



Hope returns to Gaza as first prisoners freed

- Red Cross says all three women prisoners freed by Hamas are in 'good health'
- Israel to release 69 Palestinian women, 21 teenage boys in first batch
- During a three-hour delay in ceasefire, Israeli strikes kill 13 people

GAZA: Palestinians burst into the streets to celebrate and return to the rubble of their bombed-out homes on Sunday, and Hamas released the first three prisoners under a ceasefire deal that halted fighting in Gaza.

Armed Hamas fighters drove through the southern city of Khan Yunis with crowds cheering and chanting. In the north, the territory, heavily divided in the war's most intense fighting, people picked their way on narrow roads through a devastated landscape of rubble and twisted metal.

"I feel like at last I found some water to drink after being lost in the

desert for 15 months," Aya, a displaced woman from Gaza City who has been sheltering in Beit Al-Salam in the central Gaza Strip for over a year, said after the fighting stopped. "I feel alive again."

In Tel Aviv, hundreds of

UN races to feed one million Palestinians:
Page 11

Israelis in a square outside the defence headquarters watched the prisoners' release on a giant screen. The crowd cheered, embraced and wept as three women prisoners could be seen exiting a vehicle in Gaza sur-

rounded by Hamas men. The prisoners got into vehicles of the International Committee of the Red Cross as the crowd chanted the name of the armed wing of Hamas.

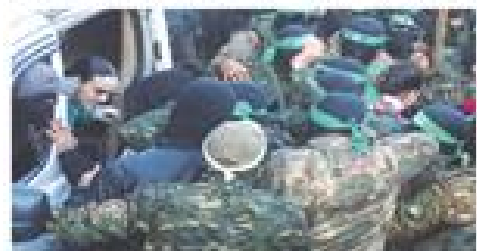
Soon after, the Israeli military said the prisoners, identified by the prime minister's office as Rami Gonen, Doran Steinbrecher and Emily Damari, had reached Israeli territory.

An Israeli official said Reuters the Red Cross said they were in good health.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, buses were awaiting the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli detention. Hamas said the first group to be freed in exchange for the Israeli prisoners includes 69 women and 21 teenage boys.

The first phase of the truce in the 15-month-old war between Israel and Hamas took effect following a three-hour delay during which Israeli warplanes and artillery pounded the Gaza Strip.

That late-minute Israeli blitz killed 13 people, according to Palestinian health authorities. Israel blamed Hamas for being



HAMAS members hand over Israeli prisoners to the ICRC staff in Gaza City, on Sunday.—Reuters

Continued on Page 5

Centre, KP seek clarity on gas sale 'in violation of rules'

Minority shareholder proposes deal for sale to third party; other private partner complains of 'being kept in dark'

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister Office (PMO) and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government have sought clarity from the Petroleum Division over the proposed sale of gas from a field in Kohat without bidding.

According to sources, the PMO had issued the directive on January 2 after media reports that a minority shareholder of the newly developed Bagair field had finalised the sale of gas to a third party through negotiations instead of open bidding.

The petroleum division had yet to respond to the PMO.

KP's Directorate General of Petroleum Concessions (DGPC) has also reminded the division that it had the power to make a decision on such sales under the Petroleum Policy, 2012.

The process adopted by the shareholder was against the decision made by

the Council of Common Interests (CCI), DGPC Director Milan Nadeem Javed said.

The CCI, which included chief ministers of all four provinces, envisaged a competitive process for the sale of gas to third parties and also stipulated that provincial rights under Article 158 should be protected in such deals.

Mr Javed said any arrangement violating Article 158 and the CCI's decision

Gas supply to CNG stations suspended to improve pressure for domestic consumers:
Page 9

would not be acceptable to the KP government.

Earlier this month, MOI-Pakistan, the operator and 10 per cent shareholder of the gas field, told its partners that it had finalised the sale of gas to a private firm, Universal Gas Distribution Company Ltd (UGDCL), through negotiations.

Pakistan Oilfields Limited (POL) is the second private shareholder with 25pc stakes.

The remaining 65pc shares are held by three public companies: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) (30pc), Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) (30pc) and Government

Continued on Page 5



DISPLACED Palestinians wave national flags as they return to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip after the ceasefire took effect, on Sunday.—AFP

Five terrorists infiltrating from Afghanistan killed: ISPR

Forces engage infiltrators in Zhob; interim Afghan govt urged to deny use of its soil for attacks in Pakistan

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Security forces killed five terrorists when they were attempting to infiltrate Pakistan from Afghanistan, the military's media wing said on Sunday.

In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said a group of terrorists attempted to cross the Pakistan-Afghanistan border through the Sambosa area of Zhob district on the night between Saturday and Sunday.

The movement of terrorists was "picked up by the security forces", leading to gunfire.

The troops "thwarted" the infiltration attempts and managed to gun down five terrorists, ISPR added.

The statement added that Pakistan has "consistently been asking" the Afghan Taliban government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border.

"The [interim] Afghan government is expected to fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by Kharazi for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan," the ISPR statement concluded.

In recent months, civil and military leaderships have stated that terrorists carrying out attacks in Pakistan were based in Afghanistan.

In his press conference last month, ISPR Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said that

terrorist outfits were being provided "sanctuaries, support, and are allowed unrestricted activities on Afghan territory."

Later, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also asked the Afghan government to stop the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from carrying out terrorist activities inside Pakistan, calling it unacceptable and a red line for the country.

Kabul has repeatedly denied Pakistan's allegations, resulting in a marked degradation of bilateral ties.

In a meeting last week, the political leadership

Police van damaged in Bannu roadside explosion:
Page 5

asked the military's top brass to engage with Afghanistan to address security issues.

In an almost four-hour-long meeting with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, representatives of several political parties expressed concerns over the prevailing law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

However, the COAS pointed out that the Afghan interim rulers had failed to adhere to repeated warnings in the past.

"They don't listen to us," a source quoted the army chief as saying in reply to the suggestion of formal or informal dialogue with the interim Afghan government.

In the face of recurring attacks, security forces have also increased targeted operations in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Last week, security forces killed 27 terrorists in

Continued on Page 5

PTI to challenge £190m case ruling tomorrow

• Says funds intended for Malik Riaz's account, not for the state • Claims Bushra's imprisonment politically motivated, aimed at pressuring Imran

By Ikram Jinnah

ISLAMABAD: The opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday announced its intention to challenge the decision in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust case in the high court tomorrow (Tuesday).

PTI leader Salman Akram Raja alleged that the funds were misappropriated by the current government, claiming they were to be deposited into property tycoon Malik Riaz's account, not returned to the state.

The party also decided to continue talks at different levels, including with the government and the powers that be.

Speaking at a news conference at KP House, Mr Raja revealed that nine accounts of Malik Riaz's family were seized over suspicious transactions in the United

Kingdom and one of the transactions was with Hassan Nawaz, son of PML-N supreme leader Sharif. On the other hand, there was an allegation that 16,000 acres of land

Ahsan slams PTI supporters for defending 'corruption':
Page 3

were given to Malik Riaz, and the Supreme Court gave a verdict that the property tycoon had to pay Rs460 billion to the Malik Development Authority (MDA).

UK authorities then decided to send the amount to the Supreme Court and directed the Malik Riaz family to leave the United Kingdom, he said.

He claimed that the UK authorities did not find any crime in it and just directed the family to leave the country in light of the

Supreme Court's verdict.

It was a bilateral agreement between the National Crime Agency (NCA) of the UK and Ali Malik, and it was decided that the amount would be deposited in the Supreme Court's account. There was a sentence in the press release issued by the NCA that the amount would be returned to the state of Pakistan. It was claimed that the money had to be returned to the state, which was totally wrong, and the fact was that the amount had to be submitted in the account of the Supreme Court, he said.

As the NCA requested that the agreement not be disclosed, approval was obtained from the federal cabinet through sealed envelopes. As Malik Riaz got the Sindh land free of cost, so that money has to be given to the state

Continued on Page 5

Operation to rid Kurram of 'spoilers' launched

- Law enforcers take over bunkers and check posts amid plan to secure Parachinar route in next few days
- Jirga demands probe into violations and non-compliance with peace accord

By Umar Farooq and Javid Hussain

PESHAWAR/ KURRAM: In order to rid restive Kurram of miscreants and secure the highway connecting the district with other parts of the country, a security operation has started in the Bagai area of the tribal district, officials said on Sunday.

"The forces have begun the operation to sanitise the area in and around Bagai by taking over check posts and destroying bunkers along the route," sources privy to the details of the operation said.

They said security forces and paramilitary Frontier Corps were leading the opera-

tion, with the police closely following behind.

According to officials, the law enforcement agencies' personnel were moving into the villages, but the miscreants had already fled and evacuations were already underway from the residential areas. "The plan is to secure the road in the next couple of days to allow the trucks to start moving (between Kurram and Peshawar)," they said.

The law enforcers had taken control of the bunkers on the mountains and a search operation was expected during the night, officials said, adding that security forces were deployed in lower Kurram and the operation would be car-

ried out in four villages.

During a news conference held in Kurram on Sunday, Regional Police Officer Abbas Majid Marwat said that the first convoy left successfully

Fuel opposes use of force to solve Kurram dispute:
Page 3

for Parachinar, followed by a second convoy. He said locals had committed that the third convoy should carry more supplies and they would support it, but the attack took place that resulted in several deaths.

"According to the agreement signed by both groups action will be taken against

the spoilers placing hurdles... and security forces and police will jointly take action and are taking action," RPO Marwat said, adding that social media was being monitored and action was being taken.

On Jan 17, the provincial government issued a notification for setting up camps in order to accommodate the temporarily displaced persons due to a possible offensive against miscreants in Kurram's Bagai, Mandori, Charkhel, Chagori Paraw and Chagori areas.

"Action against few miscreants present in the affected areas has become inevitable. The state stands with peaceful citizens," read a statement issued by Barister

Muhammad Saif, the KP government's spokesperson.

The statement came after a high-level meeting held to take stock of the situation in the Kurram district. In the meeting, it was decided to take strict action against the miscreants without discrimination. Barister Saif said that the provincial government had been trying to peacefully restore peace in the area for the last three months, but some miscreants had been conspiring to sabotage the accord.

Jirga demands probe

Meanwhile, members of the grand jirga, which brokered a peace accord between the warring groups on December 31, demanded a joint investi-

gation team (JIT) headed by a judge to investigate violation of the peace accord and action against those openly supporting the militants.

The members, in a letter addressing the president, the prime minister, the chief of army staff, the federal interior minister, and the KP chief minister and governor, read that they were of the opinion that what the jirga had said was not being acted upon neither were the state institutions acting upon the written agreement signed in 2024. The letter, issued on Saturday, read that the regional military leadership had secured a convey would depart on January

Continued on Page 5

Trump arrives in Washington as celebrations begin before inauguration

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump arrived in the Washington area on Saturday evening for a celebration of his return to power ahead of an inauguration ceremony that has been upended by record cold temperatures.

Trump flew aboard an Air Force plane sent by outgoing President Joe Biden to the Republican's home in Palm Beach, Florida, where the Republican prepared his transition after winning the Nov 5 election over Democratic Vice President Kamala

Trade, immigration, culture wars: Trump's big promises
— Page 11

Harris. His wife, Melania, daughter Ivanka and her husband, Jared Kushner, accompanied him on Saturday's flight.

After arriving at Dulles airport in suburban Virginia, Trump headed to his golf club in Sterling, Virginia, on the outskirts of Washington.

Some 500 guests will view a fireworks display and musical performances that include Leo Days, an Elvis impersonator, and Christopher Macchio, a singer whom Trump has previously featured at political events.

The 78-year-old Trump is due to hold a rally with supporters inside the Capital One Arena in downtown Washington on the eve of his inauguration, as well as

Continued on Page 11

ON OTHER PAGES



21 survivors of boat tragedy identified

The Foreign Office has released the names of 21 Pakistanis who survived after staying ashore in the Atlantic Ocean on a boat while attempting to illegally enter Europe. The boat with 60 immigrants, including 60 Pakistanis on board, left Mauritania for Spain's Canary Islands, but a major sea rescue mission, at least 44 Pakistanis on board are presumed dead after by drowning or torture. Page 3



Pakistan crush Windies in first Test

Sajid Khan and Abrar Ahmed led the charge for Pakistan, bundling out West Indies for 123 to win the first Test by 127 runs on the third day. It was the shortest completed men's Test match in Pakistan with 40 wickets falling in 1064 balls. Javed Warfar's seven-wicket haul restricted Pakistan's second innings to 157, setting a target of 251 for West Indies. Page 18

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FO names 21 boat tragedy survivors

Says Pakistan embassy in Morocco making arrangements to repatriate Pakistanis

By Syed Irfan Raza and Wassim Ashraf Butt

ISLAMABAD (GUJRAT) The Foreign Office has released the names of 21 Pakistanis who survived after staying afloat in the Atlantic Ocean on a boat while attempting to illegally enter Europe.

The boat with 86 migrants, including 66 Pakistanis on board, left the West African country of Mauritania for Spain's Canary Islands on Jan 2. However, it never reached its destination and docked in Morocco on Thursday after staying in the open sea for almost two weeks.

At least 44 Pakistani immigrants on board are presumed dead either by drowning or alleged torture, while Moroccan authorities rescued 36 people. 10 dead bodies were also recovered from the boat.

According to a statement by FO on Sunday, the 21 Pakistanis who survived the tragedy are being housed in Dakhla, a coastal city in Western Morocco.

The survivors identified by the FO were: Mubashir Hussain, 31; Wassim Khalid, 36; Muhammad Khaliq, 45; Abdul Ghaffar, 34; Gul Shauqar, 21; Farooq Ahmed, 32; Syed Muhammad Abbas Kanni, 26; Ghulam Mustafa, 20; Syed Badar Majeed din, 35; Imran Iqbal, 34; Shouh Zafar, 35; Ali Hassan, 23; Syed Mahmood Hassan, 19; Usir Basharat, 27; Muhammad Asif, 49; Mujahid Ali, 31; Amir Ali, 21; Muhammad Usir Farooq, 20; Bilawal Iqbal, 26; Arsalan, 22; and Irfan Ahmad, 40.

"Through our diplomatic mission in Rabat, immediate assistance has been mobilised for the affected nationals," the FO said in its statement.

"The embassy has arranged essential provisions including food, water, medicine, and clothing," it said, adding that local authorities were providing shelter and medical care to the survivors.

A team from Pakistan's embassy in Morocco was in Dakhla to oversee relief operations and coordinate with local authorities.

The FO said it was coordinating with the Moroccan authorities to ensure "non-prohibitive support" for the affected citizens and their repatriation.

"We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of overseas Pakistanis and will continue to monitor the situation closely."

Action against 'traffickers'

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala Zone has lodged at least four cases against eight human traffickers based in Gujrat, Sialkot and Gujranwala districts.

The names of at least eight human traffickers who allegedly made travel arrangements for the boat tragedy victims have already been included in the stop list to prevent them from travelling abroad.

Among the suspects arrested so far is a woman, the mother of Fahad alias Fahdi Gujjar of Jaura Kartama, who is allegedly the ring leader of the traffickers.

A senior FIA official told Dawn that a car belonging to Gujjar was also confiscated during a raid at his house.

He had allegedly sent at least 28 people from his area to Spain, charging them Rs 4 to 4.5 million each.

The agency has also identified at least three bank accounts allegedly belonging to Gujjar and his other accomplices. The process to seize these accounts and Gujjar's other assets will be initiated today (Monday), according to FIA.

FIA Gujranwala and Gujrat circles have also approached the families of survivors to seek details about human traffickers.

The agency has pinned its hopes on the detailed report by the high-ranking government team, which has gone to Morocco to probe the incident on the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The team, headed by Additional Secretary Interior Salman Chaudhary, included Additional DG FIA (North) Mansoor Maath and two officials of the Foreign Office and Intelligence Bureau. PM Shehbaz has also sought a report on the incident and ordered strict action against the human traffickers.

A record 10,457 migrants, or 30 people a day, died trying to reach Spain in 2024, most while attempting to cross the Atlantic route from West African countries such as Mauritania and Senegal to the Canary Islands, according to Walking Borders.

Last month, more than 80 Pakistanis reportedly died in a boat, which capsized near Greece.

Following the tragedy, the FIA looked and dismissed more than 30 of its officers for allegedly colluding with human smugglers in illegally sending Pakistanis abroad.



ZIARAT: Snow is being removed from a road by Levies and NHA staff on Sunday, after the Ziarat Valley received first winter snowfall of this year. —Photo by Muhammad Khatir

Snowfall in Balochistan disrupts traffic

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Heavy rain and snowfall disrupted transportation across several towns and cities in Balochistan, while residents of Quetta faced severe hardships due to prolonged power and gas outages in freezing temperatures. The mercury dropped below zero as icy Siberian winds swept through northern and central Balochistan, causing biting the harsh weather conditions.

Snowfall began in northern and other parts of the province late on Saturday evening, continuing intermittently until Sunday morning. Quetta and its surrounding areas experienced rainfall, while the mountains encircling the city were blanketed in snow.

Tourist spots such as Hanna and Urak valleys, on the outskirts of Quetta, received snowfall, attracting locals eager to enjoy the weather. Vehicles and motorcycles stuck in the Lakpota Tunnel area in Chitral valley, which also witnessed heavy snowfall.

Areas including Ziarat, Qila Saifullah, Muslim Bagh, Qila Abdullah, Chaman, Pishin, Toba Achakzai and Toba Kakari received snowfall, while rainfall was reported in Quetta, Mastung, Chaman, Pishin, Kalat, Harani, Zhob, Musa Khel, Barkhan, Khuzdar, Kharan, Kech, Panjgur, Turbat, Gwadar and Jirani.

Ziarat valley faced heavy snowfall, causing traffic disruptions between Ziarat, Sangari, Duki and surrounding areas. The Quetta-Chaman Highway, connecting Quetta with Kandahar via the Khojak Pass, was also blocked due to snow accumulation.

According to NHA officials, the connecting roads in Chaman and Qila Abdullah were blocked due to the heavy snowfall, and operations have been launched to clear the highway for traffic.

Fazl opposes use of force to solve Kurram dispute

JUL-F chief suggests the issue can be resolved through jirga

By Muhammad Jamal Hoti

MARDAN: Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman has demanded a solution to the dispute between warring groups in Kurram through the jirga system (a traditional dispute resolution mechanism used in tribal communities), saying that the use of force or imposition of a one-sided decision could further deteriorate the fragile situation in the volatile tribal district.

"Disputed issues have been resolved neither by force nor by one-sided decisions. We believe in jirga system. That is why the issue of Kurram should be resolved through a jirga comprising credible and reliable personalities. We prefer jirga in case of resolving issues and disputes as it has the ability to solve problems and issues in a better way," said the JUL-F chief while talking to media persons here in Mardan on Sunday.

The Maulana expressed these views in reference to the government decision about limited 'counter-terrorism operation' in some villages of Lower Kurram, after attending a religious programme at Jamia Islamia Bahawal in Kattal school of Mardan district.

"Similarly, the elders of both rival groups have to be taken into confidence in this connection if the government is serious in bringing a durable peace and stability in the volatile region," he remarked.

The JUL-F chief has asked the federal government to include political figures in talks process of Kurram issues.

In reply to a question, he said he apparently did not see any improvement in talks going on between the incumbent federal government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The JUL-F chief said: "I pray for success of talks between the government and PTI, but apparently I am not seeing any improvement or breakthrough in the dialogue."

To another query, he said that every leader of PTI had his own

separate statement that was why he did not respond to questions regarding those statements. However, he said he would comment on party's statements whenever it was needed.

KP rulers 'not elected'

The JUL-F chief lamented that there was no government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because the provincial rulers had lost their writ in many areas of the province.

He alleged that the incumbent provincial rulers had not been elected rather they were given power in KP by some powerful forces. The corruption had broken all its records in history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because the province had been handed over to intelligible, unable and immature people, he added.

However, as a political leader he believed in talks, adding that their doors were open for all political parties, including PTI, he said. He added that he and his party had held talks with PTI leadership in the past on the issues of mutual interests and similar talks could be held in future as well.

Ahsan slams PTI supporters for defending 'corruption'

Tarar says judicial verdict has confirmed corruption charges against Imran

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday condemned what he described as regressive and shameful attitudes by supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to defend their leader Imran Khan, even after he was proven corrupt and convicted in the £190 million graft case.

In a statement, the minister said that the PTI founder built his entire political campaign around the corruption card and lured people toward him with promises of transparency and accountability.

He regretted that PTI supporters had "turned a blind eye to Imran Khan's corrupt practices", adding that "the duplicity and hypocrisy of PTI are laid bare as they defend a leader who, rather than confronting the grave breach of trust, resorts to religious or anti-establishment narratives to deflect criticism".

Mr Iqbal said some clear and undeniable facts, including Britain's National Crime Agency, had returned £190m to Pakistan, which was supposed to be deposited in the national treasury for public benefit. Instead of depositing this money in the national treasury, Mr Khan transferred these funds to benefit his ally, the famous property tycoon Malik Riaz. The money was deposited in a Singapore Court account that was created to pay the fine imposed on Malik Riaz.

In return, the minister said, the PTI founder received personal benefits from Malik Riaz, adding that "even if those benefits are ignored, transferring state funds for personal purposes is an unforgivable crime".

He recalled that a leading British daily, The Financial Times, had published a detailed report on July 28, 2022, exposing Mr Khan's corruption in using charitable funds for his political campaigns. To date, Mr Khan has not taken any legal action against the newspaper, which raises serious questions about his innocence, he added.

Tarar says corrupt face of PTI exposed

Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture Anasudh Tarar said that judicial verdict has confirmed allegations of corruption against the PTI founder, claiming it as the largest financial scandal in the country's history.

Speaking at the inauguration of developmental projects in the NA-127 constituency in Lahore, Mr Tarar claimed that economic development and public relief

remain the government's top priorities.

Mr Tarar said PML-N is a people-centric party which is dedicated to resolving public issues.

"We are tirelessly working to fulfil our election promises," he said. Highlighting the government's efforts, he noted that inflation, which was at 38 per cent last year, has decreased to 3.9pc, and foreign investment is steadily increasing.

Referring to the £190m corruption scandal, he criticised the PTI leadership for approving significant financial misappropriations behind closed doors.

"They manipulated funds meant for the state, used religion as a cover, and indulged in personal histories, including acquiring expensive properties and jewellery," he said.

He challenged the PTI's legal team to refute allegations and questioned the credibility of the religious education initiatives at Al Qadir Trust. —APP

University teachers decry 25pc tax rebate withdrawal

By Amjad Mahmood

LAHORE: The Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUSA) has sought immediate intervention from the federal finance minister over what it terms the illegal withdrawal of a 25 per cent tax rebate for full-time teachers and researchers.

In a letter addressed to Finance Minister Muhammad Azeem-uz-Zafar, FAPUSA president Dr Amjad Abbas Magi and General Secretary Dr Muhammad Usair expressed deep concern and disappointment at the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) recent directive to revoke the tax relief.

"The directive issued in the middle of the fiscal year are not only illegal but also illegal, as they bypass the decisions of the parliament merely on the interpretation of their own choice," the letter said.

Recalling that the tax

rebate had been officially announced in the last budget and included in the proceedings of the National Assembly and had been part of the income tax manuals of 2022, 2023 and 2024, the association said the FBR's unilateral action to overturn this rebate directly contradicted the directives of the National Assembly and undermined its authority.

The FAPUSA leadership highlighted the problems of university teachers grappling with severe challenges, including a lack of funding and delayed salaries in state institutions, and appealed to the finance minister to intervene promptly and resolve this matter, which has caused significant unrest among university faculty across the country.

They threatened nationwide protests if the issue was not resolved as soon as possible.

The Higher Education Department had, through

a communication dated Jan 14, 2025, directed all the vice-chancellors of universities in Punjab to implement the FBR's directions regarding the disallowance of tax rebates in the S&P system.

The FBR, in a letter to the department on Jan 8, drew attention towards the amendment to the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 through the Finance Act 2022, applicable from tax year 2023.

The act had omitted Clause 2, Part III of the second schedule of the ordinance that read as: "The tax payable by a full-time teacher or a researcher, employed in a nonprofit education or research institution duly recognised by the Higher Education Commission, a board of education or a university recognised by the Higher Education Commission, including government research institution, shall be reduced by an amount equal to 25pc of tax payable on his income from salary."

They were of the opinion that the mountainous region was home to the world's highest peaks including five eight-thousanders and over 100 seven-thousanders. Foreign and national adventure-seekers, including climbers and trekkers, visit Gilgit-Baltistan in large numbers every year.

However, they said the Gilgit-Baltistan government significantly jacked up the royalty and mountaineering fees, including trekking permits fee, making them the "most expensive" in the region. They explained that one foreign expedition on K-2 fetched about \$40,000 to GB, benefiting the government, tour operators, the hospitality sector,

transporters, the aviation sector, high-altitude porters and rescue service providers.

"However, the recent increase in the royalty and permit fees has made it hard for the tour operators to sell mountaineering expeditions and treks to foreign and domestic clients," they pointed out.

Stakeholders

Tour operators expressed reservations that they were not considered a stakeholder while formulating the policy.

