead of focusing on revenue generation, the CDA/MCI should focus on providing services to citizens," said an official.

It is relevant to note that private contractors, who were allowed to get Rs500 to Rs1,000 per trip, had been overcharging the passengers besides running an illegal car service, sometimes milking up to Rs20,000 per trip. Last year, a European diplomat had also informed the then CDA chairman about the overcharging issue faced by visitors to embassies. Following the complaint, the then chairman of the CDA, Anwarul Haq, chaired a meeting and reprimanded DMA officials, prompting them to issue a warning letter to the contractor on September 25.

The bus service has put an end to this practice.



CDA has deployed 10 electric buses to transport passengers to the Diplomatic Enclave. — File photo

Sources told Dawn that the private parties allegedly in conference with the Directorate Municipal Administration were making

all out efforts to remain in charge of the service instead of the CDA.

The said service, which transports citizens from out-

side the diplomatic enclave to embassies inside the enclave, is seemingly the most expensive service across the country. It was launched after the

9/11 attack as a security measure after the federal government banned the entry of private vehicles into the enclave.

The contract, which expired on Friday, was awarded to 2020 for Rs102.6 million per year.

According to sources, some DMA officials wanted the service to "continue" through contractors because they allegedly enjoyed a good relationship with them. Now the CDA buses will charge Rs1,000 per passenger and a computerised fare system will be in place to facilitate the citizens.

"The CDA should run this service permanently to help citizens as this service should be ended for good and visa seekers should be allowed to move freely into the diplomatic enclave of their own country," said an official. It is relevant to note that on December 27, the DMA tried

to award a new contract, but at the eleventh hour, the tender was deferred and one of the DMA officials was also suspended.

Sources said that when the matter was brought to the notice of the chief commissioner, he had directed that instead of private contractors, the CDA buses should be utilised for the service to help citizens.

On the first day of the service, the contractor's staff was still present on the site. However, DMA Director Dr Sania Pasha told Dawn that there was no role of the contractor in running this service anymore.

"Today, some of their staff members were present there to guide the DMA staff about the operations. From now on, they have nothing to do with this project."

"They are not even allowed to enter the premises," she said. — Kashif Abbasi