Speaking to Dawn, Nadirwan Karim, former general secretary of Pato, said the Pakistan destination image was weak yet with joint efforts it was improved in recent years. Subsequently, a large number of international tourists had started coming to Pakistan for trekking and tourism.

He said a large number of

locals depend on tourism for their livelihoods.

Mr Karim made it clear that the economic benefits from foreign tourists didn't come from government fees, but rather from the money spent on adventure activities. "When foreigners come to Pakistan, they bring foreign exchange, which is a great source of earnings for the country," he said. He cited the example of trekking fees, which foreigners have to pay \$500 for in Pakistan, whereas in Nepal, the trekking fee is only \$30. The trekking fees in Pakistan varies by location and altitude, with an average fee of \$500.

However, according to him, now after the recent hike one foreigner had to pay more than \$4,000 royalty fee to climb one of the eight thousanders in GB, while in Nepal royalty fee for climbing eight thousanders was \$1,000 per client.

He said the local tour operators

were finding it hard to attract foreign clients. They were worried that foreign mountaineers and trekkers would prefer Nepal and other countries that charge less than what Pakistan is charging for trekking and climbing peaks.

The move had not only affected tourism industry but also impacted the hospitality and transport sectors, while rendering thousands of shopkeepers, porters and other people in Gilgit-Baltistan jobless.

No single expedition

Another tour operator, Asghar Ali Parik, said Dawn that there was no single expedition or trekking group plan to visit Gilgit-Baltistan this winter and the increase in fee was one of the main factors.

He said if the decision not to withdraw, adventure tourism would be badly hit and foreign clients might also cancel their summer plans.

The matter was also discussed at length in a meeting, chaired by the Force Commander of Gilgit-Baltistan Indian Hussain Gillani and attended among others by GB tourism secretary Pato and GBATO heads.

The Pato chairman presented a briefing on the proposed fee structure, drawing comparisons with Nepal's mountain royalties. He strongly advocated for reverting the recent fee increase, highlighting its detrimental impact on Pakistan's adventure tourism sector and the livelihoods of mountain communities that rely on seasonal tourism jobs.

Following extensive discussions, the GB tourism secretary agreed to review the increased fees based on proposals submitted by Pato and GBATO, promising a decision within a week. However, it is yet to be seen if the authorities will withdraw the increase in fees to allow the tourism sector to thrive once again.

GB govt urged to reverse hike in royalty, mountaineering fees

Tour operators say move badly hit adventure tourism, hospitality and other sectors

By Jamil Nagri

GILGIT: Tour operators have expressed concerns over the steep hike in royalty and mountaineering fees, alleging that the Gilgit-Baltistan government's decision is detrimental to the region's growing adventure tourism sector.

They claimed that the move has already rendered many people jobless due to a significant drop in tourist footfall.

Expressing serious concerns over the move, representatives from Pakistan Association of Tour Operators (Pato), Gilgit-Baltistan Tour Operators

Missing boy's body recovered after two months

RAWALPINDI: The body of a four-year-old boy, who went missing about two months ago in Rawat, was recovered from a pond close to the house where he had gone along with his mother and two siblings to attend a wedding ceremony.

The mother, who also had a baby girl and a son younger than the missing boy, did not leave the house for two weeks in a hope that he would be reunited with her son.

But after her husband's condition deteriorated due to cancer, she returned to her home, and the boy's father passed away a few days later, one of their relatives said.

Omer Rauf, a resident of Rawat, told Dawn that his sister with her three children had gone to participate in a wedding ceremony of a relative on November 23 when her elder son Ansham went missing while playing with other children outside the area. He recalled that there had been an aerial firing in the village due to which some of the children among them his nephew had run away in panic.

After some time when his sister realised that her son had gone missing, a search was launched but the boy could not be traced.

Later, the relatives sought police help and registered an FIR with the Rawat police.

The parents of the missing boy had to pass through another ordeal in the hands of police investigating officer, Mr Rauf claimed.

"The IO demanded Nikahnama and CNIC of my sister and also harassed the younger brother of my sister who had accompanied her to the wedding ceremony," he alleged.

Mr Rauf said he approached the regional police officer (RPO) and the city police officer Rawalpindi seeking their help, but his efforts remained unproductive.

The body of the missing boy was found after a passerby couple spotted the body on the surface of the pond on Saturday and informed the villagers.

"Yes, it was the body of young Ansham clad in the wedding dress when it was taken out of the water," Mr Rauf told Dawn.

He said the police investigating officer visited the spot and shifted the body to the District Headquarters Hospital for postmortem.

On the other hand, a police spokesman said CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani had taken notice of the incident and sought a report from the SP Sadar Division.

The spokesman said that four-year-old Ansham went to a wedding with his mother in November and went missing while playing with other children. A case of the incident was registered at Rawat police station and a search was launched. "The police made every effort to search the child using all technical and human intelligence sources."

The child's family also worked with the police to search for the child but remained unsuccessful. The child's body was found in a pond near the location where he had gone to the wedding ceremony with his mother, said the spokesman.

It appears to be a case of death after falling into the pond while playing; however, a postmortem has been conducted on the body.

— Mohammad Asghar

Officials told to remain on alert amid harsh AJK winter

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq on Sunday directed the administration to remain on high alert amid harsh winter conditions in upper Neelum Valley, following the death of a pregnant woman allegedly due to limited healthcare access.

He issued these directives after reports surfaced on social media, claiming that a 21 years old pregnant woman from Taobutt Bala village, who was being carried to Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital in Kel, by her relatives on foot on Saturday night succumbed due to the alleged unavailability of healthcare services in the area. The woman's family blamed the death on blocked roads and inadequate health facilities.

Local journalist Hayat Awan told Dawn that the woman's relatives and neighbours protested by placing her body on snow, accusing the government of negligence.

When contacted, Deputy Commissioner Nadeem Ahmed Janjua said: "Continuous snowfall and frost make the main artery and link roads impassable."

Even heavy machinery struggles in these conditions."

He dismissed claims of inadequate healthcare, stating that upper Neelum had several health facilities, including a THQ Hospital equipped with specialist doctors, gynaecologists, and medicines. Additionally, the Pakistan Army also operated health facilities in the area, he added.

— Staff Correspondent



Dark clouds hang over the 7th Avenue metro station in Islamabad on Sunday evening. — Photo by Mohammad Asim

CDA may take up Monal case in Supreme Court again

Official says civic agency will attempt to convince top court that existence of eatery was not 'unjustified'

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to challenge the closure and demolition of the Monal restaurant, which was recently shut down by the Supreme Court for encroaching on protected land.

Talking to Dawn, CDA's Director Environment Dr Irfan Niaz said: "The CDA will again take up the issue of Monal in the Supreme Court in a separate case of the Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI) to explain the existence of the restaurant was not unjustified."

The official hoped that the authority would try to convince that under the law, the CDA's acquired land could not be given to anyone without payments.

The Supreme Court had ordered the closure of Monal and the adjacent La Montana restaurant in August last year, and they were closed in

September to protect the biodiversity of the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP).

"The Supreme Court ordered the closing of Monal only because the word 'restaurant' was not mentioned in its conceptual document," the CDA official claimed.

"Rather, it was mentioned in the document that a hotel, recreational facility, and tourist spot will be established at the site of Monal. I had requested to consider Monal as a hotel, tourist place, and recreational facility which also houses restaurants; however, the court ordered its closure and ruling only because the word 'restaurant' was missing," he claimed.

"We had also presented a list of 132 other hotels, restaurants and recreational places being run in the national park area, but the court did not take any decision about them," he added.

These places included a hotel of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), which is in the vicinity of Monal, some small kiosks, and a number of other restaurants and hotels in Shakarparian as well as the Islamabad Club and the Pak-China Friendship Centre.

Some of the owners of these hotels and outlets were contacted. A few said they had not received any notice from

the authorities, while a few were reluctant to share details.

PTDC Acting Managing Director Ashfaq Ahmed was also contacted, but he didn't reply, saying "he would call back later".

The CDA built Monal in 2004, and the eatery became operational in 2006. Following the establishment of the restaurant, it was leased out to the Monal Group of Hotels.

About two decades ago, the government and the CDA, under former chairman Kamran Lashari, felt that the federal capital lacked recreational places, hotels, and tourist spots.

At the time, plots for high-rise buildings like Centaurus and Constitution 1 (twin towers) were auctioned for the highest-ever bids, and restaurants like Monal and 1969 area were established.

When contacted, former CDA chairman Kamran Lashari shared his experience of establishing Monal, whose construction work took one year. "If anything was wrong in Monal and it was harming the national park then there must be some solutions to it rather [going] straightly to its closure," he said.

Mr Lashari said a number of countries, like African states and Switzerland, were making millions of

dollars through tourism in national park areas. He said it would have been better to form a committee of experts to decide how the restaurant could be made environmentally friendly.

In September, a three-judge bench also rejected a set of review petitions moved by the Monal Group of Companies and others.

On Aug 21, the Supreme Court in its detailed order had directed the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board to take possession of restaurants namely Monal, La Montana and Gloria Jeans and obligated the CDA and the police to assist the wildlife board.

Then-CJP Quazi Faez Isa, in a 13-page order, said that Monal, La Montana, and Gloria Jeans were in total disregard of the provisions of the Islamabad Wildlife (Protection, Preservation and Management) Ordinance, 1973.

The operators of these restaurants and those who permitted them to operate disregarded the integrity of the national park, ravaged its flora, and displaced and disturbed the endemic bird and animal life, the SC judgement had regretted.

An astronomical environmental cost was also borne by the public and will continue to be borne by future generations, then-CJP Quazi Faez Isa had lamented.

Minister for robust policy enforcement to tackle vehicular emissions

By Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice Asam Nazeer Tarar has emphasised the urgent need for a robust policy enforcement to tackle vehicular emissions, a significant contributor to the country's worsening smog problem.

Smog, now a pressing public health hazard, disrupted lives, economic activity, and transportation while causing severe health issues.

Chairing the 10th meeting of the National Climate Change Policy Implementation Committee at the ministry, Mr Tarar stressed the need for immediate actions to curb smog and air pollution. He said coordinated efforts among government bodies were essential to address the environmental crisis.

Aisha Humera Mariani, Secretary Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, briefed the meeting on the implementation of the National Climate Change Policy 2021. She outlined progress on renewable energy projects and the National Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy 2019, both designed to

reduce the country's carbon footprint.

The participants were informed that significant strides had been made in expanding solar, wind, and hydropower projects, aligning with Pakistan's goal of achieving a 30 per cent renewable energy share in its energy mix by 2030. Public-private partnerships have been instrumental in accelerating these initiatives.

She also detailed the growing adoption of EVs, particularly two- and three-wheelers, supported by government incentives such as tax exemptions and reduced customs duties.

These measures aimed to reduce transport-sector emissions and promote a cleaner, sustainable future.

Representatives from federal and provincial agencies, including the ministries of Industries and Energy, and the National Highways and Motorway Police endorsed the adoption of mandatory vehicle emission standards. They agreed on enforcing Euro-5 or higher standards through stricter compliance monitoring and regular vehicle inspections.

The minister stressed the importance of nationwide enforcement

of stringent emissions standards.

"Ensuring conformity with Euro-5 standards is critical to improving air quality and tackling the recurring smog problem," he said.

Imran Ahmed, Director General (Oil) at the Ministry of Energy, said 60pc of Pakistan's fuel consumption still relied on substandard Euro-2 and Euro-3 fuel.

This contributes significantly to sulfur oxides (SOx) emissions, especially from diesel vehicles. Upgrading local fuel refineries to align with regional standards is crucial to mitigate this issue.

The meeting also reviewed government initiatives under the National EV Policy 2019, which included incentives for EV adoption and the development of EV-based mass transit systems.

The minister urged swift approval of the new energy policy to facilitate nationwide promotion of EVs and hybrid vehicles, including mass transit fleets.

The meeting observed that by prioritizing EV adoption, renewable energy projects, and stricter emission standards, Pakistan aimed to address urban air pollution and mitigate the adverse effects of smog.

UK to promote entrepreneurial culture in Pakistan: envoy

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott on Sunday said that the United Kingdom would continue cooperating with Pakistan to promote entrepreneurial culture and skills and build entrepreneurial spirit in youth of the country.

Pakistani youth have entrepreneurial skills and potential and the British High Commission in Islamabad will continue its due support to develop this potential, Ms Marriott said while speaking at the annual inter-school business competition hosted by her along with Kings Trust International and SERED Ventures.

Talking to this agency, the high commissioner said today, young students from five different schools and education institutions belonging to all the provinces of the country and Islamabad presented their business models and business-related ideas, which reflected their excellent entrepreneurial skills and capabilities.

The envoy said the British High Commission had already started various programmes to promote girls' education and entrepreneurship in Pakistan and more programmes were being planned.

She said the private sector, especially Small and Medium Enterprises, played an important role in any economy.

She said in today's modern world, start-ups, innovation, and entrepreneurial skills are the backbone of any emerging economy, and to increase the role of youth in the future economy, these skills must be taught to them.

The high commissioner said that there is a lot of potential in economic and trade relations between the United Kingdom and Pakistan and that vast opportunities existed for promoting future bilateral trade. — APP

Gilani says education vital for shaping Pakistan's future

Insists technological advances necessary for students to develop faculties for meeting job requirements

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Sunday highlighted the importance of edu-

cation in shaping Pakistan's future and called on universities to play a pivotal role in equipping students to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Speaking at the 25th degree-awarding ceremony of Iqra University Islamabad, he urged the graduating classes of 2023 and 2024 to embrace the changing world with knowledge, innovation and a commitment to national progress.

The ceremony held at the Jinnah Convention Centre celebrated the hard work and dedication of over 500 graduates, marking a signifi-

cant milestone in their academic journey.

"The world around us is changing fast. Technological advances such as AI, Machine Learning, Genomics, Internet of Things, Blockchain, and Quantum Computing necessitate our students to develop their faculties to match the new requirements of the job market," said Mr Gilani.

He emphasised the importance of cognitive, socio-emotional and digital learning skills to ensure employability in this new era.

He added, "As we transition to a knowledge economy, we see a shift

from traditional growth factors to building human and intellectual capital for sustainable increase in GDP."

The predominant source of influence in the modern world stems from information, intelligence, and insight rather than physical power or natural resources." Drawing inspiration from renowned futurist Alvin Toffler, Mr Gilani quoted, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." He urged educational institutions to be

proactive in fostering critical thinking, innovation, and leadership in students, thereby contributing to Pakistan's economic and social growth.

The Senate chairman also emphasised the need for collaboration between the government, academia, and parliament to ensure that Pakistan's youth are equipped with the tools to thrive.

"We must work together – the academia, the parliament, and the government – to ensure excellence and innovation in education," he said. He mentioned the improvement in

the quality of education provided at Bahauddin Zakaria University and said hundreds of students were sent on fully funded scholarships abroad through the university.

Mr Gilani also quoted Pakistan's founder Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who said, "Pakistan is proud of her youth, particularly the students who have always been in the forefront in the hour of trial and need. You are the nation's leaders of tomorrow and you must fully equip yourself by discipline, education and training for the arduous task lying ahead of you."

Fruitless war won't deliver any good, says CM Bugti

Criticises doctors for 'opposing' reforms in health department

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti has said the people of Balochistan are standing with the state of Pakistan as our future is linked with the country. Speaking at a public gathering during his visit to mineral-rich Nokundi area, he said that a fruitless war cannot deliver anything and there is a need to stand shoulder to shoulder with the state of Pakistan for achieving the rights of the people of Balochistan.

Provincial Minister for Finance, Mines and Mineral Mr Shoaib Nadeem, Minister Dawood Kumar, and MNA Usman Badini were also present on the occasion.

The chief minister said the past provincial governments and bureaucracy lacked capacity to utilise the annual budget, but this time, the government was determined to ensure that at least 90 per cent of the budget was spent on development projects in the province.

He said the current government has around Rs210 billion funds and it is planned to effectively spend it on different development projects.

The chief minister criticised the state of affairs in the health department, stating, the Balochistan government provides Rs40 billion to the department to provide the best treatment to people.

"[W]e are trying to reform the system to provide best treatment facilities to the masses, but when we try to introduce reforms in the health department, doctors and other health workers start protesting," he said, adding the protesters "do not want any improvement" in healthcare facilities.

The chief minister said health department officials themselves seek treatment in Karachi's Aga Khan Hospital and records were available to verify this. Yet, they do not want any improvement in government hospitals of the province, he added.

Registration of worker associations cancelled

By Our Staff Correspondent

QUETTA: The Director General of the Balochistan Charities Registration and Regulation Authority has revoked the registration of 50 employee associations in various government departments in the province.

According to an official notification issued by the director general, the decision was made in compliance with orders from the Balochistan High Court.

The associations whose registrations have been cancelled include the Metropolitan Corporation Quetta Employees Association, Employees Welfare Association of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University, PPRI Employees Association, Balochistan Fisheries Employees Association, and Balochistan Technical Staff Association.

Other affected associations included the Staff Association of the Balochistan Tax Board Quetta, Field Officers Association, Medical Teachers Association, Local Government Officers Association, Officers Association Workers Board, and Public Health Engineering Employees Association.



SARGODHA: A child exercises at an open-air gym in Company Bagh, on Sunday.—APP

PTI to challenge ruling

Continued from Page 1

through the Supreme Court.

The amount was deposited in the foreign reserve account, and the equivalent amount, i.e. Rs34 billion, was deposited in the Supreme Court's account.

Meanwhile, Malik Riaz also deposited the amount due to which the Supreme Court transferred Rs400 to the federal government and Rs400 to the Sindh government's accounts, he added.

He said that in the judgement, it had been written that the land was initially transferred to Zulfiqar Bhakhti and then to Imran Khan.

It was because the trust was not established at that time and once the trust was established, land was transferred in the name of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi.

"Although we are going to challenge it in a few days, it is a fact that 'constitutional judges' are being appointed," he alleged.

Mr Raja said it was condemnable that Bushra Bibi had been imprisoned just because her name was included in the list of trustees.

Without naming the establishment, he said PTI would continue holding talks at different levels as

the party wanted to continue to play a role in the country's politics.

Replying to questions, Mr Raja claimed that judges were under pressure.

PTI leader Karwal Shauq also criticised Bushra Bibi's imprisonment, accusing the government of targeting her to exert pressure on Imran Khan.

"The fact is that the Form-47 government will not be able to give mental torture to Imran Khan, and that is why Bushra Bibi went to jail and surrendered herself," she said.

Challenge

The PTI is all set to challenge the Al-Qadir Trust case in the high court on Tuesday.

PTI Central Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram said in a statement that the party would file an appeal at the earliest with the high court, aiming to quash the contentious verdict and correct the egregious miscarriage of justice.

He expressed confidence that the names of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi would be cleared in the first hearing because the decision was a "blatant travesty of justice, driven by political motivations and fabricated charges".

Mr Akram remained hopeful that the court would order the immediate release of Mr Khan, as the decision was a grave injustice and a mockery of Pakistan's justice system.

He emphasised that Imran Khan, having committed no wrongdoing, steadfastly refused to compromise his principles and decided to fight his more than 200 cases in the courts.

He vowed that the PTI founder would seek to clear his name through the judicial process instead of resorting to underhanded deals because he believed in the supremacy of the Constitution, the rule of law and democracy.

The PTI leader vowed that "power usurpers" attempting tactics "would ultimately fail, as they had in the past."

He emphasised that it would be better to accept the ground reality and immediately release all political prisoners, including Imran Khan and his wife, besides establishing a powerful judicial commission comprising senior Supreme Court judges to investigate the May 9 and Nov 25 incidents.

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Centre, KP seek clarity on gas sale

Continued from Page 1

Holdings (Pvt) Limited (GHPL) (5pc).

MOL-Pakistan has sought consent from other shareholders for signing of gas sale purchase agreement with UGDCI, according to documents seen by Dawn.

The deal would enable the Islamabad-based UGDCI to acquire gas for its private customers, mostly CNG stations, to be sold through a pipeline network of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd (SNGPL) on payment of wheeling charges.

However, PGL has claimed that the natural resource, overwhelmingly (55pc) owned by the public companies, could not be legally sold to a third party without competitive bidding.

Dawn reached out to Petroleum Minister Moinuddin Malik, Secretary Moinin Agha, and managing directors of UGDCI, PPL, and GHPL, but none responded to repeated calls or written questions despite reminders.

MOL-Pakistan's Regional Vice President Ali Marwana Abbas also did not respond to written requests for comments.

The MOL-Pakistan has told its partners that its negotiations with UGDCI for the sale of Islamabad gas, the total expected output from the Raigar field.

Under the commercial terms, UGDCI would purchase gas at 10.5pc premium over the Petroleum Exploration & Production Policy 2012, against a 100pc take and pay condition.

PGL has objected to this transaction and complained of being "kept in the dark" over the negotiations and concluded terms.

In letters to other shareholders, PGL demanded a competitive bidding process for the sale of gas from the field before finalising the buyer and price to avoid any potential complications.

Ghans Abdullah Paracha, the chief executive officer of UGDCI, has said his company signed an agreement with MOL-Pakistan in March 2023 for Islamabad gas from the Mamikhal field.

Under the agreement, UGDCI was bound to purchase gas in future as well.

"This transaction is progressing under the same agreement," he added.

Mr Paracha alleged that some new players having "no experience of gas sales" were trying to "spoil the market".

He said the UGDCI had given the highest ever premium on gas production price and that too on 100pc take-and-pay model.

According to Mr Paracha, UGDCI was required to make advance payments and had even agreed to pay for 11pc system losses to the SNGPL instead of the actual 6.5pc for transportation and wheeling of gas from Mamikhal and Raigar fields to its customers.

"This is in addition to duties and taxes and windfall levy to the government."

He said none of the private gas distribution businesses were eligible for the transaction, while the two government-owned entities, Pakistan LNG Limited and a Punjab government firm, were not interested in the deal.

He said he had even offered the government to purchase surplus LNG from Sui gas companies for him to sell to his customers at a minimal profit.

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US delegation meets BBoIT leadership to discuss investment

QUETTA: Shahid Ahmed Khan, a member of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Arts (PACA) at the John F. Kennedy Centre in Washington D.C., met Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT) Vice Chairman Bilal Kakar and CEO Abdul Kabir Zarkoon on Sunday to discuss investment opportunities and development prospects in Balochistan.

The meeting focused on using modern technology for earthquake-related surveys in mines and minerals sectors, aiming to identify untapped natural resources in the region.

They also discussed the Greater Free Zone, security concerns, organic cotton production, Balal meat exports and potential collaborations between the United States and Balochistan in the education and healthcare sectors.

BBoIT CEO Zarkoon, who participated in the meeting virtually, outlined sectors ripe for investment in

Balochistan and stressed the province's potential for economic growth and development.

Vice Chairman Kakar underscored the government's commitment to creating a secure and investor-friendly environment. "We want investors from across the globe to conduct business here without any fear and contribute to the development of Balochistan and Pakistan," he said.

Mr Kakar highlighted the BBoIT's

proactive efforts to attract investment and improve the ease of doing business in the province.

"The path to development and prosperity in Balochistan cannot be obstructed. Both domestic and foreign investors are expressing their desire to invest in various sectors of Balochistan. Major projects will soon be launched here, paving new avenues of progress and prosperity," he added.

—Staff Correspondent

Hope returns to Gaza as first prisoners freed

Continued from Page 1

lane to deliver the names of prisoners it would free, and said it had struck Hamas fighters. Hamas said the backdrop in providing the list was a technical glitch.

Hamas' armed wing said the group would abide by the ceasefire agreement, but that any possible Israeli violations would endanger the process and put the lives of prisoners at risk. In a video speech, Abu Uthala urged mediators to compel Israel to commit to the ceasefire deal, adding that the group would abide by all phases of the agreement and the timetable of the prisoner-exchange accord.

"Everything is dependent on the commitment by the enemy... Violations from the side of the occupation (Israel) would put the prisoners at risk," said Abu Uthala.

Biden welcomes deal

"Today the gains in Gaza have gone silent," said US President Joe Biden, who welcomed on his last full day in office a truce that had eluded US diplomacy for more than a year.

The truce calls for fighting to stop, aid to be sent to Gaza and 33 of the 58 Israeli and foreign prisoners still held there to go free over the six-week first phase in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli jails.

For Hamas, the truce could provide an opportunity to emerge from the shadows after 15 months in hiding. Hamas policemen dressed in blue police uniforms swiftly deployed in some areas.

People who had gathered to cheer the fighters chanted "Greetings to against security forces and civilians and were wanted by law enforcement agencies."

Earlier this month, three soldiers were martyred, while 19 terrorists were killed in separate incidents in Karak, Peshawar and Mohmand districts.

According to ISPR, the terrorists

were killed in three separate engagements.

The government, through an official notification a few months ago, designated the banned TTP as Faza al Khawarij, while mandating all institutions to use the term Khawarij (outcast) when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks.

clashes between two groups, leaving over 130 people, including women and children, dead. On November 22, the Bagan banar came under attack when over 500 shops besides several houses were burnt to the ground.

Although the main transportation route between Peshawar and Bagan has remained closed for over 100 days, life in Bagan, an area located on the main route some 60 kilometers north-west of the district headquarters Peshawar with around 24,000 registered voters, is also at a standstill.

After the month-long violence, a grand jirga announced a peace accord. However, the agreement faced a major blow when a convoy carrying aid supplies to Bagan on January 16, the same area where the November 21 attack had taken place. Before this, the convoy of the ex-deputy commissioner was attacked only a few days after the agreement.

Bagan sits in

Locals in Bagan are also holding a sit-in which has entered its fourth week. On January 17, a local elder from Bagan town, Haji Karim, said their demands were

Kurram onfeet

A passenger convoy which came under attack on November 21, 2024, in Bagan triggered armed

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At breaking point

PAKISTAN'S prisons have become a masterclass in how not to run a correctional system. With facilities bursting at 150pc of their capacity and three-quarters of inmates merely awaiting their day in court, the country's jails serve as monuments to bureaucratic paralysis rather than justice. A recent report, *Pakistan's Prison Landscape*, tells a compelling story: 102,026 prisoners crammed into spaces designed for 65,811. Karachi Central Prison, operating at an eye-watering 350pc of capacity, resembles a sardine tin more than a correctional facility. Most troubling is that 74,918 of these inmates are still awaiting trial, caught in the quagmire of a sluggish judicial system that makes *Dickens' Jarndyce v Jarndyce* look expeditious.

Pakistan's lawmakers have only worsened matters. The 2022 amendment to the Control of Narcotics Substances Act, which axed parole and probation options for drug offenders, has achieved precisely what any first-year criminology student could have predicted: a surge in incarcerations. In Punjab alone, drug-related imprisonments account for nearly 30pc of the prison population. Behind the prison walls, conditions would make a medieval jailer blush. Inmates navigate an obstacle course of unsanitary conditions, dirty water, meagre food, and exploitative labour practices. Family visits and legal consultations are treated as luxury items rather than basic rights.

The solutions are not rocket science. Pakistan must first drag its pretrial detention system into the 21st century. The practice of tossing people behind bars for minor offences does not make any sense. A proper bail reform package, paired with readily available legal aid, could thin the crowds considerably. Alternatives sentencing desperately needs a seat at the table. Community service programmes — absent from Pakistan's penal menu — could offer a more sensible approach for minor offenders while giving overcrowded cells some breathing room. The Pakistan Prison Rules of 1978 have aged about as well as telegram in the age of smartphones, and cry out for modernisation across all provinces. With an incarceration rate of just 40 prisoners per 100,000 population — barely a third of the global median — Pakistan's crisis becomes even more perplexing. This low rate, far from being a success story, masks a troubling reality: a justice system too overwhelmed to process cases effectively, with informal dispute resolution filling the vacuum. That such a modest caseload has still managed to overwhelm the prison system speaks volumes about its structural deficiencies. The failure to address these issues suggests Pakistan's commitment to justice is weak. An independent oversight mechanism through the National Commission for Human Rights, empowered to conduct surprise inspections and handle prisoner complaints, could shine some much-needed light on these dark corners. While its prisoners have lost their freedom, a civilised society cannot justify stripping them of their fundamental dignity.

Lower growth

THE IMF has slightly marked down its previous growth forecast for Pakistan's economy from 3.2pc to 3pc for the current fiscal year, underscoring the fragility of the recent stability. Though it has not elaborated on the reasons for the downgrade, its concerns over the erosion of the economy's capacity to support growth are unmistakable. This also shows that the economy is caught up in a low-growth equilibrium in the absence of any significant domestic or foreign stimulus. Almost every international agency expects growth prospects for Pakistan to remain subdued for the next few years. International developments too are adding to risks to growth, even though the forecast for the global economy remains unchanged at 3.3pc in the IMF's latest six-monthly *World Economic Outlook Update*. For example, the ongoing slowdown in the eurozone, a major export market for Pakistani goods, is likely to keep our industrial output suppressed. Moreover, the threat by the incoming US president to impose additional tariffs on imports from China, the EU and the rest of the world, has further deepened uncertainty for the global economy, including Pakistan's.

Economic stability without growth should be worrisome for the ruling PML-N, which has recently devised its five-year "homogrown" economic development programme, Uraan, promising to boost growth to 6pc by the end of its term. But is it worried enough to undertake critical reforms to address the imbalances that always lead us back to the door of the IMF for bailouts and to end our growth drought? Not really. True, the signs of recent macroeconomic stability are encouraging. But that is not enough as any attempt to push the growth accelerator without first implementing structural economic changes will again propel us towards a balance-of-payments crisis. There is a reason why no private foreign investment is coming to Pakistan in spite of promises of billions of dollars from the wealthy Gulf nations. This basically underlines a lack of investor confidence in the country's commitment to reform itself. Besides, the resurgence of militant violence in KP and Balochistan, and unresolved political divisions in the country are keeping investors away. Without heavy private investment in the economy, a growth rate greater than 3pc to 4pc will remain elusive. We are no longer in a position to pull off higher growth rates by encouraging imported consumption with borrowed money.

Nutrition challenge

WHEN a country's children go hungry, its future withers. In Pakistan, where over 40pc of children under five are stunted, nearly 18pc are wasted, and more than half suffer from anaemia, malnutrition threatens to undermine a generation. For a middle-income country with nuclear capabilities and significant agricultural output, such statistics are appalling. Yet amid this troubling landscape, there are glimmers of hope. Recent data from Sindh shows some progress. Infant mortality rates in the province now stand at 2.5pc, below the national average of 5.4pc. The province's public hospitals are achieving mortality rates comparable to private institutions, demonstrating that public healthcare, when properly managed, can deliver satisfactory outcomes. This success stems from Sindh's embrace of public-private partnerships in paediatric care. The establishment of emergency facilities across major cities and telemedicine services in 106 tehsils shows how strategic collaboration can expand healthcare access.

The disparity within territories is striking. Punjab, despite its greater resources, has established only two emergency rooms in Multan and Lahore. Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and other regions have made minimal progress, while KP and Azad Kashmir still lack paediatric emergency facilities. Sindh's progress highlights the urgent need for similar initiatives across Pakistan. To begin with, Pakistan must address the basic issue of food security, with 7.9m people facing acute food insecurity. The successful public-private partnership model needs replication beyond Sindh's borders. Moreover, there must be greater focus on preventive care and nutrition education, particularly given that only 38pc of infants are exclusively breastfed in their first six months. Granted that the challenges are enormous — and include funding constraints and weak inter-sectoral coordination — but progress is possible with political will and smart partnerships. Pakistan's economic future is in great peril. We can either invest in our children's nutrition now or pay a far heavier price in lost potential and productivity. The clock is ticking.

OPINION



BY MALEEHA LODHI

Trump, Act II

Will Trump's foreign policy be destabilising for the world as is being widely anticipated?

DURING the election campaign, President Donald Trump repeatedly said he wanted to "stop wars" and prevent the US from becoming embroiled in foreign adventures. But his provocative statements earlier this month sent a different message. He threatened to take over the Panama Canal and Greenland, if necessary by military force, and turn Canada into the 51st state of the US by using "economic force". He also suggested the Gulf of Mexico should be renamed the "Gulf of America". Meanwhile, his close ally and X member Elon Musk called for the removal of UK's Keir Starmer government and declared his support for the far right in Germany.

Does this mean Trump 2.0 is already proving to be destabilising for the world even before he starts his second term? His aggressive assertions certainly signal that, emerging countries in Europe and beyond. His statements did not of course go unanswered. French and German leaders shot back to warn the US not to meddle with Europe's borders while Danish leaders said Greenland was not for sale. The Mexican president responded to Trump's remarks by saying parts of the US should instead be named Mexican America. Canada's then prime minister, Justin Trudeau, tweeted "there was a snowball's chance in hell" of his country becoming part of the US.

But the question is whether all this is characteristic Trumpian bluster or a disturbing indication of what's to come, which many see as a throwback to 19th-century US imperialism or an age of territorial expansionism. The *Financial Times* decried Trump's "expansionist rhetoric" as "dangerously wrong-headed" and pointed to its "unsettling" effect on America's allies. For some time will tell whether such pronouncements will actually translate into policy actions.

It is hard to say if power will have a moderating effect on Trump's conduct and policies. Although Europe seems more shaken by his utterances, it is the future course of US-China relations that will be more consequential for global stability. China has been calmly preparing to deal with Trump with its officials in touch with his team

ahead of his assumption of office. Trump's threat to impose much higher tariffs on imports from China, and other trading partners, has raised the spectre of an escalation in the trade and tech war between the world's two superpowers. But it may not be easy to carry out that threat. The impact of such action on the American consumer will be hard to ignore as higher tariffs will lead more inflation. China has also evolved a plan to retaliate in a tariff war by actions that could hurt American companies as well as direct its exports to other and new markets.

Given Trump's transactional approach, his tariff threats may well be to generate negotiating leverage to drive a harder trade bargain with China. He has frequently said he seeks a better relationship with Beijing. He spoke by phone with President Xi Jinping before taking over and even took the unprecedented step of inviting him to his inauguration. The Chinese leader declined but by sending Vice-President Han Zheng to attend the oath-taking he signalled readiness to positively engage with Washington. This doesn't change the fact that a bipartisan consensus in the US views China as an adversary to be countered. America's top strategic priority will continue to be to contain China. That doesn't however rule out Trump seeking a grand bargain with Beijing. For his part, President Xi has said a trade war would have "no winners". It remains an open question whether the two sides can ever time agree on some kind of mutual coexistence, which would obviously be salutary for global stability.

In the Middle East, Trump's intervention produced the breakthrough that resulted in a ceasefire agreement in Gaza between Hamas and Israel — days before he assumed office. He warned a quick end to the 15-month war and had said if hostages were not released before his inauguration "all hell will break out". However, many challenges lie ahead. The Gaza deal has to be enforced in all its phases. Trump is expected to be unwavering in his support for Israel but he is also capable of putting pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as he did to end

the ceasefire deal. Members of his team are all staunchly pro-Israel. This could embolden Israel to annex the West Bank — a step Trump might approve. This would plunge the region into more turmoil. It would certainly end any possibility of an independent Palestinian state, which is the key to durable peace in the region.

Trump may be more open to talks with Tehran rather than to Israel's long-standing desire to wage war against Iran. Under a reformist president, Iran would be an avenue of engaging with Washington. There are indications Trump will loosen sanctions but he may also consider this an opportune moment to negotiate with an Iran weakened by its recent setbacks in Syria and Israel's pummeling of Hamas and Hezbollah. His ally Elon Musk has already met with Iran's UN envoy in New York. Trump will in any case have to deal with a region which has seen geopolitical shifts that have realigned relations among regional states following the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Claiming he can end the Ukraine war in 24 hours, Trump has offered no specific plan on how to do this. He wants Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin to enter negotiations to forge a peace deal. But the terms on which this can happen are unclear. Trump has said a meeting with Putin will quickly be arranged. The Kremlin too is keen on early engagement. European leaders worry in that Trump might push for an outcome that advantages Moscow and not consult them. He has in the past been critical of US financial and military support for Ukraine for a conflict he has described as a "bloody mess".

For Trump unpredictability is both a habit and a tactic. Therefore, little can be said with any certainty. What seems likely though is that with such a mercurial personality in the White House committed to "America First", the world is in for a turbulent phase and further weakening of multilateralism. ■

The writer is a former ambassador to the UK, UK and UN.

POLITICAL SUBSTITUTE



BY UMAIR JAVED

Middle class in crisis

A BUSINESS publication recently reported that in the first five months of the current fiscal year, salaried employees contributed Rs200 billion as income tax. This is Rs2.5m for 56 per cent higher than the same period in the previous fiscal year, in which salary tax deductions emerged as the third biggest contributor to direct revenues.

An insightful assessment by citizens and tax equity advocates, Amer Sharif, shows that a household earning Rs500,000 per month is effectively paying a tax rate of 33pc, after factoring in income tax deduction and sales taxes on major consumption items. Using the same type of household as an example, broad estimates show that after accounting for tax deductions and basic needs (rent, utilities, private education, health, transport), inflation has left less than 10pc for unexpected or discretionary spending. Amidst such conditions, anger and frustration with the status quo, and efforts to migrate abroad have become more commonplace among white-collar, salaried professionals. The sentiment is understandable given a disastrous combination of high inflation, anaemic increases in salaries, and eroding purchasing power.

However, there are some broader points worth making around the impact of higher taxes and inflation on salaried professionals. An important one is that most white-collar professional households — the kind who are being taxed at high rates — are a small percentage of the total population, and are still, objectively, better off than the majority of families in Pakistan.

Average household monthly income, as per the last Household Budgetary Economic Survey in 2019, was around Rs42,000, ie, below the income tax threshold. Adjusting for inflation, the same average today would be around Rs70,000. In a context where the minimum wage is still under Rs40,000, majority of workers, who are found in manual and elementary occupations, are likely making less than the average.

There are a few other datapoints worth keeping in mind as well. Opting for high-cost private education, such as the O/A-level system, is increasingly common among urban professional households. However, it still accounts for only 3pc of all students giving secondary/higher secondary exams annually. The number is about 50,000 A-level students versus 2.5 million sitting for the intermediate exam annually. This ratio

also excludes students from low-income households who have dropped out of the education system entirely.

Similarly, electricity consumption data shows that less than 1pc of all households consume, on average, 700 units of electricity per month, while nearly 40pc average less than 300 units per month. Finally, the 2023 census shows that less than 17pc of all households reside in housing that consists of four rooms (of any type) or more.

Collectively, figures for income, educational choice, utility consumption, and housing depict a clearer picture of Pakistan's income distribution, ie, a poor country with a very small and relatively better-off white-collar segment.

None of this is meant to either justify the onerous tax burden faced by working professionals, or to gloss over their feelings of frustration. Instead, it is to bring some perspective to the conversation and identify two different

There is no dollar bonanza forthcoming that can cheapen imports and sustain middle class consumption.

types of economic crises facing Pakistani households today.

The first is a crisis of subsistence that is confronting the majority of households, who are mired in poverty and struggling to meet basic subsistence needs. Such households were already living in precarious circumstances, and the last few years have squeezed their budgets in a disastrous way. People now routinely face daunting choices between food, shelter, and healthcare expenses.

The second crisis is a crisis of social mobility and stagnation that is being faced by salaried, professional households (who often refer to themselves as the 'middle class'). This is not a crisis of getting enough calories or having a roof over your head. Rather, it is about unmet expectations and ambitions.

Growing up, such individuals were told that gaining the right education credential and sta-

ble employment would allow them to achieve material prosperity. The expectation was that such prosperity would be greater than what the previous generation was able to afford for them, meaning their kids will have better lives. The preference for living in private housing societies, occasionally going out to eat and shop, and sending children to higher-cost private schools reflects these objectives.

While Pakistan has not seen steady growth for many years, this particular segment was shielded from previous low-growth periods by helpful external circumstances (such as aid-driven dollar liquidity) that allowed for greater consumption, and a less competitive labour market. The era for both appears to be over.

Now, there is no dollar bonanza forthcoming that can cheapen imports and sustain middle class consumption. And the expansion of higher education means that supply of credentialised workers exceeds their demand, creating downward pressure on wages and making white-collar jobs more precarious.

An important dimension to the frustration felt by many in this class is that their equivalent professionals in the preceding generation (the one born after independence in 1947) were able to accumulate some degree of wealth and obtain social mobility, often through public sector employment. That route is now largely closed except for a small segment of higher-ranking state officers, who routinely modify rules to direct resources to themselves.

The political consequences of this frustration are already visible on social media, through the results of the last election, and the general support offered to Imran Khan. The white-collar, salaried segment forms the core of the recent anti-status quo upsurge, with state officials and their expenses on cars and trips a frequent target of their ire.

It remains to be seen whether the anger rising from a crisis of immobility and economic stagnation can be calmed down by a few years of low inflation and economic growth. And if there is any possibility of that anger expanding, especially among the majority of households who are facing a far more dangerous crisis of subsistence. ■

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OPINION



BY HUMA YUSUF

Regressive decision

AS I write this, 170 million Americans are wondering whether their TikTok app will go dark, with many scrambling to retain access through VPNs. It is easy to dismiss news of the US TikTok ban as another example of US vs China macho posturing, particularly as many expect Donald Trump to find a way to circumvent the ban (on Sunday, he said he would delay its enforcement). But the ban is the latest threat to a global human rights agenda, and so must be taken seriously.

The US supreme court last week upheld a new law, ruling to ban the app on national security grounds. The concern is that TikTok can be used to collect information about Americans that can be abused by Beijing, and to disseminate pro-China propaganda. To remain accessible to American users, the app's owner ByteDance must divest to a US buyer.

At Trump's inauguration today, TikTok's CEO will be in attendance along with other Big Tech bigwigs. Rumours are circulating of a possible buyout by Elon Musk, enabling social media consolidation under the X platform. Even if Trump fudges a way to retain app access for Americans, the human rights damage is done, and it's significant.

During legal proceedings, TikTok itself made a human rights pitch, arguing that a ban would restrict Americans' freedom of expression, limiting their choice over which platform to publish on or source content from.

But the implications are wider, and link to the court's decision to privilege national security over human rights. Digital rights activists have criticised the ruling for focusing on limiting Chinese access to American user data, rather than considering individuals' rights to data privacy and limiting state surveillance powers. Briefly, the ban's message is it's okay to surveil internet users, as long as the surveillance is being conducted by their own government or complicit companies.

A better approach would have been to use concerns about TikTok as a way to counter Big Tech surveillance and strengthen digital privacy and protection.

As Article 19, a British human rights group, put it, "this bill is unlikely to fundamentally disrupt China's adverse influence over the digital space and without significant changes will fail to solve the fundamental problems posed by the biggest tech platforms, such as data privacy and algorithmic manipulation stemming from surveillance capitalism. It does very little to limit the power the tech giants, including the likes of Google or Meta, exert over public discourse. If anything, it weakens consolidation and digital

monopolies for geopolitical reasons."

Pakistanis should be as worried about the TikTok ban as American users. The ban will be interpreted by authoritarian regimes everywhere as a free pass for internet surveillance. Hybrid regimes such as ours will be particularly excited by the US template which allows for a national security argument to be used to trump any freedom of speech and expression or data privacy considerations. The push for local ownership and data localisation will also be amplified, making state access to user data.

In one fell swoop, the TikTok ban erodes the legitimacy of initiatives such as the Freedom Online Coalition, a group of 39 countries, including the US, that call for a free internet without censorship and political disruption, and the Declaration for the Future of the Internet, which is a 70-plus country pact against the authoritarian control of the internet. Future network shutdowns or social media platform bans by our own government may still be met with international censure, but it will ring hollow.

The TikTok ban, even if circumvented, will also further spur internet fragmentation. In early utopian digital fantasies, the internet's promise of global interconnectivity and a free flow of information across borders was celebrated. So far, isolated not blocking by states has not materially resulted in inoperability.

But the shift towards fragmentation seems inevitable. That means not only differing means for internet access and data privacy, but also separate flows of information in distinct internet spheres. For example, pro-China content will continue to proliferate on TikTok inside the US, leading to divergent global perceptions about the country. Echo chambers will take on global proportions, setting the stage for fragmented realities, a digital reflection of geopolitical tensions.

There is a ray of hope. One potential layer for TikTok is a non-profit entity Project Liberty. This proposal pitches an alternative social media future, one in which TikTok's current extractive algorithm is ditched, and American TikTok users control, protect and profit from their own data. Such an outcome may be the only positive of a regressive ban, which otherwise heralds a new era of state censorship.

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BY MUHAMMAD ALI SIDDIQI

Self-indictment

ISN'T indulging in a bit of self-indictment a healthy activity for nations and individuals?

This question must be answered because most analysts writing on Pakistan's economy tend to ignore geopolitical developments over which Pakistan had no control. These events militated against the growth of Pakistan's economy — an economy that had the potential to make this country one of the Asian Tigers. In fact, during Ayub Khan's 'great decade of development', this country was cited as a model of growth for all developing countries. With rare exceptions, most critics assume that it is the poor quality of political leadership and its inability to formulate and implement sound economic policies that stunted Pakistan's economic progress.

Let us note that it is the other way around also, because sometimes world-shaking events abroad dramatically boosted Pakistan's economic fortunes. Gen Zia-ul-Haq, for instance, was initially looked upon with contempt by Western powers for overthrowing a constitutionally elected government. However, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 changed his fortunes. American president Jimmy Carter, who died recently, had a strong human rights agenda and made his anger known to Zia. But all his ideals vanished when Babrak Karmal entered Afghanistan at the head of 30,000 Soviet troops and was installed as the ruler. In a letter dated Jan 11, 1980, Carter wrote to Zia: "The overthrow of the Afghan government and occupation of that country by Soviet military forces represent a profoundly disturbing threat to the stability of the region and, most directly, to the security of Pakistan. In these circumstances, it is essential that there be no misunderstanding as to the commitment of the United States to the security and territorial integrity of Pakistan." Needless to say, economic and military aid started pouring in.

Two decades later, the attack, led by Egyptian architect and engineer Mohammed Atta, on New York's Twin Towers on Sept 11, 2001, opened a new chapter in US-Pakistan ties, whose consequences would fluctuate to both help and hurt this country.

Gen Pervez Musharraf's rule showed the negative and positive consequences of 9/11 as the attack's mastermind, Osama bin Laden, was based in the mountains between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The ferocity of the US administration was epitomised by a threat to bomb Pakistan into the Stone Age. Afghanistan, ruled by Al Qaeda's Taliban followers, paid a price by refusing to hand over OBL to America. As US air power unleashed its fury, there were 130,000 Nato troops on the ground as part of what president George Bush called Oper-

ation Enduring Freedom. In November, the Kabul regime was destroyed by US-backed forces that included the Iran-supported Northern Alliance and the ruthless Uzbek warlord, Rashid Dostum.

Briefly, Musharraf surrendered to what amounted to an American war ultimatum, his decision proving to be a boon as well as a curse. 'Mush', as some Americans called him fondly, received plenty of American aid, but Afghanistan would turn out to be a problem.

During Musharraf's reign, the annual GDP growth rate was six per cent, poverty was down, 12 million jobs were created, the debt-to-GDP ratio dropped substantially, and Pakistan's reserves increased from \$1.9 billion to \$11.4 bn.

However, the negative results of his decision over Pakistan clearly. More than one attempt was made to assassinate him, as fanatic loyal to the Taliban launched a terror campaign with suicide bombers blowing themselves up in mosques, universities, bazaar and public buses, killing thousands of people.

One example of the foreign causes of Pakistan's economic misfortune is the tragedy that afflicted Pakistan's tourism industry. In fact, one can say with confidence that no country has what Pakistan possesses — three of the world's highest mountain ranges: the Himalayas, Hindu Kush and Karakoram. There are snow-capped peaks which have not been scaled and named. Nestling in the mountainous territory is the legendary Shura, with its breathtaking views mesmerising foreign tourists. The reason for the tourism boom was geography, because European tourists drove through Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan to enter Pakistan via the Khyber Pass, enjoying the scenic beauty along Grand Trunk Road as they reached the historic city of Lahore. This lucrative source of dollars and deutsche marks for Pakistan was cut off by the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. There was nothing Pakistan could do about it.

The question is, to what extent should Pakistan be accused of mismanaging its economy when foreign events beyond its control too have badly hurt economic growth? ■

The writer is Dawn's External Ombudsman and an author.

FROM THE PAST PAGES OF DAWN

1975 Fifty years ago

Third World unity

BEIJING: China sees the Third World as the main force in combating colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism, supports political unity in Western Europe and believes that it will be possible to improve China's relations with the United States, Premier Chou En-lai told the National People's Congress last week in a government policy speech. ... On the other hand, China does not see an end to the ideological conflict with the Soviet Union which it accuses of breaking the 1950 agreements to settling the border conflicts, according to Mr Chou. Mr Chou repeated China's standpoint that the two Super Powers — Russia and the United States — are fighting for hegemony in the world and that this must eventually lead to a new world war. — News agencies

[Meanwhile, as reported by news agencies from Islamabad,] Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has warmly felicitated Mr Chou En-lai on his re-election as the Prime Minister of China. ... Mr Bhutto expressed his fervent hope that the traditionally close and friendly relations ... between the two countries will continue to grow. ... The [PM] said: "I have great pleasure in extending to Your Excellency our warm felicitations."

1950 Seventy-five years ago

Won't bow to force

KARACHI: Mr Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, categorically declared in Parliament yesterday (Thursday) [Jan 19] that "we shall not allow India to dominate Kashmir by force". Irrespective of what anybody may say or do, no matter what the sacrifice, no matter what the consequences. The Prime Minister said that although he very much desired "peace, amity and friendship" with India, it was not possible unless the Kashmir problem was justly settled. ...

Lord Alton welcomed the Prime Minister's declaration. His sentiments were echoed and re-echoed by six of the seven speakers, including the Leader of the Opposition, during the three-hour debate on Kashmir. — Staff correspondent

[Meanwhile, as reported by a correspondent from Cairo,] it is learned here that the Syrian Minister of National Economy, who is at present in al-Riad with a view to obtaining a 25 million dollar Saudi Arabian loan for Syria, may also visit Cairo for the same purpose. ... The Syrian delegates may also visit Pakistan to obtain a 12 million dollar loan. Syria plans to use the money ... in executing big irrigation projects and supplying its army with armaments.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Populism is about narrative control



RECENT developments in the United States remind us how crucial narrative control has become in shaping public perception. Just recently, US District Judge Aileen Cannon temporarily blocked the release of Special Counsel Jack Smith's report on Donald Trump's handling of classified documents and efforts to overturn the 2020 elections.

The decision delayed the release of findings that could clarify ongoing legal battles, leaving the public in a fog of competing narratives. At the same time, Mark Zuckerberg announced that Meta is cutting its fact-checking teams on Facebook and Instagram, following Elon Musk's earlier move to dismantle fact-checking tools on X (formerly Twitter).

These decisions come at a time when misinformation spreads faster than ever, aided by algorithms and powerful artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

This convergence of events raises urgent questions. Who controls the narrative? How do we ensure truth remains at the centre of public discourse? What happens when facts are subordinated to a quest for perception? Many such questions agitate rational minds today.

As someone who has spent decades in technological leadership, I have seen how advances in AI, social media algorithms, and digital platforms can both empower and destabilise.

Tools like AI-generated content and deepfakes have blurred the line between reality and fiction, making fact-checking and critical thinking more essential than ever.

However, when platforms remove these safeguards, they leave the public vulnerable to manipulation.

The use of narrative control is not new. Edward Bernays, the father of public relations, in the 1920s, convinced the

Americans that smoking was a symbol of freedom, masking the health risks behind a compelling story. The lesson? What is repeated enough times becomes the truth for many, regardless of the facts.

The Watergate scandal showed the other side. Richard Nixon tried to dismiss the investigation as a partisan attack, but investigative journalism broke through the spin. The truth unravelled Nixon's presidency, demonstrating that transparency and accountability could restore public trust.

Yet today, trust in institutions has further eroded. A 2022 Pew Research report found that only 26 per cent of Americans trusted national news organisations. Trump has nearly emerged as the master of repetition.

His presidency was defined by his ability to control the narrative. Fact-checkers documented over 10,000 false or misleading claims during his term, an average of 21 per day. These were not careless errors, but deliberate strategies to dominate public discourse.

Trump's handling of the Iran nuclear deal exemplifies this. He withdrew in 2018, calling the agreement a disaster. Critics argued the move destabilised the Middle East and strained alliances, but Trump's narrative of strength and decisiveness took hold.

Facts about the deal became secondary to the story he told. The Jan 6 Capitol Hill attack showed the consequences of unchecked narratives. False claims of election fraud fuelled violence and division, undermining trust in democratic processes.

Besides, social media platforms have amplified the stakes. Algorithms prioritise engagement, often spreading sensational or polarising content. A 2021 study found that false news spreads six times faster than the truth. Populists and leaders exploit this, crafting emotionally charged narratives that dominate the feeds.

Undoubtedly, controlling the narrative works, but it comes at a price. Trump's reliance on misinformation eroded trust in the presidency. Platforms like X and Meta risk losing credibility as users grow disillusioned with the lack of safeguards.

The Americans have Trump to deal with. It is not difficult to find Trump's parallel in Pakistani politics who once reacted the American president used to create false narratives with the aim of creating a cult.

Narrative control is a powerful tool, but it must be wielded responsibly. Leaders who align their narratives with facts build lasting trust. Lies may win short-term victories, but truth sustains relationships and institutions.

Transparency and safeguards, like fact-checking, are crucial. The question is not whether narratives will shape our world; they always have, and they will. The question is whether we, the people,

will allow them to divide us or demand they be grounded in truth, ethics and respect for freedom of thought and speech.

Dr Manzoor Aslam
Wisconsin, USA

Another captive lost

THE recent death of Sonia, the elephant at Safari National Park in Karachi, highlights the growing ethical and practical concerns associated with keeping wild animals in captivity, particularly when their fundamental needs are consistently neglected.

As a matter of fact, zoos and similar facilities are meant to serve as centres for education, conservation and wildlife appreciation. However, when animals are housed without adequate shelter, nutrition, professional healthcare, or proper hygiene, their wellbeing gets compromised, and the purpose of such institutions is undermined.

A critical issue in captive environments is maintaining proper hygiene. Poor sanitary conditions deteriorate animal health, and facilitate the spread of infectious diseases.

Reverse zoonosis, or anthrozoosis, is a process where humans transmit various



bacteria to the caged animals, and these pathogens can cause severe illnesses, including skin infections, tuberculosis and drug-resistant infections.

Captive elephants, for instance, are particularly vulnerable to endothelothecosis (ELEHV), a virus that leads to fatal haemorrhagic disease.

Additionally, parasitic infections, like coccidia and strongylids, thrive in unsanitary environments, compounding the threat to animal health.

In Pakistan, the treatment of zoo animals has been alarmingly inadequate. Instances of untreated diseases, unsanitary conditions, and an utter lack of professional oversight are distressingly common, highlighting systemic failures.

These issues have led to the premature deaths of numerous species, including elephants, whose suffering symbolises the broader challenges facing captive wildlife in the country.

Ensuring the highest animal welfare standards in zoos and national parks requires robust policies, professional veterinary care, and the involvement of trained personnel with expertise in animal behaviour and health.

Public interaction with zoo animals, such as feeding or touching, should be strictly prohibited to minimise the risk of disease transmission.

Besides, learning from the stringent protocols established in developed countries can provide a roadmap for improving captive animal care in Pakistan.

In simple, without such reforms, the captivity of wild animals will remain a contentious and unethical practice, defeating its intended purpose and perpetuating the suffering of wildlife.

Rabib Roper Laghari
Edmonton, Canada

Eliminating evil

THE recent air strikes by Pakistan on Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) camps in Afghanistan were a necessary evil. The strikes, although not desirable, were a necessity. As such, the Afghan Taliban regime, in spite of repeated requests and reminders by Pakistani authorities, was not willing to rein in the TTP to stop it from terrorist incursions into Pakistan.

In fact, terrorist attacks from Afghanistan have increased since the Afghan Taliban took over Kabul. Under these circumstances, the Pakistani authorities could not just watch the wrongful killing of their troops and innocent citizens.

Kinetic strikes inside another country is a high-risk manoeuvre, and is taken only when all other forms of persuasion fail to work. However, Pakistani authorities have taken a wise decision to continue the dialogue process with the Afghan regime. As a matter of fact, a Pakistani delegation was in Afghanistan when Pakistan conducted the air strikes inside Afghan territory.

Unsurprisingly, the Pakistani establishment, which was expecting a friendly Taliban regime in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the United States and Nato forces in 2021, now seems to be totally perplexed by the belligerent response from Afghanistan, which is not only providing full support, but also a sanctuary to TTP terrorists.

I hope more actors will have learned their lessons, and that they would be more cautious and careful in shaping the country's crucial foreign policy in future.

Akhtar Jan Marwan
Islamabad

► **LOADSHEEDING:** K-Electric (KE) recovers hefty charges from the people in order to provide them electricity, but fails to keep its part of the deal. Previously, the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) area used to be exempted from loadshedding, but that is not the case anymore. Unfortunately, the residents of DHA had to put up with 10-12 hours of loadshedding for more than a week recently that was done on the pretext of maintenance activity. Despite complaining multiple times on the KE helpline, no proper justification or solution was provided by its representatives. The higher authorities must look into the matter because we, the residents of DHA, are being forced to live in medieval times. **Komal & Hafid A Khashnari**
Karachi

► **RECKLESS DRIVING:** My father had a narrow escape while travelling between Jhang and Faisalabad recently when his car was struck by two over-speeding trucks on the road. Having hit my father's car, the drivers fled the scene. Though there were no major injuries, the incident has left in all deeply concerned about one's safety on the road. Reckless driving and overloaded trucks, combined with poor visibility during foggy weather, are turning our roads into danger zones. The authorities must enforce traffic laws to deter reckless driving as well as overloading. Keeping in view this grievous situation, heavy fines, better monitoring, and increased police presence on highways are critical in order to avoid accidents. Public awareness campaigns and infrastructure improvements will also make a difference. **Rao Numan Ahmad**
Jhang

► **FLEEING MOTORISTS:** Toll tax on highways and motorways has been increased from Jan 5. This increase happens to be the third hike within the last seven months. Though the relevant notification does not mention Upret Expressway, the local contractor has started fleeing the motorists already. The higher authorities are requested to take immediate notice of the matter. **Aamir Kabir**
Karachi

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. **Email: dmahmoodombudsman@gmail.com**

PUNJAB NOTES

Work: self-fulfilment or enslavement?

By Mushtaq Soofi

CAN we conceive the human world without what we call work? Certainly not! It is a highly complex social phenomenon, a product of what humans have been doing purposefully in an organised manner generation after generation. All the wonders of our world came into being as a consequence of work.

Organised work done individually and together has progressed incrementally having a cumulative effect; it transformed quantity into quality. Can a scholar conceive of modern digital and financial systems, and computing without Aryabhata (476-550) and Brahmagupta (7th century)? The former was a mathematician and astronomer who used zero in his astronomical calculations which paved the way for its use in calculus etc. The latter employed zero as a number, developed it as a concept and used it in arithmetic. Mesopotamians and Mayans already had the concept of zero. It's just one example from history how work done by mathematicians regarding zero led us to the modern world of IT where zero plays a crucial role in binary systems, digital programmes and computer programming.

But work is inevitably organised in the framework of the politico-economic power structures in each society. The upside of it is that it is an act of self-fulfilment, an objective evidence of human productivity that sets it apart from the animal world driven by instinctive impulses. The downside is equally manifest as Karl Marx very lucidly analysed in his writings, the alienating aspect of work. Human labour, responsible for production, gets alienated and estranged from what it produces because of power structures. Products, a solid proof of human creativity and ingenuity, instead of objectifying the labour and becoming a means of self-expression end up as their negation. When appropriated by forces enmeshed in the power corridors the production emerges as a force hostile to its producer. Creative

capability turns into its opposite.

By the way, Marx was not the first to discover alienation though he theorised it brilliantly as a young thinker. If we look at our own history we find the recognition of alienation from work and one's own self in the verses of 16th century poet and mystic Shah Hussain aka Madho Lal Hussain. All his life he desisted from the glittery temptations of work that produced conformity. "To spin its manna who asks me, to spin the simple one who asks me...I've learnt to spin daily / Shrap jamana impulse me! Now no sense remains, no memory / The spinning wheel I smash! All skins unraveled yarn-broken kick avidly," he says in one of his lyrics employing feminine verbs. In another lyric he says: "O girls! With all that spinning I've spent / Good the spinning wheel broke! Life's been released from torment (translation: Mansaffar Ghaffar)." Alienated work instead of fulfilling the dear hollows him / her out in a society that takes away the fruit of work through legally created illegitimate means.

No doubt work is what sustains life, individual and social. It has been (still is) as much the need of workers as that of employers in a class society. The advent of machine age raised hopes about human emancipation from the drudgery of work. The more the machines, the less the work. It was thought that the use of machines would gradually free the man from the shackles of work. The work done with the help of machines in the modern era could create conditions enabling humans to work less.

Great minds believed that machines would enable men to get rid of ugly and dirty work they were compelled to do. Thus humans would have increased leisure time that would lead them to engage more with creative and imaginative pursuits. Sadly, such a dream could not materialise in the power structures we have built. Machine age did improve working conditions to an extent and eventually resulted in five day a week i.e. the standard work week. But in a clever trick what

the system gave with one hand took away with the other. By promoting and establishing consumer society the system in fact compelled humans to work more by dangling carrots ahead of them. Since consumption has been made the measure of man one needs to work more in order to consume more. One has to do more work in the advanced societies in five days than previous generations had to do in six or seven days. That's why it exhausts people but side effects are covered by a show of consumption which is supposed to provide gratification. Recently some Indian industrialists' entrepreneurs, the latest avatars of the proverbial Banias, have exhorted the workers to work for longer hours. One has said that workers should work for 72 hours a week which means that one would work for 14.4 hours a day for five days or 12 hours a day for six days. What will be left of the workers after such a gruelling schedule is not his concern.

Another Bani exhibiting a misogynistic streak has said that workers should also work on Sunday for how long one can stare at one's wife on an off day. Well, accolades for the Bania vision of family life. An enlightened industrialist joining the dialogue rightly pointed out that debate shouldn't be about quantity of work but rather about the quality. He concluded by saying: "My wife is wonderful. I have staring at her." Like him one should have time to stare at their wives, spend time with children and friends or simply while away time thinking things and indulging in imaginings and daydreaming.

Post Brecht shows us how the exploiters reduce the man and how he is more than the sum total of the work he does: "You who throw him into dirty yellow seas / Or into the black earth dig him down / More than you know will swim towards the fishes / And more than you buried will rot in the ground." And surely the man is "the deer of more than his deed." If we care about the nature and quality of work we ought to ponder: should less be more or more be less? —soofi010@hotmail.com

Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Vehari police show top performance as per new KPIs

Rawalpindi worst performer

By Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: The Gujranwala, Sahiwal and Vehari police topped their respective groups by achieving the highest score in the month of December following the assessment evaluated on the basis of the 36 key performance indicators (KPIs), the mechanism introduced by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to hold the under-performing police officers accountable and reward those achieving targets.

These three districts remained at the top in their respective groups consecutively for the last three months by showing outstanding performance as per the KPIs.

All the 36 districts of the province were divided into Group-I, Group-II and Group-III by the CM while launching the evaluation mechanism in June last year, aiming at deciding the future posting criteria of the field officers.

According to a report, Gujranwala obtained 79.63 out of 100 marks in October, 81.51 in November and 81.96 in December 2024; Sahiwal 82.70 in October, 81.26 in November and 81.91 in December while Vehari police showed notable performance by obtaining 89.20 marks in December, 86.25 in November and 79.35 in October.

The report highlighted that these three districts improved performance under the command of Gujranwala City Police Officer (CPO) Rana Ayman Saleem, the then Sahiwal District Police Officer (DPO) Faisal Shahid who was recently transferred and posted as Sialkot DPO and Vehari DPO Munawar Aman.

Multan, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi were part of the Group-I while the Group-II comprised 14 districts and Group-III 17 districts.

The KPIs, which assessed the performance of the

field officers, included the marks of FIRs, crime control efforts, improvement in investigation of cases, action against drug dealers, law and order situation, protection of women and vulnerable groups, complaint handling and accessibility to public, security, public service delivery, special initiatives, etc. Marks were allocated following the assessment made by the senior police officers in the Central Police Office (CPO) Lahore and the Special Branch of the Punjab Police before sending the reports to the CM.

Rawalpindi police showed the worst-ever performance by obtaining lowest marks in its group. On the other hand, the government recently transferred Rawalpindi Operations SSG Kamran Aggar and posted him as Bahawalnagar DPO, contrary to the claims of holding the officers from the under-performing districts accountable.

According to some independent police circles, no action was proposed or initiated against Rawalpindi CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani or the regional police officer (RPO), making the evaluation of the performance of supervisory officers just an eyewash or a futile exercise.

They said the system was being followed actively by the police officers serving as RPOs and DPOs to assess the performance of the station house officers (SHOs), a major criteria set by them for the postings and transfers of the SHOs. Unfortunately, the police officers said, the same was not applicable so far in letter and spirit to decide/judge the transfer and postings of the senior field police officers.

In the Group-II, district Jhang was at the last position for having just 66.81 scores.

In the earlier settings, Lahore district was part of the Group-I to judge the performance of the head of the provincial capital police. However, the government, in consultation with the IGP, separated it from any group for unknown reasons.

In the new arrangements, the government just assessed the performance of the divisional SPs of Lahore.

Despite court intervention, Khanpur plot dispute persists

By Ifrazul Haq

RAHIM YAR KHAN: A 3-kanal prime location plot in Khanpur city has been a point of conflict for the past 25 years between the irrigation department and a neighbouring town owner. The alleged lack of interest by the local administration and the irrigation department has lingered the issue.

The land is adjacent to the Land Record Centre in Khanpur and enclosed by a boundary wall. The piece of land has been claimed by both the irrigation department and the town owner. According to Khanpur Irrigation Sub-Divisional Officer Muhammad Khalid, the plot was in the department's possession before 2000. Then,

town owner Rashid filed an application with the Khanpur assistant commissioner (AC) for the demarcation of the land.

The irrigation department requested that the demarcation be completed using the latest machinery, however, after the manual demarcation, the then deputy commissioner (DC) ordered the AC to hand over the land to Rashid. Mr Khalid added.

The irrigation department later approached the Board of Revenue (BoR) in Lahore, which overturned the DC's orders and decided in favour of the irrigation department after a new demarcation. Mr Rashid, however, filed a writ petition in civil court claiming that the demarcation had already been completed by the AC.

After an 11-year legal battle, the civil court in 2011 issued a decree in favour of Rashid, declaring the BoR's decision null and void. In 2018, Rashid filed a writ petition with the Lahore High Court (LHC) against the AC's reluctance to hand over the land.

The LHC directed the AC to give possession of the land to Mr Rashid, but the AC failed to implement the court's order.

Mr Rashid filed a contempt of court petition against the AC. The irrigation department responded by filing three different appeal petitions in the sessions court, LHC, Bahawalpur Bench and the Supreme Court, but all were dismissed by 2022.

Following the disposal

of the appeals, Mr Rashid invited irrigation department officials to conduct a new demarcation of the land using GPS. As a result, the AC Khanpur handed over two kanals to Mr Rashid. However, Mr Rashid again approached the DC for a fresh demarcation.

Repeated attempts to contact the town owner's spokesperson, Fahad Saeed, for comment were unsuccessful, as he did not respond to calls. When contacted, Senior Engineer Khalid Mahmood told this correspondent that the dispute over the prime irrigation land persists. He added that the Khanpur executive engineer (EXEN) would soon provide an explanation. However, three days have passed, and the EXEN has yet to respond.



UNIT READING HOSPITAL MEDICAL TEACHING INSTITUTION, FAISALABAD

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Applications are invited for the following Positions on contract basis:

S. No	Designation	Qualification & Experience
1.	Manager Material Management	1. The candidate must have MBA/BBA (Hons) in Supply Chain/Finance/Accounting (10 Years Education) or equivalent Degree from HEC Recognized University. 2. The candidate must have 05-years relevant experience preferably in a reputed organization.
2.	Manager Pathology	1. The candidate must have Master or higher degree in any pathology discipline (Microbiology, Hematology, Immunology, Clinical Chemistry etc.) 2. The candidate must have 05 years' experience with 02 years managerial experience in Pathology Laboratory in a reputable institute/organization.
3.	Manager Radiology	1. The candidate must have BSc Radiology from recognized university. 2. The candidate must have 05 years' experience with 02 years managerial experience in Radiology Department of a reputable institute/organization.
4.	Assistant Manager Material Management	1. The candidate must have MBA/BBA (Hons) in Supply Chain/Finance/Accounting (10 Years Education) or equivalent Degree from HEC Recognized University. 2. The candidate must have 03-year relevant experience preferably in a reputed organization.
5.	Pharmacist	1. The candidate must have Pharm-D from HEC recognized University. 2. The candidate must be registered with Pharmacy Council of Pakistan. 3. The candidate must have 1-year relevant experience in HD Accredited/Tertiary Care Hospital.
6.	Pharmacy Assistant	1. The candidate must have Diploma in Pharmacy (Category B) duly recognized by Pharmacy Council of Pakistan/Pharmacy of Pharmaceutical & Allied Health Sciences, Hyderabad/Pathankot.
7.	Legal Officer	1. The candidate must have 1-year relevant experience in a recognized hospital. 2. The candidate must have B. A., LL/B.S-Law from Recognized University. 3. The candidate must have three years of grading experience preferably in a reputed organization.
8.	Finance Officer	1. The candidate must have a Valid License Holder of CP Bar Council. 2. The candidate must have MBA/BBA (Hons)/M. Com/BS-Commerce in Finance/Accounting (10 Years Education) or equivalent Degree from HEC Recognized University. 3. The candidate must have 02 years' relevant experience preferably in a reputed organization.
9.	Finance Assistant	1. The candidate must have MBA/BBA (Hons)/M. Com/BS-Commerce in Finance/Accounting (10 Years Education) or equivalent Degree from HEC Recognized University. 2. The candidate must have 02-year relevant experience preferably in a reputed organization.
10.	HR Assistant	1. The candidate must have MBA/BBA (Hons) HRM/HRD (10 Years Education) or equivalent Degree from HEC Recognized University. 2. The candidate must have 02-year experience in HRM preferably in a reputed organization/hospital.
11.	Material Management Officer	1. The candidate must have MBA/BBA (Hons) in Supply Chain/Finance/Accounting (10 Years Education) or equivalent Degree from HEC Recognized University. 2. The candidate must have 02-year relevant experience preferably in a reputed organization.
12.	Purchase Assistant	1. The candidate must have MBA/BBA (Hons) in Supply Chain/Finance/Accounting (10 Years Education) or equivalent Degree from HEC Recognized University. 2. The candidate must have 02-year relevant experience preferably in a reputed organization.
13.	Database Administrator	1. The candidate must have MCS/BCS or equivalent degree from HEC recognized university. 2. At least five years' experience in handling Client/Server applications, backup, recovery, and procedure for application development in a reputed organization.
14.	Software Developer	1. The candidate must have MCS/BCS (Four years) or equivalent degree from HEC recognized university. 2. Minimum of three years of professional experience of software development in well known organization. A thorough and detailed knowledge and experience of Oracle, ideally up to and including 12c. Familiarity with Ajax, etc. OR Minimum of three years' experience of full stack development (Angular/Net core) in a public or reputable private sector organization. Familiarity with ASP.NET framework, SQL Server and Design/architectural pattern (e.g., Model-View-Controller (MVC) etc.
15.	Assistant Web Developer/Designer	1. The candidate must have MCS / BCS or equivalent qualification from HEC recognized university. 2. At least 2 years' experience in web development (HTML, CSS, JS, etc.) in a reputable public or private sector organization.
16.	Assistant PACS Administrator	1. The candidate must have MCS / BCS or equivalent degree in Computer Science from HEC recognized university. 2. The candidate must understand DICOM Protocol and JAVA.
17.	Assistant System Engineer	1. The candidate must have MCS/BCS or equivalent degree from HEC recognized university. 2. At least 4 years' work experience in troubleshooting in Hardware & Software. Having knowledge of VMware ESXi.
18.	Mobile App Developer	1. The candidate must have MCS / BCS or equivalent degree from HEC recognized university. 2. At least 3 years of proven work experience as a Mobile Developer with a demonstrable portfolio of released applications on the App Store or the Android market. In-depth knowledge of at least one programming language like Java/Kotlin or Flutter. Experience with third-party libraries and APIs. Familiarity with UX/UI design principles. Excellent analytical skills with a good problem-solving attitude.
19.	Network Technician	1. The candidate must have Intermediate or equivalent qualification from a recognized board. 2. The candidate must have minimum 3 years' relevant work experience.
20.	Hardware Technician	1. The candidate must have Intermediate or equivalent qualification from a recognized board. 2. The candidate must have minimum 3 years work experience. OR 1. The candidate with SSC or equivalent qualification from a recognized board. 2. The candidate must have minimum of 5 years' experience in the relevant field.
21.	CSD Technician	The candidate must have knowledge of computer hardware installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting in computer hardware. 1. The candidate must have Diploma in CSD duly recognized by Medical Faculty Hydrabad/Pathankot/BS Lyallpur from a recognized medical university. 2. The candidate must have 01-year CSD experience in health care facility.
22.	Oxygen Plant Technician	1. The candidate must have DMT (Mechanical) or an equivalent board. 2. The candidate must have 3 Years' experience in Oxygen Plant Systems. 3. The candidate must have detailed knowledge of the Medical Air System Plants. 4. The candidate having experience in OSA Welding will be an Additional advantage.
23.	Medical Gases Technician	1. The candidate must have DMT (Mechanical) from a recognized board. 2. The candidate must have 3 years' Experience in Control Medical Gases Systems. Should have Experience of the Medical Air Vectors Plants (Installation & Operation/Trouble Shooting). 3. Expertise in OSA Welding will Additional advantage.
24.	CCTV Operator	1. The candidate must have Diploma in CCTV from a recognized board or HEC from a recognized board. 2. The candidate must have three-year relevant experience in operating CCTV.
25.	Waiters/Barboys	1. The candidate must have SLC from recognized board. 2. The candidate must have 01-year relevant experience in a three-star hotel/restaurant or in Canteen or cafeteria of a tertiary care hospital.

General Instructions:

- Interested candidates should send prescribed job application (Available on www.lrh.edu.pk), duly filled to the following address through registered Courier Service by 31 February, 2025.
- Job Application processing fee of Rs. 1000/- (Non Refundable) to be deposited in MCB Account No. 6047680141003952 (online), titled as "Receipt of Hospital LRH MTI" Branch code: (0958). Original Deposit slip must be attached with the Job Application.
- Job Application must be supported by the requisite certificates and shall be attested.
- Incomplete or by hand submission of job application shall not be entertained.
- Candidate's should be eligible in all respects including qualification, & certificate before the closing date of the advertisement. Only post qualification experience will be considered.
- Any candidate may be disqualified or excluded from interview if he/ she was:
 - Knowingly furnishes any false information.
 - Supplies any information which may lead to his/ her disqualification.
 - Submits forged certificates including educational and experience etc.
- The service of the incumbent will be governed by the Medical Teaching Institution Statute Act 2015 and its amendments made, Rules and Regulations of the Institution.
- The prescribed quota for disabilities and minorities will be maintained as per rule.
- Only shortlisted candidates will be called for Test/ interview.

Hospital Director

Address: Human Resources Department
Lahore Reading Hospital Medical Teaching Institution, Pathankot
Phone: +92 91 9211450, Visit: www.lrh.edu.pk



A BOAT stuck in the shallow water on the bank of Kabul River at Sandaryah picnic point near Peshawar. — White Star

Gas supply to CNG stations suspended to improve pressure for domestic consumers

CNG association rejects decision; transporters threaten to increase fare

By Ali Hazrat Bacha

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced suspension of gas supply to the CNG stations across the province from Jan 20 to 31 to ensure smooth supply to domestic consumers.

However, the business community and transporters rejected the decision and described it as unilateral.

The transporters warned that if the decision was not withdrawn they would increase the fare on intercity and intercity routes by 10 per cent from Monday (today).

The decision was taken under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure,

according to a notification issued here on Sunday with signature of additional chief secretary (Home) Akbar Majeed.

It was stated that the onset of winter season and cold temperature had been delayed and was still in progress and non-availability of natural gas for domestic consumers could lead to public agitation and law and order situation in the province.

The notification said anyone found violating the order shall be proceeded against under Section 188 of Pakistan Penal Code.

Meanwhile, All Pakistan CNG Association, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Fazal Moqeen Khan rejected the decision and said it was a unilateral action taken by the provincial government.

He told this correspondent that the province had sufficient gas reserves to meet the local needs but even then the provincial government failed to seek a stand on the issue.

He said that the decision was violation

of the Article 158 of the Constitution because under the law a province with a wealth of natural gas would be preferred for the gas supply to the other parts of the country.

He said the province had sufficient gas reserves but the government was least bothered to raise voice for the provincial rights.

Mr Moqeen criticised the political leaders for what he called not raising voice on the matter.

He said as most industrial units in the province had stopped production due to power and gas crises, the closure of CNG stations would cause unemployment and financial problems for the people.

He said that the provincial government was raising hollow slogans against the federal government but it was unable to take a firm stand against its "illogical" steps.

"We expected that the provincial government will take stand for the provincial rights but it failed to do so," he lamented. He said that due to weak poli-

cies of the government the people were suffering.

Similarly, Urban Transport Union president Khan Zaman Afridi said that the gas supply remained suspended from Jan 15, but the transporters did not overcharge the passengers.

He said that the passenger vehicles plying on roads inside Peshawar and to other districts of the province were on CNG.

"The office-bearers of public transport unions will meet today (Monday) to decide future line of action. We will definitely increase the transport fare by 10 per cent in a state of compulsion because we could not afford the petrol price," he said.

However, the people belonging to different localities complained about gas outage and demanded of the relevant officials to ensure smooth supply to the domestic consumers. They said that despite the suspension of gas to CNG stations the supply to residential localities had not improved.

Mamad Gat hospital on verge of closure due to financial crisis

Partner organisation asks govt to clear its dues

By Ashfaq Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Category-D Hospital Mamad Gat in Mohmand tribal district is facing financial crisis and the partner organisation has warned of closure of operations in case the outstanding amount is not paid by the government, according to sources.

The hospital was entrusted to a private organisation in 2020. It is being run under Public Private Partnership Act. The government extended three-year contract of the partner organisation after its expiry in June 2023.

The extension was given because of the non-existence of Board of Governors of Khyber Health Foundation (KHF), a public sector entity established for outsourcing hospitals to non-governmental organisations.

The contract kept extending and the latest agreement expired last year. Medical Emergency Resilience Foundation (MERF), which is running Mamad Gat and six other hospitals in the province, has been asking the government to clear the unpaid dues so that it could resume operations.

"The government should pay us a total of Rs1 billion for all the hospi-

tal, including Rs104 million for 46-bed Mamad Gat Category-D Hospital so we could resume work," Dr Adnan Taj, the managing director of Health Foundation, said. He said that they had hired specialists and other staff but all quit owing to lack of salaries, which led to closure of work in the health facility.

"From Monday, we are going to start emergency and labour room services just on humanitarian grounds," he said.

Sources said that the government had selected new organisations to hand over the health facilities to them but it was delayed through a decision of RoG, recently announced by health department.

The managing director of Health Foundation in a letter to health department that he had received from the deputy commissioner of Mohmand on January 13, sought clearance of dues. In the letter, he said that MERF clearly stated that without clearance of its outstanding liabilities it would not be able to continue services beyond January 1, 2025.

Explaining the situation, he said that upon the expiry of contract of MERF, a different organisation was selected for contract awarding of Mamad Gat hospital, but due to non-existence of RoG of Health Foundation the contract was yet to be awarded to the new implementing partner. He said that the RoG was the approving authority for outsourcing hospitals.

The said hospital is the only Category-D health facility in Na-

teel of Mohmand district. The hospital is being run by MERF and it is providing quality health services to people since 2020. In case of exit of MERF, the hospital will be closed as no recruitment has been made on sanctioned posts by government, ultimately the local community will suffer.

"Furthermore, with the existing HR strength at district level, we are not in a position to run the said hospital if the current implementing partner exits," said the letter. It said that finance department should be approached for clearance of the outstanding liabilities.

The letter said that the current implementing partner, MERF, should be directed to continue health delivery services till awarding of the contract to the new organisation or to deploy staff for Mamad Gat hospital as per the approved schedule of new expenditures to ensure provision of uninterrupted health services to people of the area.

The government has been awarding contract to private organisations to run public hospitals in line with Public Private Partnership Act to improve patients' care.

The selection of hospitals for outsourcing is recommended by a committee as the hospitals don't function properly because the staffers don't want to get posted in far flung areas. Under the law, the partners recruit the staff, including specialists and female medicals, and the government pays them the sanctioned budget for the respective facilities.

PTM leader sent to Swat jail

By Our Correspondent

SHANGLA: Police arrested Abdul Samad Khan, a lawyer and leader of banned Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), in a narcotics smuggling case and shifted him to a prison in Swat.

According to Alpuri police station SRO a man identified as Farmanullah was arrested with 700 kilograms of hashish some four days ago in Machar area. He said that the arrested man told police during investigation that the hashish was provided to him by Abdul Samad Khan, a resident of Bannu district.

He said that Farmanullah of Boly Babu confessed to narcotics smuggling and nominated Abdul Samad Khan in the case so the investigation team included Abdul Samad as co-accused in the case under Section 5 of Control of Narcotics Substances Act and arrested him.

The SRO said that Abdul Samad Khan was in the custody of Chitral police in a case of similar nature before he was arrested by Shangla police. After confession by Farmanullah, Chitral police handed over Samad Khan to Shangla police.

He was produced in Shangla before a judge, who sent him to prison.

Advocate Waqif Shah, president of Shangla Bar Association, said that Abdul Samad Khan was a senior leader of PTM and also a senior lawyer, who had been the district president of ANP in Bannu before joining PTM.

He president said that after arrest of Abdul Samad Khan, police produced him in a court and sought his custody but he requested the judge that he was a guest and senior lawyer so should be sent to jail instead of granting his custody to police.

Mr Shah said the judge sent him to district prison in Swat. Lawyers and local leaders of PTM condemned the arrest of Abdul Samad Khan and termed it political victimisation for holding a judge in Khyber tribal district in October last year.

Police van damaged in Bannu roadside explosion

By Our Correspondent

LAKRI MAHWAT: A police team escaped a bomb attack on Miramshah Road in Bannu on Sunday.

An official said a police patrol party was targeted with an improvised explosive device near Azad Mandi area on the busy Bannu-Miramshah Road. "The explosive device planted by unknown miscreants along the road went off with a bang when a police van passed by," he said.

The official said the van was partially damaged in the explosion. He said all policemen remained unhurt in the attack. "After the blast the road was temporarily closed to enable police experts to collect evidence from the spot," he said, adding the law enforcers also launched a search operation in the area to track down the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, a man was killed and a young boy was injured when two groups exchanged fire over a property dispute in Jabbarkhel area here on Sunday.

Police identified the deceased as Hidayatullah, 35, and injured as Mohammad Adnan, 20, saying the shooting incident occurred in the limits of Saddar police station.

They quoted a complainant, Samiullah, as saying that Karim Khan, Juma Khan and Mohammad Adnan entered their house and opened fire on his brother, Hidayatullah, killing him on the spot.

However, Mohammad Adnan from the other side told police he was injured when Ghazizadah, Rehmatullah Khan and Naimatullah opened fire at him inside his house.

Separately, a young boy was murdered over a petty dispute in Banga Khenukhel area in the limits of Shabbazkhel police station.

Death anniversary of Bacha Khan, Wali Khan today

PESHAWAR: Different events to mark the 37th death anniversary of Fakhr Alghar Bacha Khan, also known as Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and the 19th death anniversary of Khan Abdul Wali Khan will begin today (Monday).

According to a statement issued here on Sunday, Awami National Party central president Arifal Wali Khan will formally kick off the celebrations at Bacha Khan Markaz here.

ANP secretary general Dr Mohammad Saleem Khan, provincial president Mian Rikhar Hussain, provincial general secretary Hussain Shah Yousof and other central and provincial leaders will attend the ceremony.

It was stated that stalls of books, traditional clothes and various other types would also be set up on the occasion. New books will also be launched at the ceremony.

Meanwhile, Mian Rikhar, in a separate statement, paid rich tribute to the late leaders and appreciated the services they rendered for welfare of people. — Bureau Report

Earthquake-hit Oghi hospital yet to be rebuilt

MANSEHRA: Residents of Oghi are without adequate healthcare facilities as the historical Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, which was grounded after developing dangerous cracks in the 2005 devastating earthquake, is yet to be rebuilt.

"The government performed the groundbreaking of this health facility about seven years ago, but its reconstruction couldn't be completed as yet due to a shortage of funds leaving locals dependent on quacks and unskilled birth attendants," Javed Sikandar, a local peasant councillor, told reporters in Oghi.

Flanked by a group of locals, he said that the hospital built in 1901 had developed dangerous cracks during the earthquake almost 19 years ago and its reconstruction work was suspended some two years ago due to a shortage of funds. "An alternative health facility is running nearby but is unable to meet the healthcare needs of people, resulting in patients being shifted to quacks," Mr Sikandar said.

He said children and women were the worst affected by this situation and were compelled to seek treatment at King Abdullah Teaching Hospital in Mansehra or Ayub Medical Complex in Abbottabad. — Correspondent

Fresh snowfall in Swat draws tourists from all over country

Visitors revel in picturesque landscapes, winter festivities

By Fazal Khaliq

SWAT: The upper region of Swat district has been transformed into a breathtaking winter paradise as a fresh wave of snowfall on Sunday blanketed the area. This natural wonder has drawn tourists from across the country, eager to experience the charm of snow-covered valleys and mountains.

Popular tourist destinations such as Kalam, Malam Jabba, Baharain, Mankiyal and Gabin Jabba are buzzing with activity as visitors revel in the picturesque landscapes

and winter festivities.

The snowfall has created a magical atmosphere, attracting families, friends, and adventure seekers from cities, including Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Lahore, Faisalabad, and beyond. For many, it is their first time witnessing live snowfall, and the experience has left them awestruck.

Malam Jabba, known for its ski resort, has become a hub for adventure enthusiasts. Tourists are seen enjoying skiing, snowboarding, and chairlift rides while taking in panoramic views of the snow-clad peaks.

In Kalam, visitors are mesmerised by the serene beauty of the snow-covered Ushu Forest and Mahodand Lake, while Gabin Jabba, often referred to as the Switzerland of Pakistan, offers a tranquil escape with its snow-laden meadows and hills.



Ahmed Raza, a tourist from Islamabad, described his first encounter with snowfall as magical. "This is my first time seeing snow, and it's absolutely mesmerising. The mountains and valleys are

breathtaking, and Swat feels like a fairytale land in winter. I can't imagine a better place to experience this," he said with excitement.

Farah Khan, who travelled from Lahore with her family, praised the local hospitality and scenery. "The people here are so welcoming, and the snow-covered landscapes are simply stunning. Malam Jabba was a highlight for us, especially the skiing and the chairlift ride. It's been a perfect winter vacation," she shared.

Ali Nawaz, a university student from Faisalabad, was captivated by Gabin Jabba's beauty. "The untouched snow, the peaceful environment, and the breathtaking views make this place a dream destination. We've taken countless pictures, and this trip has been unforgettable," he said.

The influx of tourists has pro-

vided a much-needed boost to the local economy, with hotels, guest-houses, and restaurants bustling with activity. Traditional dishes, warm beverages, and unique winter activities are being offered to enhance the visitor experience. Local vendors are also thriving, selling handmade crafts and souvenirs.

Authorities have ensured smooth access to the tourist spots by clearing roads and providing necessary support to visitors. With more snowfall expected, Swat is set to welcome an even larger number of tourists, solidifying its reputation as a premier winter destination in Pakistan.

For now, the snow-clad valleys, meadows, and peaks of Kalam, Malam Jabba and Gabin Jabba continue to enchant visitors, offering them a magical escape and memories to cherish for a lifetime.

Trump 2.0: Calm waters or rough seas?

PRESIDENT-ELECT Donald Trump will take his oath on Jan 20 (today), with one hand on a Bible, commencing the heavens' aid by saying, "So help me, God." Trump will bring about a tectonic shift in American domestic policies and international relations, regardless of what everyone else thinks. These expected massive policy shifts have far-reaching implications that can very well upend the international order established since World War II and reconfigured after 9/11.

Such is the case as long as the world relies on the United States dollar as the primary global currency for international trade and finance, and the US can maintain its iron-clad alliances with old and new friends through the assurance of the protection of its nuclear umbrella.

Expect a lot of challenges in international relations as the current, as Trump will require a reevaluation of current US alliances from day one. This is understandable for an incoming administration which now has the benefit of hindsight, an experienced old hand returning with knowledge from past mistakes and successes, and armed with ideas on how to shake things up.

International observers must not forget that due to the war on terror following 9/11, US troops were sent to Afghanistan and Iraq. Since then, there has been a low appetite among Americans for meddling in other countries' troubles, much less for supporting wars of the past like the Iran-Contra affair and the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. The US overseas adventurism has not only stretched its military thin, but it has also overburdened American taxpayers with military spending just to fulfill its role as global police.

We have seen a preview of how foreign policy will be shaped on Capitol Hill: henceforth during Tuesday's confirmation hearing of Pete Hegseth as defense secretary, in which he vowed to modernize all three legs of the nuclear triad amid China and Russia's accelerated development of their nuclear delivery and weapons systems.

America has a lot on its plate these days, besides its highly polarized electorate. Trump will surely prioritize domestic concerns over global issues, but his true intent is to reassert the US's role as the world's policeman. According to David Leshchinskiy of The New York Times, Trump is not an across-the-board isolationist, and I agree. Trump is keenly aware that he must confront other powers that can undermine the US's might and interests, such as Russia, China, and the oil-producing countries in the Middle East. For that reason, Israel will

remain the pivot point of the American foreign policy in the Middle East, which involves the rival regional (and Islamic) powers Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar.

Chip war

In the Indo-Pacific, the US faces its biggest rival, China. But decoupling from China in trade is not possible in the short term because it is the world's manufacturing hub, after all. This is why Washington has continued to engage with Beijing bilaterally despite their fierce rivalry on the global stage. As long as Taiwan supplies at least 90 percent of the US' demand for advanced chips, and its allies Japan and South Korea remain key players in the global semiconductor supply chain, the US presence in Asia is here to stay.

This means that these three East Asian allies plus the Philippines, which now has new allies for temporary hosting American troops, can continue to enjoy robust relations with the US under Trump. The Biden administration's policy of revitalizing the US semiconductor industry through the bipartisan \$50-billion CHIPS Act of 2022 can lead to self-reliance, but it will take time.

Thus, the Marcos administration can become the darling of the second Trump presidency if it takes advantage of this opportunity for renewed interest in the Philippines as a reliable ally—and defence—against China. But Manila should go beyond military aid and press Washington to expand the Philippine semiconductor industry, turning it into a producer of advanced microchips, which historian Chris Miller describes as the "new oil" (Chip War, 2022). Expansion of chip making capacity is not only costly. Such a transfer of technology requires trust and is only reserved for the closest of friends, as the Philippines has painfully proven to the US since the Fall of Batasan in 1942.

Miller says "military, economic, and geopolitical power are built on a foundation of computer chips." Thus, he says China "spends more money each year importing chips than it spends importing oil" to catch up to the US's technological superiority.

Such is the complexity of international relations that maintaining the balance of power in Asia will not be straightforward for the US. The factors that complicate things are North Korea's submissiveness to China and Russia's expanding interests in Europe. The historic kingdom has continued to rely on the duo to prop up its military and nuclear arsenal, which can very well threaten the continental US.—The Philippine Daily Inquirer/ANN



A VIEW of the Traditional Beijing New Year Goods Fair at the National Agricultural Exhibition Center. The festival attracted eager shoppers during the Snake year.—Courtesy China Daily

Year of the Snake will be good for China

MANY famous people were born in the Year of the Snake. There's Polish astronomer and mathematician Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), a major figure in the "scientific revolution", who established that Earth revolved around the sun, not the other way around. Then there's the greatest of German literary figures, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832).

But let's talk about years, not people. One of the traditions of the Year of the Snake in China is transformation. There have been plenty of bad "snake" years. One is reminded of the Great Depression and the Wall Street Crash of (October) 1929. Another year I would like to mention is 2001. It was the year when the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States took place. It was also the year when China joined the World Trade Organization — which helped expedite China's economic development and integrate its economy with the global economy.

Looking back at the past year, two trends stand out for me. One

is the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. The region is seeing a genocide being committed by the Israeli state, witnessed in real time on TV screens across the world. And the US is complicit in this genocide, with its global standing going down drastically, even in parts of the West. On the other hand, apart from the West and a few US ally countries, China's standing has improved across the world, because it has stood with the ordinary people against the Israeli and American ruling elite.

The other development is the continuing rise of BRICS, along with China's rising economic status throughout the world. The year 2024 saw the addition of several major countries to BRICS, with Indonesia becoming the first country to join the grouping in the first days of 2025.

The rise of BRICS frightens the US elite, because it symbolizes the loss of their global economic dominance because of the decline of the US dollar as the principal international

reserve currency. Although the decline of the dollar is an ongoing process, the year 2024 saw the acceleration of the process.

So what about 2025? I believe it will be a good year for China. Of course, we have to take into account Donald Trump's return to the White House after four years and his threat to impose high tariffs on imports from China, as well as other countries.

If Trump imposes punitive tariffs on Chinese goods, I believe he will cause more damage to the US than China. Looking at recent history, we can clearly see that the Chinese people's spirit of independence and self-reliance is very strong. They will not cave in under the pressure of punitive US tariffs.

Self-reliance is a major part of Chinese culture, which has influenced China's development. The other features include the emphasis on education and resolving problems harmoniously. Despite the bad periods in China's history, Chinese people's resilience, fighting spirit and industriousness have seen them through

many a crisis. Three factors stand out in all this.

The first is the Chinese people's love for peace. Contrary to what the Western media say, I regard China as a peace-loving country. Unlike the US, which has been at war throughout its entire history, China avoids war. The century of humiliation taught it that a country is better off strong than weak. However, that does not mean it wants war.

The second factor is China's emphasis on reducing pollution and moving toward a sustainable, green economy. China's leadership of the green revolution over the last few years has been extremely impressive. The country is now the global leader in electric vehicles (EVs), and solar and wind energy. This is a remarkable achievement, and shows China is sensitive to the dangers that climate change poses to our world.

Some Western countries have recently accused China of "over-production" of EVs, which are important to build a sustainable, green world in the future.—China Daily/ANN

Why is there a forest in the middle of Singapore?

HIGH above the gleaming malls of Singapore's busiest shopping belt, a pink-necked green pigeon spots a tree. It is an acacia, a towering evergreen that sticks out of a dense canopy the size of three football fields.

A stone's throw away on the pavement lining Orchard Road, mynads squabble for crumbs and shoppers jostle for space in the overcrowded street.

But here, in the overgrown no-man's land bordered by Orchard Turn, Orchard Boulevard and Orchard Link, there is only the brief fluttering of wings and swaying of branches.

It is a curious space: a rare parcel of prime real estate, left untouched since the 1950s, in a country where limited spaces are often pulverised by pragmatism.

It is not a park. Nor is it an active cemetery. There is no one fighting for it, no one using it and, apart from the occasional foragers just asking "Why until now still no developments yet?", hardly anyone pays attention to it. Even the multimillion-dollar makeover intended to transform Orchard Road into a lush green corridor that connects Singapore's historical green spaces



THE forest is home to many different species of plants.—Courtesy The Straits Times

passes over this secondary forest, for which the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) has other plans.

Perplexed but intrigued, I do a preliminary

Google search, but do not get very far. A blog post here, a throwaway mention in a decade-old article there.

I even contact the Ngee Ann Kongsi,

which used to own the plot of land, to ask if it could tell me anything about its history, but am told by a friendly but apologetic employee that there is not much to add.

"If you find out, please let us know too," she says, putting an end to our brief phone call. Still, I want to know how this forest came to be, why it remains untouched, what lies inside and what fate awaits it.

This is the story of my trip down that particular rabbit hole and how I end up in the hottest, most mosquito-ridden part of Orchard Road, squinting at a pink-necked green pigeon. Before acacias sprouted up and creepers carpeted the ground, this section of Orchard Road was studded with tombstones.

A Teochew cemetery, Tai Shan Ting, sprawled over the expanse currently occupied by the forest, as well as Ngee Ann City, Wisma Atria, Orchard Gateway and Mandarin Gallery.

The about 28ha plot of land was acquired from the East India Company by Ngee Ann Kongsi in 1945, establishing Singapore's first Teochew cemetery on the site. For the island's Teochew community, this was a well-earned — and long overdue — move.

"Many of the early Teochew immigrants who settled in Singapore were labourers who arrived alone to make a living. They lived in poverty and had little hope of returning to China to spend their final days," says Dr Lee Chee Heng, an associate professor in the Department of Chinese Studies at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

"For these immigrants, looking for a place for burial after dying in a foreign land became a pressing concern, as there were very few public cemeteries established by the colonial government of Singapore at that time." Many cemeteries then were owned by Christian or Muslim organisations, which made them inaccessible to Chinese immigrants who were not Christian, Catholic or Muslim.—The Straits Times/ANN



MUMBAI: Indian poet, lyricist and film director Gulzar (centre) poses for photographs during a marathon, on Sunday.—AFP



KHOSR: Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai (left), Afghanistan's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, speaks with country's deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghani Baradar during a graduation ceremony of madrassas, on Saturday.—AFP

NEWSMAKERS



GULIN rice noodles.—Courtesy China Daily

Rice noodles unite China and Southeast Asia

RICE noodles play a crucial role in the daily lives of people in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region in China, and Southeast Asia. In Guangxi, these noodles are a staple part of meals, enjoyed for breakfast or as quick snacks throughout the day.

In Southeast Asia, rice noodles are integral to daily dining, offering a range of delicious options. Here are the similarities and differences between the rice noodles from

Guangxi and Southeast Asia.

Similarities

1. Raw materials: Both Guangxi rice noodles and Southeast Asian rice noodles are predominantly made from rice as their main ingredient, resulting in a shared foundation despite distinct production methods.

2. Texture: Both varieties are loved for their chewy and smooth texture, appealing to palates across different regions.

3. Cooking methods: Both types can be prepared through boiling, stir-frying, or blanching, showcasing versatility to cater to diverse tastes and dietary preferences.

Differences

1. Production process: Guangxi rice noodles come in round and flat forms, with round noodles often extruded and flat ones such as Nanning's noodle variations made using wet rice flour.—China Daily/ANN



PRAYAGRAJ (India): Police officers and volunteers salvage belongings of the devotees after a fire erupts in makeshift tents during the ongoing "Maha Kumbh Mela", or the Great Pitcher Festival, on Sunday.—Reuters



TOKYO: People gather at the entrance of Ryogoku Kokugikan for the arrival of sumo wrestlers during the Grand Sumo Tournament, on Sunday. Sumo will stage a tournament in Paris for the first time in over 30 years next summer in a push to expand the ancient sport beyond Japan, organisers said.—AFP

UN races to feed one million Palestinians

WFP plans ready meals with vouchers and cash for people to buy their own food 'to bring back some dignity'

HOME: The UN's World Food Programme said on Sunday it was moving full throttle to get food to as many Gazans as possible after border crossings reopened as part of a long-awaited ceasefire deal.

"We're trying to reach a million people within the shortest possible time," the WFP's Deputy Executive Director Carl Skau said, as the Rome-based UN agency's trucks began rolling into the strip.

"We're moving in with wheat flour, ready to eat meals, and we will be working all fronts trying to outpace the bakeries," Skau said, adding the agency would attempt to provide nutritional supplements to the most malnourished.

An initial 42-day truce between Israel and Hamas is meant to enable a surge of sorely needed humanitarian aid into the Palestinian territory after 15 months of conflict.

"The agreement is for 600 trucks a day... All the crossings will be open," Skau said.

The first WFP trucks entered Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing in the south and through the Zikim crossing in the north, the agency said in a statement, as it began trying to pull "the war-ravaged territory back from starvation".

"We have 150 trucks lined up for every day for the next at least 20 days," Skau said, adding that the WFP was "hopeful that the border crossings will be open and efficient".

There needs to be "an environment inside (Gaza) that is secure enough for our teams to move around", so that food "does not just get over the border but also gets into the hands of the people".

"It seems so far that things have been working relatively well... We need to now sustain that over several days over weeks", he said.

Bakeries 'top priority'

Before the ceasefire came into effect, WFP was operating just five out of the 20 bakeries it partners with due to dwindling supplies of fuel and flour, as well as insecurity in northern Gaza.

"We're hoping that we will be up and running on all these bakeries as soon as possible," Skau said, stressing that it was "one of our top priorities" to get bread to "tens of thousands of people each day".

"It also has a psychological effect to be able to get warm bread into the hands of the people," WFP also wants to "get the private sector and commercial goods in there as soon as possible", he said.

That would mean the UN agency could replace ready meals with vouchers and cash for people to buy their own food "to bring back some dignity" and allow them "drankily to start rebuilding their lives".

WFP said in a statement that it has enough food pre-positioned along the borders — and on its way to Gaza — to feed over a million people for three months. —AFP



PEOPLE gather to collect humanitarian aid after trucks arrived in Gaza via the Kerem Abu Salem crossing, on Sunday. —AFP

Iran sentences pop singer Amir Hossein to death

TEHRAN: An Iranian court has sentenced popular singer Amir Hossein Maghsoodlou, known as Tattolou, to death on appeal after he was convicted of blasphemy, local media reported on Sunday.

"The Supreme Court accepted the prosecutor's objection" to a previous five-year jail term on offences including blasphemy, reformist newspaper Etemad reported online.

The report added that the verdict was not final and can still be appealed. The 37-year-old underground musician had been living in Istanbul since 2018 before Turkish police handed him over to Iran in December 2023. He has been in detention in Iran since then.

Tattolou had also been sentenced to 10 years for promoting "prostitution" and in other cases was charged with disseminating "propaganda" against the Islamic republic and publishing "subversive content".

The heavily tattooed singer, known for combining rap, pop and R&B, was previously courted by conservative politicians as a way of reaching out to young, liberal-minded Iranians. Tattolou even held an awkward televised meeting in 2017 with ultraconservative Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi, who later died in a helicopter crash.

In 2015, Tattolou published a song in support of Iran's nuclear programme that later unravelled in 2018 during the first US presidency of Donald Trump. —AFP



PEOPLE walk past rubble of collapsed buildings near a destroyed clinic of UNRWA at the Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees in the northern Gaza Strip, on Sunday. —AFP

Displaced Gazans head home through rubble as truce begins

People return to an apocalyptic landscape dotted with piles of rubble and destroyed buildings

JERUSALEM: Thousands of displaced, war-weary Gazans set off across the devastated Palestinian territory to return to their homes on Sunday, after a long-awaited truce between Israel and Hamas went into effect following an initial delay.

The ceasefire began nearly three hours later than scheduled, during which time Israel's military said it was continuing to operate in Gaza, with the territory's civil defence agency reporting 19 people killed and 25 wounded in bombardments.

Thousands of Gazans carrying tents, clothes and their personal belongings were seen heading back to their homes, after more than 15 months of conflict that displaced the vast majority of the territory's population, in many cases more than once.

In the northern area of Jabalia, hundreds of Gazans streamed down a sandy path, returning to an apocalyptic landscape dotted with piles of rubble and destroyed buildings.

And in the main southern city of Khan Younis, people celebrated their pending homecoming.

"I'm very, very happy," said Wafa al-Habes, "I want to go back and kiss the ground and the soil of Gaza. I am longing for Gaza (City) and longing for our loved ones." The truce had been scheduled to begin at 0530 GMT (8:30 am) but a last-minute dispute over the list of hostages to

be freed on the first day led to the holdup.

The truce is intended to pave the way for a permanent end to the war, but a second phase has yet to be finalised. It follows a deal struck by mediators Qatar, the United States and Egypt after months of negotiations.

'Full of hope'

In Gaza City, well before the ceasefire went into effect, people were already celebrating, waving Palestinian flags in the street. But when it became clear the truce had been delayed, the joy gave way to desperation for some.

"Enough playing with our emotions — we're exhausted," said Maha Abed, a 23-year-old displaced from Rafah.

The Israeli army warned Gaza residents on Sunday not to approach its forces or Israeli territory.

"We urge you not to head towards the buffer zone or IDF forces for your safety," military spokesman Avichay Adraon said on Telegram, adding that "moving from south to north via Gaza Valley puts you at risk". In Israel, the ceasefire was met with guarded optimism.

"I don't trust our side or their side," said taxi driver David Gatterman.

"Always at the last moment something, a problem, can pop up, but all in all I'm really happy," Shai Zaki, an employee at Tel Aviv's art museum, said he had "mixed feelings", but was "full of hope" that the prisoners would return.

"We had so many disappointments in the last year," he said, "so we won't believe it until it really happens, until we see them (the hostages) with our own eyes, and then we will be happy I hope." —AFP

Who are the most prominent Palestinians held in Israeli jails?

JERUSALEM: Under the Gaza ceasefire deal that came into force on Sunday, Israel has agreed to release Palestinians held in Israeli jails in return for freeing prisoners taken by Hamas on Oct 7, 2023.

There is no final agreement on which prisoners will be released in return for prisoners, in part because it is unclear how many of them will eventually be freed or how many are still alive.

There are currently 10,400 Palestinians in Israeli prisons, not including detainees arrested in Gaza during the last 15 months of conflict, according to the Palestinian Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoners' Society.

Below is a list of some of the most prominent Palestinian figures held in Israeli prisons. None of them are expected to be freed on Sunday but some may be released in later stages.

Abdullah Al Barghouti of Hamas

Barghouti was sentenced to 57 life terms in 2004 by an Israeli military court for his involvement in a series of suicide attacks in 2001 and 2002 that killed dozens of Israelis. Barghouti prepared the explosive belts used in the attacks, including one in a Jerusalem Shalom restaurant in which 15 people were killed, the Israeli army said. A father of three, he was born in Kuwait in 1972. In 1996, he moved with his family to live in Beit Kims village near Ramallah in the West Bank.

Ebrahim Hamed

Hamed, who was handed 54 life terms, was arrested in 2006 in Ramallah. He is accused by Israel of planning suicide attacks that killed dozens of Israelis. Hamed, who had been on Israel's wanted list for eight

years before his arrest, was the top West Bank commander of the 1st al-Dum Al-Qusam brigades, the Hamas military wing. He holds a degree in political science from Birzeit University near Ramallah. While he was a fugitive, Israel detained his wife for eight months and in 2003 demolished his house.

Nael Barghouti

Born in 1957, Barghouti has spent 44 years, or two-thirds of his 67-year life, incarcerated by Israel — longer than any other Palestinian and is known as the "dean" of Palestinian prisoners. He was first jailed in 1978 for taking part in an attack that killed an Israeli soldier in Jerusalem. He was first released in 2011 under an agreement by which Israel released more than 1,000 Palestinians in exchange for Gilad Shalit, a soldier abducted by Hamas in 2006.

After his release in 2011, he married Eman Nafi, who had also spent 10 years in an Israeli jail accused of attempting to plan a suicide operation in Jaffa. Hamas accused Israel of breaching the deal when it re-arrested Barghouti in 2014. During his first, 33-year stretch in jail, Barghouti's parents and many other relatives died. Nafi died. Barghouti was a member of the armed wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah Movement when he was given his life sentence in 1978. Later, he joined Hamas.

Hassan Salama

Born in Khan Younis refugee camp in 1971, Salama was convicted of orchestrating a wave of suicide bombings in Israel in 1996 that killed dozens of Israelis and wounded hundreds more. He was sentenced to 48 life terms in jail. Salama said the attacks were a

response to the assassination of Hamas leader Yehya Ayyash in 1996. Salama was arrested in Hebron in the West Bank later that year.

Murwan Barghout of Fatah

A leading member of the Fatah movement, Barghouti is seen as a possible successor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. He made his name as a leader and organiser in both of the Intifadas, or uprisings, waged by the Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1987. He was arrested in 2002, charged with orchestrating gun ambushes and suicide bombings and sentenced to five life terms in 2004. Fatah officials have said that he set up the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the Fatah armed wing, on Arafat's orders.

Ahmed Saadat of PFLP

Saadat, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), was accused by Israel of ordering the assassination of Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi in 2001. Paroled by Israel, he took shelter at the Ramallah headquarters of Arafat. Under a deal with the Palestinian Authority in 2002, Saadat stood trial in a Palestinian court and was incarcerated at a Palestinian Authority jail, where he was held under international supervision. The Israeli military seized Saadat in 2006 following the withdrawal of the foreign monitors. Put on trial in a military court, the charges against him included involvement in a militant group, weapons dealing and deadly attacks. However the justice ministry decided there was not enough evidence to charge him with Zeevi's assassination. He was sentenced to 30 years in jail in 2008. —Reuters

Trade, immigration, culture wars: Trump's big promises

WASHINGTON: A sweeping deportation programme, ending "transgender harassment," "drill, baby, drill," and peace for Ukraine: President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to move big and fast when he returns to the White House on Monday.

Here is a look at his sensational but frequently vague promises for a second term — many of them likely to be enacted through executive orders.

Immigration

Trump promises a hardline stance against an estimated 11 million undocumented migrants in the United States. "When I am reelected, we will begin... the largest deportation operation in American history," the Republican billionaire said on the campaign trail.

He also vowed to end birthright citizenship, calling it "ridiculous." To achieve these goals, Trump is weighing declaring a national emer-

gency, which would allow him to unlock Pentagon resources. Analysts also expect him to issue executive orders on other aspects of immigration policy, including possibly to terminate an app used by migrants hoping to petition for asylum.

However, birthright citizenship is guaranteed by the US Constitution, and any deportation program will face legal challenges as well as potential refusals by some countries to accept deportees.

Trade wars?

Trump has vowed to slap a 25 percent tariff on goods imported from Mexico and Canada — top US trading partners — as punishment for what he says is their failure to stem the flow of drugs and undocumented migrants into the United States.

But is Trump really ready to unleash a trade war with US neighbors, capturing a North

American free trade agreement? Some see this — and an even more provocative suggestion that Canada should be absorbed into the United States — as pre-negotiation bluster. Beijing should also buckle up.

Trump has threatened to impose a 10 percent tariff on Chinese products, adding to existing tariffs that date back to his first term. Trump accuses China of allowing the chemical components used to makeentanyl.

Jan 6 pardons?

The president-elect has suggested he might pardon some or all of the people involved in the January 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol, when his supporters tried to overthrow the 2020 election in which he lost to Democrat Joe Biden. Trump has described them as "hostages" and "political prisoners" and said that he will be



A WOMAN looks through a fence in front of the US Capitol, on Sunday. —AFP

"making major pardons" in connection with the incident, but it remains unclear how he might differentiate cases involving violence against police officers.

More than 1,500 people

have been charged with federal crimes in the deadly assault, and more than 1,100 of them have been sentenced.

Wars and diplomacy

Trump warned that "all

hell will break out in the Middle East" if Hamas does not release Israeli hostages before his inauguration — and promptly took credit when a ceasefire and hostage release deal negotiated by the Biden Administration was announced on Wednesday.

Trump also says he intends to quickly end Russia's war against Ukraine, though it is unclear when or how he plans to do that. After promising over the summer to end the nearly three-year conflict "in 24 hours," Trump more recently suggested a timeline of several months.

Climate

Climate skeptic Trump has promised to "drill, baby, drill" for oil and gas. He plans to repeal some of Biden's key climate policies, such as tax credits for electric vehicles, which are meant to encourage a transition to a green econ-

Trump arrives in Washington as celebrations begin before inauguration

Continued from Page 1

a postinauguration event on Monday afternoon.

Frigid weather forecast for Monday prompted Trump to move the inauguration ceremonies from the iconic west front of the US Capitol building indoors to the Capitol Rotunda, and the parade down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol One Arena.

In the Capitol Rotunda, Trump will be sworn in at 12 pm ET (1700 GMT) then deliver an inaugural address, a speech that typically sets the tone for the president's four-year term. It will be the first time since Ronald Reagan's second inauguration in January 1985 that the big event has been moved indoors.

Crowds without seats

Most of the more than 220,000 ticketed guests who had been due to watch from the US Capitol grounds will be unable to view the swearing-in inside the building. Just a fraction will be able to fit inside the 20,000-seat Capitol One Arena where the inauguration will be broadcast and parade entertainers and participants are expected to perform.

Trump fans who had planned to attend the inauguration were already walking around downtown Washington.

Arthur Calise, a 78-year-old retired professor, and his brother Richard Calise, a 64-year-old small business owner, had travelled from Connecticut to see Trump's second inauguration, after coming for the launch of his first term in 2017.

"It is so disappointing because all of us travelled so long and far to get here, and then to go through the congressional process to get tickets to the inauguration. Finally, we get tickets, now, boom. They are saying we may not even be able to go to the (National Mall), Arthur Calise said.

"I'm not disappointed because on Monday we're getting our country back, Richard Calise chimed in.

Delvin Koch, a 60-year-old information technology professional who travelled from Wisconsin with his sister, said they were still planning to attend the Sunday night arena rally if they can get inside.

"We don't know for sure," she said. "We're just excited to be here." Asked on Saturday how they would manage the crowds of Trump inauguration ticket holders who would not fit into the Capitol Rotunda or the stadium, the Secret Service referred the question to event organisers.

Trump's inauguration committee didn't respond to requests for more information on Saturday.

Once he returns to the White House on Monday afternoon, Trump is expected to begin signing dozens of executive orders and directives to crack down on migration, boost US energy production and other priorities.

Trump, whose first term lasted from 2017 to 2021, had refused to attend the inauguration of Biden, who defeated him in 2020. He left Washington for Florida ahead of the ceremony.

Biden will attend the inauguration ceremony on Monday. —Reuters

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Trump wants US to partly own TikTok, hints at delaying ban

Social media app begins to restore service after daylight blackout

WASHINGTON: Hours after TikTok went dark across the United States, President-elect Donald Trump called for the US to take part-ownership in TikTok and vowed to issue an executive order delaying a ban on the wildly popular app to allow time to "make a deal".

Trump's announcement came on Sunday, as a deadline for its Chinese owners ByteDance to sell its US subsidiary to non-Chinese buyers loomed. The law banning the app, however, includes a clause allowing for a 90-day delay if the White House can show progress toward a viable deal.

ByteDance flatly refused any sale and TikTok stopped working for its 170 million American users late on Saturday before a law shutting it down on national security grounds took effect on Sunday.

Outgoing President Joe Biden's administration said it would leave the matter to Trump, who takes office on Monday, and that it would not enforce any ban.

"I will issue an executive order on Monday to extend the period of time before the law's prohibitions take effect, so that we can make a deal to protect our national security," Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

He said he "would like the United States to have a 50pc ownership position in a joint venture," arguing that the

app's value could surge to "hundreds of billions of dollars — maybe trillions." "By doing this, we save TikTok, keep it in good hands," Trump wrote.

Later in a statement, TikTok said, "In agreement with our service providers, TikTok is in the process of restoring service." TikTok thanked Trump for "providing the necessary clarity and assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties (for) providing TikTok to over 170m Americans and allowing over 2 million small businesses to thrive."

From teenage dancers to grandmothers sharing cooking tips, TikTok has been embraced for its ability to transform ordinary users into celebrities.

In an earlier message to dismayed users trying to access the app on Sunday, TikTok said, "We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office."

Sunday's blackout came after the US Supreme Court on Friday upheld the legislation banning it pending any sale. But the app now has a fan in Trump, who since signing an executive order stepping up pressure on ByteDance to sell in 2020 has since credited the app with connecting him to younger voters.

"Congress wrote this law to be virtually president-proof," warned Adam Rosenzweig, chief executive of industry trade group Chamber of Progress. Other social media platforms such as X were flooded with memes and comments mourning the move — though some posts were more cynical, with many pointing to Trump's own previous efforts to ban TikTok.

In Europe, TikTok's suspension drew praise from the foreign minister of Estonia, according to the European Media Liberty Index. "Banning TikTok must be considered in Europe as well," Margus Toomla said on X.

The ban even became a hot topic at the Australian Open in Melbourne, where American tennis player Coco Gauff scratched "RIP TikTok USA" on a court-side camera. "I love TikTok, it's like an escape... hopefully it comes back," the world number three told reporters. —AFP

Five-day WEF moot kicks off in Davos

Finance minister to speak on 'Hacking Trade and Investment'

By Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Amid a world being shaped by geopolitical tensions, economic shifts, and technological advancement, the World Economic Forum is opening its 2025 meeting in Davos on Monday, bringing together nearly 3,000 leaders from diverse geographies and industries to drive dialogue, build trust and catalyse sustainable solutions to shared challenges.

The global economy is set to face significant challenges in 2025, with 56 per cent of chief economists surveyed expecting conditions to worsen, according to the latest 'Chief Economists Outlook' from the World Economic

Forum. Only 17pc foresee an improvement, pointing to heightened uncertainty in key regions and the need for measured policy responses worldwide.

The meeting will foster new partnerships and insights to shape a more sustainable, inclusive future in an era of rapidly advancing technology, focusing on five key areas: 'Reimagining Growth', 'Industries in the Intelligent Age', 'Investing in People', 'Safeguarding the Planet', and 'Rebuilding Trust'.

Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb will participate in the WEF event and speak on the theme of 'Hacking Trade and Investment' on Jan 23.

The five-day meeting taking place at the Swiss Alpine School in Davos, aims to spark dialogue between thought leaders and the public on various topics including the current geopolitical landscape, environmental challenges and the role of the arts in society.

Myanmar junta air strike kills 28 at detention centre, ethnic group says

ASEAN leaders want Myanmar junta to prioritise ceasefire over fresh polls

BANGKOK: A Myanmar junta air strike killed 28 people, including children, and wounded 25 at a temporary detention area in eastern Rakhine state, an ethnic minority armed group said on Sunday.

The Arakan Army (AA) is engaged in a fierce fight with the military for control of Rakhine, where it has seized swathes of territory in the past year, all but cutting off the state capital Sittoung.

The Rakhine conflict is one element of the bloody chaos that has engulfed Myanmar since the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government in a 2021 coup, sparking a widespread armed uprising.

The AA posted on its Telegram channel that a military jet bombed a detention area in Maung-U Township around 4.45pm on Saturday, where family members of junta soldiers were being held by the AA.

"Those who were killed and wounded were family members of soldiers in Myanmar's Army. We



MALAYSIA'S Foreign Minister Mohamad Hassan (left) waves to journalists after the ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting in Langkawi island, on Sunday. —AFP

arrested them during fighting," the AA said in the post.

"As we were preparing a plan to release them, they were bombed," the AA claimed.

Nine children were among those dead, including a two-year-old boy, it said. The others killed were women, according to a list of the dead posted by the AA.

The military is struggling to fight opposition to its rule on multiple fronts around Myanmar and it has been regularly accused of using air and artillery strikes to

hit civilian communities. It is unclear whether the strike in Maung-U Township was mistargeted or if the junta was unaware the area was being used as a detention site for soldiers' families as well as youth-led "People's Defence Forces" that emerged to oppose the coup. The military is also battling numerous long-established and well-armed ethnic minority armed groups.

These groups, which include the AA, control large areas of territory along Myanmar's borders.

The UNDP earlier warned that Rakhine was heading towards famine as fighting squeezed commerce and agricultural production. The United Nations said this month more than 3.5 million people have been displaced by the conflict in Myanmar, an increase of 1.5 million from last year.

Junta told to prioritise ceasefire

Meanwhile, Association of Southeast Asian (ASEAN) foreign ministers told Myanmar's junta to prioritise a ceasefire in its civil war over fresh elections during a meeting in Malaysia on Sunday.

"One thing that we know, they want to have an election. But we told them that election is not a priority at the moment," Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hassan told reporters after the meeting of Asian foreign ministers on the Malaysian island of Langkawi.

"The priority now is (for a) ceasefire and every body to stand down. It's very simple," Mohamad said.

Malaysia is this year's rotating chair of the 10-member ASEAN. Myanmar was represented on Sunday by Aung Mye Thaw, a senior civil servant in the foreign ministry after the regional bloc barred junta members from its meetings. —AFP

Nigeria oil tanker blast toll rises to 86

LAGOS: The death toll from the explosion of a petrol tanker truck in Nigeria that killed people rushing to gather fuel has risen to 86, emergency services said on Sunday.

The truck carrying 60,000 litres (nearly 16,000 gallons) of gasoline exploded after flipping over on a road in the centre of the country on Saturday, authorities said.

"The final death toll from the tanker explosion is 86," said Ibrahim Asika Hassan, spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency in Niger state.

"We buried 86 bodies yesterday at 2pm today," he said, updating an earlier toll of 79.

"It took us 14 hours to bury the bodies because we couldn't get excavators and had to get locals to dig the mass grave manually."

The blast struck at the Dikko junction on the road linking the federal capital Abuja to the northern city of Kaduna.

In October, more than 370 people died in a similar accident in Jigawa State, in northern Nigeria. —AFP

New Gwadar airport to see first landing today

By Mohammad Asghar

RAWALPINDI: A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight will land at the Gwadar International Airport, making it the first commercial aircraft to arrive at the new airport after its inauguration on Monday.

An official of the Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA) confirmed the New Gwadar International Airport will commence operations today.

A PIA spokesperson said that flight PK-503 from Karachi to Gwadar will land in the morning,

he said.

According to the flight schedule available on the website of Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, the flight is expected to depart 9:20am.

In addition to passengers, high-ranking officials from the aviation division will also be onboard the inaugural flight.

The flight will receive a customary water salute from the water bombers upon landing.

Defence and Aviation Minister Khuram Khan will be expected to welcome the passengers at the new airport, where a brief ceremony will be held to celebrate the inaugu-

ral flight.

Balochistan Governor Jaffer Khan Mandokhail, Chief Minister Sarfraz Bhatti, Chief Secretary Shaukat Qadir Khan, Aviation Division Secretary Ahsan Ali Mangi, PAA DG Air Vice Marshal Zeshan Saad, Airports Security Force DG Major General Adnan Anil Jafar Shah and Civil Aviation Authority DG Nadir Shah Dar will also attend the ceremony.

The new airport was inaugurated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang, during the latter's visit to Pakistan in October.

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A Sign of Japanese Commitment to Better Health

In Saif knife attack case, police turn to 'international conspiracy'

Analysts say Bangladeshi angle may help BJP in 5th Feb Delhi polls

By Our Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Police investigating the near fatal knife attack on actor Saif Ali Khan have tweaked the motive of the crime from attempted robbery to a wider 'international conspiracy', getting a five-day remand from a Mumbai court on Sunday to quash a detained suspect they described as Mohammed Sharif Sheikh from Bangladesh.

"The accused is a citizen of Bangladesh. The suspicion of international conspiracy cannot be said to be impossible. So, sufficient time has to be given to the investigating officer. Therefore, granting police custody of five days," the court said. Reports were still sketchy about the 2,000 Thursday incident at the actor's 12th floor, highly guarded home in Mumbai's Bandra locality. The police were being secretive in their probe leading to considerable speculation.

During the hearing, the investigating officer defended his 14-day custody demand and said that the accused trespassed into Saif Ali Khan's residence, attacked the actor, and injured two others. "Saif Ali Khan sustained grievous injuries, including a knife embedded in his body. We need to investigate

how the accused entered the actor's residence and his motives behind the attack."

"He is a Bangladeshi national, and it is important to determine how he entered the country. We need 14-day custody," the investigating officer insisted.

'No criminal record'

The defence lawyer opposed the request for custody, arguing that the accused is not a Bangladeshi but an Indian citizen who resides in Mumbai. "The matter is being unnecessarily hyped because it involves Saif Ali Khan. Otherwise, it would have been treated as a normal case. The reasons for custody were not clearly stated in the remand application. The accused is a young boy with no prior criminal record and is being made a scapegoat," the defence lawyer said.

According to the defence, the accused is unaware of the case details. Hearing arguments from both sides, the court said, "The investigation is in its early stages, and the accused was arrested only today. Therefore, the grounds for seeking remand for a sufficient period of investigation are justified. The ground of illegalities in the arrest raised by the defence lawyer appear to be without sound reasoning."

Speaking to the media after the case hearing, Sharif Sheikh's lawyer Sandeep Shekhani said, "Single of the case has been changed."

"First of all, Saif Ali Khan has never made any statement or does

not have any grievance with anyone that would create a threat to him from any state, Bangladesh or any other country. He does not have any international cases. They changed the angle of the case just... He was earlier in Bangladesh but he has been living here for many years now. Police said he has been living here for 6 months, which is not true. The family is in Mumbai," Shekhani said.

The crime branch and the local police had formed multiple teams to trace the accused after the attack. The accused, identified as Mohammed Sharif Islam Shekhani, had eluded them for more than two days before arresting him on Sunday morning, reports said.

Political benefits

The new angle in the case in BJP-led Maharashtra could offer a political benefit for the party in Delhi. Analysts say the Bangladeshi angle should help the party in a desperate race to win the 5th Feb Delhi assembly polls.

The BJP is hoping to dislodge the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi and allegations of Muslim migrants from Bangladesh being voters in the Indian capital have yielded communal dividends.

Meanwhile, Saif Ali Khan, 54, underwent emergency surgery at the Lilavati Hospital, where he was rushed following the incident that took place at his flat in the 'Burgers Sharan' building. He is recovering and may be discharged soon, doctors said.

Sajid, Abrar help Pakistan crush West Indies in first Test

MULTAN: Sajid Khan and Abrar Ahmed led the charge for Pakistan, bundling out West Indies for 123 to win the first Test in Multan by 127 runs on the third day as spinners ruled the roost.

It was the shortest completed men's Test match in Pakistan with 40 wickets falling in 104 balls.

Spinners took 16 wickets on Sunday as Jomal Warrican's seven-wicket haul restricted Pakistan's second innings to 137, setting a target of 251 for West Indies, who failed to get a partnership going on the turn-heavy track.

"It's hard out there. Batting was hard," Pakistan captain Shan Masood said. "In the second innings, we folded already. There are improvements to be made. When you win, you can go on a happy ride and be happy, but we can't do that."

Pakistan, who had a 93-run lead after

the first innings, started from an over-night score of 103-3, San Warrican struck early, dismissing Saad Shafiq and Mohammad Rizwan in his successive overs.

Warrican's destructive spell continued with Kamran Ghulam (25) getting caught behind soon after and, with Salman Ali Agha (14) becoming Gulistan Motin's solitary wicket of the innings, the hosts collapsed, having lost seven wickets in 48 runs.

"We'll take a look at how Warrican bowled. As spinners we should take a look at that. He was bringing the bat down forward," West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite said.

Brathwaite (12) was the first to fall when the visitors began the chase as he tried to hit Sajid for a six but ended up finding Khuram Shahzad at deep mid-wicket.

Keacy Carty (6) tried to sweep Sajid, but the ball nicked his glove and was caught by wicket-keeper Rizwan. Sajid bombarded Karim Hodge (10) and Mikyle Louis (13) soon after, bowling them out with sharp turns as West Indies fell to 37-4.

Alick Athanaze (55) put up a fight, scoring quick runs to put the pressure back on the bowlers. But Abrar kept knocking batters down at the other end, as Terin Ismail (14) and Kevin Sinclair (10) fell before they could fully settle down.

Athanaze was finally trapped by before wicket by Sajid, and a defiant Warrican was the last to fall as he was bowled out for a duck trying to reverse sweep Abrar.

"The wicket had a lot of turn and bounce... it was our strategy to throttle the runs. If we could do that, wickets would come automatically," said Sajid. He took nine wickets in the Test, including five in the second innings in a player-of-the-match performance.

Pakistan have now won three home Tests in a row, having beaten England twice to win their three-match series 2-1 in October.

Brathwaite said the visitors needed to be brave going into the second and final Test of the series, which begins at the same venue on Jan. 25.

"It's important to be positive on these types of pitches," he said. "We should show intent... if we can bring it together, batting and bowling-wise we can come out on top."

Meanwhile, Shan defended Pakistan's formula of using spin-friendly pitches to win home Test matches.

"If we want to be a top side in the World Test Championship then we have to sacrifice some things, like we did with the fast bowling in this Test," said the Pakistan skipper.

Pakistan made drastic changes after going without a home Test since 2021, using industrial fans and patio heaters to dry the Multan pitch against England last year.

Sajid and left-arm spinner Noman Ali took 19 of the 40 wickets to give Pakistan a come-from-behind series win against England, repeating the same play against the West Indies.

Shan's counterpart Brathwaite had no issues with it.

"They're at home as they got their decision how they want the pitch to behave," said Brathwaite. "It was a difficult pitch to bat on for sure."

"We expect the same type of pitch in the second Test so we got to come better with bravery and belief." —Agencies



MULTAN: West Indies batsman Jomal Warrican is bowled out by Pakistan spinner Abrar Ahmed during the first Test at the Multan Cricket Stadium. —AFP

Djokovic books Alcaraz clash, wants apology from Australian Open broadcaster

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic changed into the Australian Open quarterfinals and looked a mouth-watering encounter with Carlos Alcaraz before the Serb shifted the focus by sending the Grand Slam's official broadcaster and slapping them for mocking him and his fans.

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka dismissed teenage Mira Andreova while Coco Gauff overcame Belinda Bencic to go through to the last eight and extend their winning streaks as Melbourne Park stifled in the summer heat earlier in the day.

A red-hot Djokovic then thumped Jiri Lehocka 6-3, 6-4, 7-6(4) to stay on course for a record 25th Grand Slam title and 11th in Melbourne but the Serb was in no mood to discuss his chances as he declined an on-court interview and curtly thanked the crowd.

He then took aim at official broadcaster Channel Nine, whose reporter Terry Jones had mocked him and his fans when they were out in force cheering the Serb two days earlier.

"Novak... he's overrated, Novak's a bad person. Novak kick him on. Oh, I'm glad they can't hear me," Jones had said. Jones had already been taken to task by American Danielle Collins, who he called a "beat"

for her on-court behavior.

Djokovic said he had not received a public apology from the broadcaster and would continue boycotting them until he does.

"Since they're official broadcasters, I chose not to give interviews for Channel Nine," Djokovic told reporters, adding he had made his feelings clear to tournament director Craig Tiley.

"I told him, 'If you guys want to fine me for not giving an on-court interview, that's okay'. I'll accept that, because this is something that needs to be done. That's all there is to it."

In a comment to news.com.au, Jones said it was good natured banter with the Serbian fans. "We've been doing it all tournament and it's all in good fun. This is the happy slam."

Second seed Alexander Zverev continued his scorching form by beating Ugo Humbert 6-1, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 before Alcaraz eased into his second Australian Open quarterfinal after injury-hampered opponent Jack Draper threw in the towel while trailing 7-5, 6-1.

Djokovic and Alcaraz "He's a very dynamic, explosive player. Incredibly talented. Charismatic player. Great to watch, not great to play against."

"I look forward to it. I think when the draw was out, a lot of

people were looking forward to (it). So here we are."

CONSECUTIVE VICTORIES

Double defending champion Sabalenka's 6-1, 6-2 demolition of Andreova took her run of consecutive victories at Melbourne Park to 18, while Gauff made it nine wins in a row in 2025 by seeing off Bencic, the Swiss scorching of major champions, 5-7, 6-2, 6-1.

Tommy Paul was the first man to book his place in the last eight with a 6-1, 6-1, 6-1 win over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, who appeared beaten up after back-to-back five-setters in the last two rounds.

Sabalenka was taken the distance and defeated by 17-year-old Andreova in the French Open quarterfinal last year but it was not even close on Sunday as the world number one wrapped up the victory in 62 minutes.

"I'm super happy to get this win," Sabalenka said. "Mira is so young, so mature, such a great player. She can play really great tennis."

Sabalenka faces Russian veteran Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, who ran away with a 7-6(1), 6-0 win over Iliana Volkova after the Croatian 18th seed injured her knee midway through the match.

Third seed Gauff lost her first set of the year to open her clash

with Bencic, who had won seven of her last eight meetings with major champions.

The 27-year-old Swiss, ranked a lowly 25th on her resume to the tour after losing a daughter, was put on the back foot when the 2023 US Open champion came out firing in the second set.

Gauff, a semi-finalist last year, continued to apply pressure and Bencic crumbled after two set cords conspired against her at 2-1 down in the third.

The American could face Sabalenka in the semi-finals like last year if she can beat Spain's 11th seed Paula Badosa, who made the quarter-finals for the first time in Melbourne by beating Olga Danilovic 6-1, 7-6(2) on Margaret Court Arena.

Badosa had to rally from 5-2 down in the second to get past the Serbian and reach her second straight major quarter-final.

"It wasn't like a real 5-2 because I was playing well," said the 27-year-old.

Badosa added that she was looking forward to taking on Gauff after losing to the American in Beijing and Rome last year.

"I love Coco," she said. "We always have tough matches. The last one was really tough — I hope I can have my revenge." —Reuters

Scoreboard	
PAKISTAN (first innings) 200	
WEST INDIES (first innings) 123	
PAKISTAN (second innings) 137	
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KARACHI

Sunset 05:08 pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 07:17 am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 13°C
Maximum 28°C
Humidity 38%
Outlook Sunny

METRO South



Djokovic books
Alcaraz clash in
Australian Open

Pg.18 SPORT

Boycott of classes at universities to continue

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUSA) has announced that its ongoing protest against the Sindh government's plan to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors at public sector universities will continue and academic activities will remain suspended on Monday (today).

Holding the provincial government responsible for students' academic loss, the association said in a statement, "This protest would continue till the government reversed its decisions."

"We will open all schools, students, political leaders, civil society members and the journal in community to support us in this struggle," it said.

"This is not just a fight for teachers' rights, but a battle to protect higher education in Sindh. Let us unite to save the education system and secure the future of coming generations," the statement declared.

The association urged the government to withdraw its plans to appoint bureaucrats or commissioned officers as VCs and to hire teachers on a contractual basis, saying, "The proposed amendments will affect academic standards and destabilise the education system."

The teachers demanded that the government return the authority to issue no-objection certificates (NOCs) for faculty members travelling abroad to the VCs and address financial crisis affecting universities.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the association is scheduled today (Monday) to discuss the matters and chalk out further line of action.



TRAFFIC moves at a snail's pace on the M.A. Jinnah Road as the thoroughfare is submerged by sewage, on Sunday — PPI

Activists stress need to preserve architectural legacy of Karachi

Hundreds of heritage buildings are in dilapidated condition and face demolition threat, seminar told

By Waqas Ali

KARACHI: Heritage sites and cultural spaces are part of the identity of a city as they keep its relation with its past alive in a special way along with strengthening and improving its present, too, and therefore, it is a collective responsibility of citizens and government to preserve and protect all such places in Karachi. This was the key takeaway of a seminar titled "Barbar Road or Keweenaw? Clash of Cultures" which brought together architects, archaeologists, artists and designers at the Khayal-e-Hall here on Sunday to discuss Karachi's cultural heritage and shed light on some small efforts being made to preserve it.

Ironically, however, as the seminar was

about to start, Karpi Building, a majestic heritage site from 1908, was being demolished on the city's Outram Road. And as Durr-e-Kazi, who moderated the seminar, made that announcement during the presentation of an artist who had recently made a drawing of the Karpi Building among many others as part of his project, he and everybody else in the hall felt frustrated and, perhaps, enraged, too.

But as all of them also felt helpless, the seminar continued. The focus of the first three talks was the work that has been done by different partners to renovate and revitalise the Khayal-e-Hall and its library.

The first talk was delivered by Saadia Zaidi, a communication designer and founder of Nemat-e-Karachi, an interdisciplinary collective focused on activating underutilised public spaces for cultural production and as inclusive urban retreats.

Saadia started with the history and significance of the Khayal-e-Hall and Library and how it lay in a dilapidated condition before being restored and renovated by her team along with other partners. Thereafter, she spoke about the projects of the Nemat-e-

Karachi team. One of them is the "Reading Room Series Karachi" at the hall which aims at providing an urban cultural retreat for the citizens. "We along with our partners renovated the hall and library and now it is providing various cultural activities for local communities since June 2024 along with access to the newly conserved and digitised literary assets in the library," she said.

The second talk, "Interior Restoration of a Multi-Cultural Public Space in Hyper Transforming City" was by Sadiq and Polack Architects, who did the interior restoration of the hall. Christopher Polack and Ayesha Sadiq explained to the audience how research and planning was carried out in the interior restoration of a heritage site and how they did so at the Khayal-e-Hall. "Beside all efforts and hard work, I would say it is maintenance that is most important after the restoration of such buildings," emphasised Ayesha.

A panel discussion titled "Digital Documentation" included three presentations, mainly focused on the importance of

Continued on Page 15

Mayor asks MQM-P's charity to prove legal ownership of its properties

Vows to clean city's wall of 'inappropriate slogans and advertisements'

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: City Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday asked the Khidmat-e-Khali Foundation (KKF), the charity wing of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, to either prove legal ownership of its properties in the city or get them registered through department concerned of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

Talking to reporters after

inaugurating the newly constructed Ghulam Ali Allama Road, he vowed to take all due action against the encroachments including those structures raised by different organisations even for their welfare work.

To a question, he invited the management of the KKF to come up with "documents" that proved the legality of its different facilities in the city.

"I urge the KKF to provide valid documents for regularisation of their claims any property," he said. "If they don't have them get them regularised through due process defined by the KMC."

The mayor made it clear that the city administration had a zero tolerance policy against encroachments. "We will remove

all of them that deprive the people of Karachi of their rights," he added.

The mayor also reiterated his commitment to cleaning the city's walls of inappropriate slogans and advertisements. "We are determined to keep Karachi's walls clean and free of any unsanitary slogans or posters," he said.

He said that spaces like Faisal R Azeem's Sargam Ground, previously occupied by buffaloes, would be cleared and repurposed for youth sports facilities.

Earlier in his brief address, he said that G. A. Allama Road was in disrepair for 15 years, which has been rebuilt and dedicated to the former Mayor of Karachi, Ghulam Ali Allama.

"We are actively working on projects to improve water supply, roads, parks and sewage systems. This road is an example of our efforts," said the Mayor.

He appreciated the Pakistan Peoples Party's commitment to the betterment and development of Karachi.

The 3.5-kilometer-long G. A. Allama Road was completed in four months at a cost of Rs20 million. The project includes 28,300 square feet of sidewalks, 900 running feet of rainwater drainage pipes and 4,000 running feet of curb stones. Lane marking and cat eyes have also been installed for better visibility and safety.

Mayor Wahab announced that a Rs12.4 billion project is under way to bring 40 million gallons of

additional water daily from the Rob Canal, along with a Rs1.7 billion elevated pipeline in Lyari River to prevent water theft.

He also highlighted ongoing development projects such as the restoration of Old Queens Road, I.I. Chaudhry Road, Jinnah Bridge and Nory Jerry Bridge, emphasising that these works aim to resolve citizens' long-standing issues.

The event was also attended by Deputy Mayor Salman Abdullatif, Mayor, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Usman Ghani Hangeri, City Council Parliamentary Leader Kamranullah Waqar and UC-10 Lyari Chairman Muhammad Haris Chishtani, along with other officials and members of Ghulam Ali Allama's family.



Women stage rally after 12 BYC activists booked on sedition charge

By Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: While police booked 12 workers and leaders of the Baloch Women's Committee (BYC) in a sedition case for organising a rally in Lyari, a large number of women activists gathered in Malir on Sunday to condemn the police action.

The 12 held persons — Sarfaraz Razi, Sajid Yaqar, Mazid Salman, Waheed Mehmood, Ahsan Raziq, Amir Khalid, Anwarullah, Ihsan Hameed, Zain Hussain, Ahmed Nisar, Abdul Wahab and Akbar Shaukat — were among 25 activists picked up by police when they tried to stage a rally in Lyari on Saturday.

The police said 13 of the held persons were women and they were released without any charge.

However, a case against the 12 suspects was registered at the Khatkhat police station on behalf of the state through police officer Sadiq Hussain.

The FIR was lodged under Sections 123 (contemner of the creation of the state), 124-A (sedition), 147 (punishment for rioting), 149 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object), 153 (warrantly giving provocation with intent to cause riot), 200 (punishment for public nuisance in cases not otherwise provided for), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

It was alleged in the FIR that the BYC activists chanted slogans "against national institutions and Pakistani leadership" during a rally in Lyari.

Meanwhile, underscored by Saturday's police action, a large number of women took out a rally in Shariq Goth, Malir to mobilise the people for their upcoming programme in Dabband.

BYC leader Samra Dean Baloch, who led the rally, said that the participants in the rally condemned the police action in Lyari.

Man shot dead near National Museum

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: A young man was shot dead outside the National Museum within the remit of the Arambagh police station on Sunday, police said.

They said that the man, identified as Saeed Raza, 30, was targeted by four assailants riding on two motorcycles. He suffered critical bullet wounds and died on the spot.

The police said that the suspects did not take away his cell phone and other valuables.

The victim worked at a local bakery and originally hailed from Rahim Yar Khan.

Moot calls for change in policies towards Balochistan

Hafiz Naeem demands release of all missing persons; urges establishment to talk to 'genuine leadership' of province

By Imran Ayub

KARACHI: Speakers at a seminar on Sunday demanded that the government and the establishment change their policies towards Balochistan and ensure safe return of all the missing persons from the province. The seminar, "The Burning Issues of Balochistan and Their Solution", was organised by the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) here at the Karachi Press Club.

Speaking on the occasion, JI chief Hafiz Naeem Rehman said that his party would continue fighting the case of Balochistan in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Islamabad.

He added that the JI would try to level the

playing field for the people of Balochistan.

"Respect the disgruntled people of Balochistan and they will become more patriotic than anyone in the country," he said, adding that "By exerting power, none can resolve the issue or make them respect him. Give the people of Balochistan their due rights and within three months, they will be defending the borders," he said.

"If you want to resolve the issues, you will have to talk to the genuine leadership of the province, not with the form-47 leadership," he added.

Talking about the issue of missing persons, he demanded those at the helm of affairs to send back the missing persons. There was a constitution in the country and as per the constitution, everyone should be bestowed with the right to free trial, he said, adding that if someone had breached the law of the land, he should be produced in a court of law. However, the court should be a free court and not those called kangaroo courts, he added.

The JI leader also said that the resources given to Balochistan also fell prey to corruption as the province was being ruled by the "form-47 government".



JI CHIEF Hafiz Naeem Rehman speaks at the event. — PPI

He added that there was "a tough competition of corruption in Balochistan and Sindh". Speaking on the occasion, Balochistan Union of Journalists Imtiaz Tariq said that the people in Balochistan have to take permission of the deputy commissioner before holding a seminar or press conference.

The government has attempted multiple times to close the Quetta Press Club in order to suppress the voice of people, he said, while highlighting problems being faced by journalists in Balochistan.

JI-Balochistan chief Mastura Bibekyar Rehman regretted all the propaganda about the people of Balochistan. He also highlighted the excessive use of force, inappropriate conduct and misadventure while dealing with people particularly during raids.

"The people of Balochistan had a particular high regard for their women. Arresting and harassing of Baloch women is totally unacceptable," he said, adding that even protesting Baloch women were arrested in Karachi and other parts of the country.

Zahid Akhtar Baloch said the province contributed 40 per cent of Pakistan, provides gas and minerals to the rest of the country, yet it is being treated unjustly.

PRAYER	
Fajr	5.59
Zuhar	12.42
Asr	4.35
Maghrib	6.09
Isha	7.26
Starting time in Karachi	

REFLECTIONS

“I ALWAYS KEEP THREE THINGS IN MIND: DEATH, YOUR DEEDS AND THE LIFE HEREAFTER. IN THIS WAY YOU WILL ALWAYS BE READY TO FACE DEATH AND IT WILL NOT CATCH YOU UNAWARES.”

— HAZRAT ALI (A.S.)

25A4427

Workers vow to defeat ‘plot to legalise’ contractual system

Activists ask Sindh labour dept to abandon ‘anti-worker policies’

Dawn Report

KARACHI: Workers and rights activists staged a rally in the metropolis on Sunday and demanded abolition of the contractual employment system, implementation of labour laws and an immediate halt to privatisation of state institutions, corporate farming and construction of six canals over the Indus initiatives.

The rally, jointly organised by the National Trade Union Federation Pakistan (NTUF) and the House-based Workers Federation Pakistan (HWF), began from Regal Club and culminated at the Karachi Press Club, where labour leaders delivered speeches.

Participants of the rally, including women, carried red flags, banners and placards and shouted slogans in favour of their demands. Zehra Khan and Riaz Abbas led the rally.

They demanded that the contractual labour system be criminalised and abolished, workers must receive permanent employment, written appointment letters and be paid declared wages through bank accounts.

They also asked authorities to ensure implementation of labour laws in workplaces and registration of all workers with social security and pension institutions.

The activists also voiced concern over the government's privatisation of state institutions, construction of additional canals and corporate farming initiatives and demanded a halt to these projects.

The participants also demanded that international fashion brands must adhere to local labour laws and European Parliament regulations.

Speaking on the occasion, Nasir Mansoor of the NTUF said that the Sindh and Punjab governments, in collaboration with the ILO, were conspiring to legalise the third-party contract system, which deprived workers of their basic rights and identity.

He accused the ILO of violating Convention 144, which advocates for tripartite consultation. “We will take legal action against these anti-worker moves nationally and internationally, particularly in Switzerland. Contacts with other South Asian labour organisations had also begun for a united response,” he said.

Zehra Khan of the HWF criticised the Sindh labour department for failing to ensure payment of government-declared wages. “Due to the country's incompetence, 90 per cent of workers in Sindh remain deprived of minimum wages,” she said.

She urged PPF Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari to intervene immediately to prevent further damage to his party's reputation caused by the labour department's inaction.

Qazi Khair of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan highlighted the rising unemployment and poverty, blaming anti-worker policies imposed under international financial institutions' directives. Despite government claims of economic progress, over 4.5 million people were unemployed, and 15m lived below the poverty line, he said.

Hakim Karachi, Khalid Jamali, Nasir Baloch, Dr. Aggar, Ali Dastgir, Asif Hussain and others also spoke.



PARTICIPANTS of the rally march on the Karachi Press Club, on Sunday.—Shahid Aidi / White Star

Police grill 19 suspects in boys' kidnap case

KARACHI: Police on Sunday claimed to have detained more than a dozen suspects during an operation and gathered evidence during the initial investigation that could assist the law enforcers in locating two children recently abducted from Garden.

A combing operation led by City SSP Arif Aziz was carried out for

the search of two missing children from Garden. Station House Officers (SHOs) of Garden, Kalakot, Chakwara and Kalri police station along with other intelligence staff joined the operation.

“During the search operation, 19 suspects were detained and shifted to a police station where they were being interrogated,” a city police

spokesperson said.

City SSP Arif Aziz said: “Some evidence has been obtained, which may help the police to recover the missing children very soon.”

Separately, the police also announced Rs300,000 reward for providing any information regarding the missing children.

—Staff Reporter

Raaz-i-Sukhan launched

KARACHI: Raaz-i-Sukhan, a book by Allama Iqbal's eldest grandson, Asad Iqbal, was launched at Arts Council.

Speaking at the book launch, organised by the Jinnah Memorial Literary Forum under its *Agenda-Iqbal*, Basim-ul-Haq, CEO, Jinnah Memorial Literary Forum, said Iqbal's poetry is not just a collection of verses but a reflection of his deep understanding of the human condition and the struggles of the common man.

He said that Allama Iqbal not only envisioned the creation of Pakistan but also, through his poetry, instilled a renewed spirit among the youth, dispelling despair and encouraging optimism.

He emphasised that, in today's times, Iqbal's thoughts and poetry can help alleviate the sense of hopelessness that has overtaken society, and this book can be considered a beacon for Iqbal's family. At the ceremony, Asad Iqbal also recited his grandfather's poetry, which was warmly appreciated by the audience.—Staff Reporter

THIS WEEK 50 YEARS AGO

Nawab of Dacca, Princess Ashraf and Drigh Road

By Parviza Salmaan

AS has often been mentioned in these pages, one of the problems that reared its head as Karachi's population began to increase exponentially more than five decades back is the simultaneous rise in the number of motor vehicles in the city. On Jan 20, 1975 traffic on Drigh Road (now **Shame Faisal**) between Gora Gabriani and Napier Barracks was completely disrupted for an hour when students of the Asha Bawani Academy blocked the thoroughfare. They created hindrances in both lanes of the road because of which the police had to divert cars, buses and motorcycles through Abyssinia Lines and Defence Housing Society. The students were protesting against the recent closure by the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) of an opening for cross-traffic in front of the academy. Earlier, the youngsters offered *ghazals* *namaz* *parade* for a colleague who was killed in an accident near the school a few days back. They complained that the closure had caused vehicles to move faster than before making it difficult for pedestrians to cross the road. They desisted after the police promised them that it would prevail upon the KDA to rectify the situation.

The same day, since Drigh Road was/is closest to the airport, **Nawab Khwaja Hassan Askeri of Dacca landed in Karachi from Bangladesh** (formerly East Pakistan). He had come via Calcutta to visit his wife and children who had been living in the Sindh capital for over three years.

Another dignitary was in the city that week. On Jan 22, **Princess Ashraf Pahlavi** emphasised

the need for close contact and cooperation between women's organisations of Pakistan and Iran to make 1975 a year of dynamic change and progress for women. Speaking at a symposium on International Women's Year jointly arranged by APWA (which was celebrating its silver jubilee) and the Pakistan National Centre at a local hotel, she said: “Let us hope that 1975 will bring the women of the world together to work towards such a day when their organisations will have no justification for existence, a day when men and women will share their burden and the trust of life on an equal basis.” The princess, who was the sister of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, said APWA founded by Sindh Governor Begum Rahana Liaquat Ali Khan had a great tradition of dedicated service to Pakistan's society. The celebration of its silver jubilee was an occasion to review its admirable past achievements and a starting point for greater accomplishments.

From Iran to Iraq. On Jan 24, an agreement of cooperation between the Jinnah Post-Graduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and the Medical College, University of Basrah, was signed in Karachi by Dr Nazir Ali-Shawry, leader of the visiting four-member Iraqi delegation and Dr B A Qureshi, director of the JPMC. The contract provided for establishing ‘firm relations’ between the two institutions representing Iraq and Pakistan. Complying with it, they would exchange visits of professors for short periods lasting eight to 12 weeks. The JPMC was also to allocate the Medical College in Basrah scholarships to obtain doctorate or any other post-graduate degree in subjects such as anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, bacteriology, parasitology and pathology.

BEFORE DR. HATIM AZIZ SOLANGI (JUDGE) IN THE BANKING COURT NO. 1 AT KARACHI
(Bank-107) Pakistan Banking Court No. 1, Karachi

SUIT NO. 01 OF 2025

VERSUS

1. MAJID ALI S/O OF MUHAMMAD ALI (P/F)
MAJID ALI, Resident of Block No. 10, 10th Floor, Sector 10, DHA, Karachi

2. MAJID ALI S/O OF MUHAMMAD ALI (P/F)
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ISLAMABAD

Sunset 05:28pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 07:07am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 08°C
Maximum 18°C
Outlook Partly Cloudy

METRO North



Djokovic books
Alcaraz clash in
Australian Open

Pg. 18 SPORT

Polyclinic denies administering counterfeit vaccines

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: While allegations are being made that counterfeit vaccines were being administered to travellers and pilgrims at the International Vaccination Centre (IVC), Polyclinic spokesperson has claimed that the hospital does not procure any vaccine for travellers.

"The fact is almost 70 to 80 people, intending to travel abroad, daily approach the IVC for the issuance of the international travel vaccination card. As we are not authorised to procure vaccines, so travellers purchase the vaccine from the open market and bring it to the IVC established in Polyclinic. We administer the vaccine, and after removing the sticker from the bottle of the vaccine, paste it on the vaccination card. Therefore, it is unfair to allege that the hospital is administering the counterfeit vaccine," he said while briefing media persons.

Replying to a question, he said that after the allegations, the hospital administration decided to discontinue the service. However, later it was considered that by doing so, significant problems would be created for the travellers, therefore it was decided to keep the IVC open.

"To determine the efficacy and genuineness of the vaccine is beyond the scope of the hospital. Furthermore, no adverse reaction has been reported after getting such service from Polyclinic," he said.

It is worth mentioning here that recently the federal drug inspector had found that people intending to travel to Saudi Arabia were purchasing counterfeit vaccine from the open market. These vaccines were being administered in Polyclinic as IVC was established there and people get the vaccination card from the hospital.

When contacted a senior officer of the Ministry of National Health Services (MHS), wishing not to be named, said it was a fact that a counterfeit vaccine was being sold in the federal capital.

"The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRA) and the federal drug inspectors are responsible to take action against the medical stores of the federal capital which are involved in selling the counterfeit vaccine. On the other hand, Polyclinic staff cannot identify the counterfeit vaccine, so there are strong chances that if vaccine would be sold in the open market, it would be administered to international travellers," he said.

"However, as Polyclinic, DRA and federal drug inspectors are all under the health ministry, it has become difficult for us to put the responsibility on anyone of them," he said.



Dark clouds hang over the 7th Avenue metro station in Islamabad on Sunday evening. — Photo by Mohammad Asim

CDA may take up Monal case in Supreme Court again

Official says civic agency will attempt to convince top court that existence of eatery was not 'unjustified'

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to challenge the closure and demolition of the Monal restaurant, which was recently shut down by the Supreme Court for encroaching on protected land.

Talking to Dawn, CDA's Director Environment Dr Irfan Niaz said: "The CDA will again take up the issue of Monal in the Supreme Court in a separate case of the Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI) to explain the existence of the restaurant was not unjustified."

The official hoped that the authority would try to convince that under the law, the CDA's acquired land could not be given to anyone without payment.

The Supreme Court had ordered the closure of Monal and the adjacent La Montana restaurant in August last year, and they were closed in September to protect the biodiversity of the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP).

"The Supreme Court ordered the closing of Monal only because the word 'restaurant' was not mentioned in its conceptual document," the CDA official claimed.

"Rather, it was mentioned in the document that a hotel, recreational facility, and tourist spot will be established at the

site of Monal. I had requested to consider Monal as a hotel, tourist place, and recreational facility which also houses restaurants; however, the court ordered its closure and razing only because the word 'restaurant' was missing," he claimed.

"We had also presented a list of 132 other hotels, restaurants and recreational places being run in the national park area, but the court did not take any decision about them," he added.

These places included a hotel of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), which is in the vicinity of Monal, some small kiosks, and a number of other restaurants and hotels in Shokarparian as well as the Islamabad Club and the Pak-China Friendship Centre.

Some of the owners of these hotels and outlets were contacted. A few said they had not received any notice from the authority, while a few were reluctant to share details.

PTDC Acting Managing Director Ashtaj Ahmed was also contacted, but he didn't reply, saying "he would call back later".

The CDA built Monal in 2004, and the eatery became operational in 2006. Following the establishment of the restaurant, it was leased out to the Monal Group of Hotels.

About two decades ago, the government and the CDA, under former chairman Kamran Lashari, told that the federal capital lacked recreational places, hotels, and tourist spots.

At the time, plots for high-rise buildings like Centaurus and Constitution 1 (twin towers) were auctioned for the highest-ever bids, and restaurants like Monal and 1969 area were established.

When contacted, former CDA chairman Kamran Lashari shared his experience of establishing Monal, whose construction work took one year. "If anything was wrong in Monal and it was harming the national park then there must be some solutions to it rather [going] straightly to its closure," he said.

Mr Lashari said a number of countries, like African states and Switzerland, were making millions of dollars through tourism in national park areas. He said it would have been better to form a committee of experts to decide how the restaurant could be made environmentally friendly.

In September, a three-judge bench also rejected a set of revision petitions moved by the Monal Group of Companies and others.

On Aug 21, the Supreme Court in its detailed order had directed the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board to take possession of restaurant namely Monal, La Montana and Gloria Jeans and obligated the CDA and the police to assist the wildlife board.

Then CJP Qazi Faez Isa, in a 13-page order, said that Monal, La Montana, and Gloria Jeans were in total disregard of the provisions of the Islamabad Wildlife (Protection, Preservation and Management) Ordinance, 1979.

The operators of these restaurants and those who permitted them to operate disregarded the integrity of the national park, ravaged its flora, and displaced and disturbed the endemic bird and animal life, the SC judgement had regretted.

An astronomical environmental cost was also borne by the public and will continue to be borne by future generations, then CJP Qazi Faez Isa had lamented.

Missing boy's body recovered after two months

RAWALPINDI: The body of a four-year-old boy, who went missing about two months ago in Rawat, was recovered from a pond close to the house where he had gone along with his mother and two siblings to attend a wedding ceremony.

The mother, who also had a baby girl and a son younger than the missing boy, did not leave the house for two weeks in a hope that he would be reunited with his son.

But after her husband's condition deteriorated due to cancer, she returned to her home, and the boy's father passed away a few days later, one of their relatives said.

Omer Rauf, a resident of Rawat, told Dawn that his sister with her three children had gone to participate in a wedding ceremony of a relative on November 23 when her elder son Arshman went missing while playing with other children outside the area. He recalled that there had been an aerial firing in the village due to which some of the children among them his nephew had run away in panic.

After some time when his sister realised that her son had gone missing, a search was launched but the boy could not be traced. Later, the relatives sought police help and registered an FIR with the Rawat police.

The parents of the missing boy had to pass through another ordeal in the hands of police investigating officer. Mr Rauf claimed.

"The IO demanded Naksheenas and CNIC of my sister and also harassed the younger brother of my sister who had accompanied her to the wedding ceremony," he alleged.

Mr Rauf said he approached the regional police officer (RPO) and the city police officer Rawalpindi seeking their help, but his efforts remained unproductive.

The body of the missing boy was found after a passerby couple spotted the body on the surface of the pond on Saturday and informed the villagers.

"Yes, it was the body of young Arshman clad in the wedding dress when it was taken out of the water," Mr Rauf told Dawn.

He said the police investigating officer visited the spot and shifted the body to the District Headquarters Hospital for postmortem.

On the other hand, a police spokesman said CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani had taken notice of the incident and sought a report from the SP Sadler Division.

The spokesman said that four-year-old Arshman went to a wedding with his mother in November and went missing while playing with other children. A case of the incident was registered at Rawat police station and a search was launched. "The police made every effort to search the child using all technical and human intelligence sources."

The child's family also worked with the police to search for the child but remained unsuccessful. The child's body was found in a pond near the location where he had gone to the wedding ceremony with his mother, said the spokesman.

It appears to be a case of death after falling into the pond while playing, however, a postmortem has been conducted on the body.

The postmortem report will definitively determine the actual cause of the boy's death, said the police spokesman. — Mohammed Asghar



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Starting time in Islamabad	

REFLECTIONS

IT'S ALWAYS KEEP THREE THINGS IN MIND: DEATH, YOUR DEEDS AND THE LIFE HEREAFTER. IN THIS WAY YOU WILL ALWAYS BE READY TO FACE DEATH AND IT WILL NOT CATCH YOU UNAWARES. >>

— HAZRAT ALI (A.S.)

75A4437

Officials told to remain on alert amid harsh winter in AJK

By Our Staff Correspondent

MUZAFFARABAD: Arafat Jammal and Khatun (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq on Sunday directed the administration to remain on high alert amid harsh winter conditions in upper Neelum Valley, following the death of a pregnant woman allegedly due to limited healthcare access.

He issued these directives after reports surfaced on social media, claiming that a 21-year-old pregnant woman from Tootat Bala village, who was being carried to Tootat Hospital in Keri, by her relatives on foot on Saturday night succumbed due to the alleged unavailability of healthcare services in the area.

The woman's family blamed the death on blocked roads and inadequate health facilities.

Local journalist Hayat Awan told Dawn that the woman's relatives and neighbours protested by placing her body on snow, accusing the government of negligence.

When contacted, Deputy Commissioner Nadeem Ahmed Jarrida said, "Continuous snowfall and from make the main artery and link roads impassable. Even heavy machinery struggles in these conditions."

He dismissed claims of inadequate healthcare, stating that upper Neelum had several health facilities, including a THQ Hospital equipped with specialist doctors, gynaecologists, and medicines. Additionally, the Pakistan Army also operated health facilities in the area, he added.



PEOPLE walk with their canines during a dog show held at Pir Mehr Ali Shah University of Animal Agriculture in Rawalpindi on Sunday. — White Star

Gilani says education vital for shaping Pakistan's future

Insists technological advances necessary for students to develop faculties for meeting job requirements

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Syed Yaseen Raza Gilani on Sunday highlighted the importance of education in shaping Pakistan's future and called on universities to play a pivotal role in equipping students to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Speaking at the 25th degree-awarding ceremony of Iqbal University Islamabad, he urged

the graduating classes of 2023 and 2024 to embrace the changing world with knowledge, innovation and a commitment to national progress.

The ceremony held at the Jinnah Convention Centre celebrated the third year and dedication of over 500 graduates, marking a significant milestone in their academic journey.

"The world around us is changing fast. Technological advances such as AI, Machine Learning, Genomics, Internet of Things, Blockchain, and Quantum Computing necessitate our students to develop their faculties to match the new requirements of the job market," said Mr Gilani.

He emphasised the importance of cognitive, socio-emotional and digital learning skills to ensure employability in this new era.

He added, "As we transition to a knowledge economy, we see a shift

from traditional growth factors to building human and intellectual capital for sustainable increase in GDP.

The predominant source of influence in the modern world stems from information, intelligence, and insight rather than physical power or natural resources." Drawing inspiration from renowned futurist Alvin Toffler, Mr Gilani stated, "The literate of the 19th century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

He urged educational institutions to be proactive in fostering critical thinking, innovation, and leadership in students, thereby contributing to Pakistan's economic and social growth.

The Senate chairman also emphasised the need for collaboration between the government, academia, and parliament to ensure that Pakistan's youth are

equipped with the tools to thrive.

"We must work together - the academia, the parliament, and the government - to ensure excellence and innovation in education," he said. He mentioned the improvement in the quality of education provided at Bahauddin Zakariya University and said hundreds of students were sent on fully funded scholarships abroad through the university.

Mr Gilani also quoted Pakistan's founder Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who said, "Pakistan is proud of her youth, particularly the students who have always been in the forefront in the hour of trial and need. You are the nation's leaders of tomorrow and you must fully equip yourself by discipline, education and training for the arduous task lying ahead of you."

Work on F-8 flyover continuing as per schedule, says CDA

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Sunday claimed that construction activities on all sections of the F-8 flyover were progressing round-the-clock as per schedule.

The project is supposed to be completed by February 15. A press release issued by the CDA on Sunday said Chairman Muhammad Ali Raza Gilani along with the member engineering and other officers visited the F-8 Jinnah Avenue Interchange and F-10 roundabout projects to review the construction activities. During the visit, the chairman was informed that the base slabs of the flyover had been completed while work on vertical and final slabs was expected to be finished within this month.

Additionally, work on two deck slabs of the bridge connecting Jinnah Avenue with F-10 has also been completed. The CDA chief also reviewed the engineering remodeling design aimed at

improving traffic flow at the F-10 roundabout.

He noted about the protected U-turn being constructed on Jinnah Avenue and the process of tree transplantation involved in the project. Slip roads in the project have been designed to ensure no trees are affected.

The CDA chairman directed that Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) tree transplantation be utilised to safely relocate large trees to alternative locations.

Officers on the occasion said a protected U-turn was under construction on Nazimuddin Road near F-10.

"Construction activities across all sections of the project are progressing 24/7 as per schedule," Chairman CDA expressed satisfaction with the construction progress on the Jinnah Avenue Interchange, read the press release.

Meanwhile, the CDA chief also visited the under-construction S-11 Interchange, which has a 1.5 km x 1.5 km area and is expected to be completed by February 15. He noted that the project is progressing 24/7 as per schedule. Chairman CDA expressed satisfaction with the construction progress on the Jinnah Avenue Interchange, read the press release.

Mr Raza Gilani was told that Raza Underpass on Sahrawardy Road had been completed and opened to traffic.

Additionally, two underpasses under construction on Sahrawardy Highway will be opened to traffic in the current month.

The chairman instructed that landscaping and horticulture work be prioritised to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the project. He also directed for the installation of attractive permanent lights and digital screens around the project sites.

Meanwhile, the CDA chairman visited under-construction C-14 to review the progress of ongoing development work. According to press release, he was told that over 50pc of the road infrastructure work had been completed along with more than 50pc of the drainage and sewerage work. The remaining work will be completed soon.

He directed that the pace of development work should be further accelerated. The possession of plots will be handed over to the allottees upon payment of the final installment, he added.

Recently, CDA laid out 236 plots against Rs14 billion (Rs10 million per kanal). — Staff Reporter

New RIPJA body elected

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Senior photographers Sajjad Haidar and Sohail Shahid have been elected as president and general secretary of Rawalpindi Islamabad Photographic Association (RIPJA), says a press release.

Annual elections of RIPJA were held at Rawalpindi Press Club on Sunday. According to Chairman Election Committee, Nasir Mir, Sajjad Haidar-led 'Agna Group' won the elections. Jahangir Chaudhry was elected as senior vice president while Chaudhry Javed and Mudasar Raja were elected vice presidents.

Whereas, Muhammad Asim has been elected finance secretary and Faizal Khan, joint secretary and Syed Mehdi, information secretary. Mirwan Khan, Irfan Shukh, Raja Zafar, Harif Khattak, Abid Zia, Sultan Razi and Tahir Kamal were elected members of the governing body. As many as 87 photo journalists took part in the election process.

Minister for robust policy enforcement to tackle vehicular emissions

By Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice Asim Naseer Tameer has emphasised the urgent need for a robust policy enforcement to tackle vehicular emissions, a significant contributor to the country's worsening air pollution.

Saying, now a pressing public health hazard, disrupted lives, economic activity, and transportation while causing severe health issues.

Chairing the 10th meeting of the National Climate Change Policy Implementation Committee at the ministry, Mr Tameer stressed the need for immediate actions to curb smog and air pollution. He said coordinated efforts among government bodies were essential to address the environmental crisis.

Aisha Hanjra Moriari, Secretary Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, briefed the meeting on the implementation of the National Climate Change Policy 2021. She outlined progress on renewable energy projects and the National Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy 2019, both designed to reduce the country's carbon footprint.

The participants were informed that significant strides had been made in expanding solar, wind, and hydropower projects, aligning with Pakistan's goal of achieving a 30 per cent renewable energy share in its energy mix by 2030. Public-private partnerships have been instrumental in accelerating these initiatives.

She also detailed the growing adoption of EVs, particularly two- and three-wheelers, supported by government incentives such as tax exemptions and reduced customs duties. These measures aimed to reduce transport sector emissions and promote a cleaner, sustainable future.

Representatives from federal and provincial agencies, including the ministry of industry and energy, and the National Highways and Motorway Police endorsed the adoption of mandatory vehicle emission standards. They agreed on enforcing Euro-5 or higher standards through stricter compliance monitoring and regular vehicle inspections.

The minister stressed the importance of nationwide enforcement of stringent emission standards.

"Ensuring conformity with Euro-5 standards is critical to improving air quality and tackling the recurring smog problem," he said.

Imran Ahmed, Director General (DG) at the Ministry of Energy, said 60pc of Pakistan's fuel consumption still relied on substandard Euro-2 and Euro-3 fuel. This contributed significantly to smog levels (PM2.5) emissions, especially from diesel vehicles. Urging local fuel refineries to align with regional standards in order to mitigate a smog issue.

The meeting also reviewed government initiatives from under the National EV Policy 2019, which included incentives for EV adoption and the development of EV-based mass transit systems.

The minister urged with approval of the new energy policy to facilitate nationwide promotion of EVs and hybrid vehicles, including mass transit fleets.

The meeting observed that by prioritising EV adoption, renewable energy projects, and stricter emission standards, Pakistan aimed to address urban air pollution and mitigate the adverse effects of smog.

UK to promote entrepreneurial culture in Pakistan: envoy

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott on Sunday said that the United Kingdom would continue cooperating with Pakistan to promote entrepreneurial culture and skills and instill entrepreneurial spirit in youth of the country.

Pakistan's youth have entrepreneurial skills and potential and the British High Commissioner in Islamabad will continue its due support to develop this potential. Ms Marriott said while speaking at the annual inter-school business competition hosted by her along with Kings Trust International and SEED Ventures.

Talking to this agency, the high commissioner said today, young students from five different schools and education institutions belonging to all the provinces of the country and Islamabad presented their business models and business-related ideas, which reflected their excellent entrepreneurial skills and capabilities.

The envoy said the British High Commission had already started various programmes to promote girls' education and entrepreneurship in Pakistan and more programmes were being planned.

She said the private sector, especially Small and Medium Enterprises, played an important role in any economy.

She said in today's modern world, startups, innovation, and entrepreneurial skills are the backbone of any emerging economy, and to increase the role of youth in the future economy, these skills must be taught to them.

The high commissioner said that there is a lot of potential in economic and trade relations between the United Kingdom and Pakistan and that vast opportunities existed for promoting future bilateral trade. — AFP

Woman 'raped' in Pindi

By Our Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: A woman was allegedly raped by two men at gunpoint in Rawalpindi, police reported on Sunday.

The victim, a single mother, was allegedly lured to a commercial building on Double Road using her co-worker by the two suspects.

When the alleged victim approached the New Town police to lodge a complaint, she was reportedly forced to reconcile with the suspects.

A video statement of the victim also surfaced online in which she could be heard alleging harassment and maltreatment at the hands of police personnel at the New Town police station.

A case was registered only after City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Hamdani intervened.

The victim told the police that she lived with her parents after a divorce and worked at a call centre to earn a living. On January 14, she received a call from her female colleague who asked her to come to a commercial building on Double Road, promising her a better job.

She said in the FIR that when she reached the place, she found two unknown individuals sitting there. The victim alleged that she was held at gunpoint and raped. The suspects also reportedly filmed the crime and threatened her not to disclose the matter to any body.

The twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad constantly report crimes of similar nature which have raised concerns about the safety of vulnerable individuals, especially women going through pressing times.

In December last year, a woman, who was attending her ailing teenage daughter in the children's ward of Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH), was allegedly raped by a security guard in the toilet of the hospital.

Police registered a case and arrested the suspect. The rape victim, 35, a resident of Attock, lodged an FIR with the Wazir Khan police saying that she had been attending her nine-year-old ailing daughter in the children's ward of the hospital.

She said when she went to the washroom, a security guard followed her and entered the washroom and sexually raped her. The victim said following the incident, she also tried to commit suicide.

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DIRECTORATE OF WORKS GOMAL UNIVERSITY D.I.KHAN
E-Mail: worksgom@gmail.com Phone No: 0994-7288911

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

Gomal University, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites sealed bids from firms/contractors for "Construction of Boundary wall behind the IIR Department, Qaid-e-Azam Campus, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan". The bidder should be registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC).

S. No	Name of work	Estimated Cost Rs.	Bid Security Rs.	Tender form fee Rs.	Last date of submission
1	Construction of Boundary wall behind the IIR Department, Qaid-e-Azam Campus, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan	25,00,348/-	34,000/-	2,000/-	03-02-2025
2. Tender form and BOC can be received by the office of the Works Directorate, till one day prior to opening of the tender documents on payment of sum of Rs. 2,000/- in cash or by draft (Non-Refundable) on submission of application showing permanent postal address of the Firm/Contractor along with following documents: i. Photocopy of updated renewal of Registration in C&I Department. ii. Photocopy of Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council valid up to last date of calendar. iii. Photocopy of National Identity Card. iv. Registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority					
3. The eligible contractor/ firms are required to submit their financial bids along with bid security accompanied with the tender form in favor of Director Works, Gomal University and reach to the office of the Director Works at 03-02-2025 at 10:30 AM.					
4. The tender will open by the works committee on same date i.e 03-02-2025 at 11:00 AM.					
5. If tender not opened on said date due to any reason, the same will be opened on 11-02-2025 at said time.					
6. The contractor shall submit the additional security in the light of KPPRA notification No S.R.O (34) VOL 1-240033-22, dated 04-05-2022.					
7. The bid should be quoted in above/ below system on MRS 2024 (3rd Annual).					
8. Conditional telegraphic tender shall not be entertained.					

Director Works, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan

Khookha Baoli stepwell — a relic of the past

By Hamid Asghar



THE four-arched passage leading down to the water level of the Baoli (stepwell) showcases the beauty of Mughal-era architecture.



THE retaining wall in need of urgent repair.



THE stone-cased passage was used by horses to directly access water during wars around Rohtas Fort.

Khookha Baoli (stepwell) located in village Khookha, in the surrounding area of Rohtas Fort near Dina, is a monument of wartime engineering, which is worth preserving. Such wells constructed alongside the main pathways not only cater to the needs of residents and travellers between Kabul and Delhi but also make it convenient for the horse riders to take their horses directly to the water table of the well and let them quench their thirst. It is believed that this was constructed during the Mughal era. Chaudhry Mohammad Ashraf, retired chief secretary of the Azad Jammu Kashmir government, told Dawn that in some areas, like Mianwali, these wells were also called 'Wahan' in the local dialect. Another 'baoli' still exists between Mandira and Gujar Khan towns on GT Road and the spot is known as the 'Baoli Hotel'. According to Chaudhry Mohammad Ashraf, a mega-sized baoli (stepwell) was constructed by Emperor Akbar in Gujrat as a fulfillment of the promise made by his father, Emperor Humayun to the locals. According to Mr Ashraf, due to littering, this could not be excavated and retrieved in its original shape.

A smaller stepwell also existed near Ghazanabad village alongside the Kallar-Rawat road, but in the past, it was filled with earth by the neighbouring land grabbers. The residents of the area urged the commissioner to order its excavation. 'Khookha Baoli' in the surrounding area of Rohtas is quite intact, except for a portion of its retaining wall that needs timely repair. The wide staircase leading through three majestic archways towards the cool and clean water springs is a testament to its "past glory". The wide round well is also intact despite neglect from the authorities. Meesam Abbas, the deputy commissioner of the Jhelum district, assured that the authorities would be directed for the preservation of this archaeological site. Muhammad Irfan, the sub-divisional officer of the archaeology department, posted at Rohtas Fort, said that a thorough study of the site had been conducted by a team of engineers and a report was being forwarded to the higher authorities to include 'Khookha Baoli' in the list of 'protected' sites. The officer also said that the surrounding area would be converted into a park for visitors.



An outer view of the crumbling boundary wall of the Baoli.



The wide well with an arched passage way. — Photos by the writer

LAHORE

Sunset 05:28 pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 06:59 am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 08.0°C
Maximum 21.8°C
Outlook Cloudy

AQI

Maximum (Yesterday) 665

METRO
Central

Djokovic books
Alcaraz clash in
Australian Open

Pg.18 SPORT



NEW chairs are being affixed at Gaddafi Stadium as a part of remodeling and upgrade. — White Star

32 districts complete master plans to curb illegal housing schemes

By Khalid Haqqani

LAHORE: The Punjab Local Government and Community Development Department has completed land use and zoning plans for 32 districts, designating/allocating the separate zones for residential, commercial and industrial land use, according to an official source in the department.

The measure will help stem the wave of converting green areas into residential towns.

Punjab has its 225,000 green acres in the last couple of decades to 6,000 housing schemes. Of 6,000, around 4,000 schemes have been developed illegally allegedly in contravention with the respective municipal and development authorities, Dams

has learnt.

"It is a matter of grave concern that the Punjab has lost precious 225,000 agriculture acres to unplanned urban growth, as these major chunks have been converted into as many as 6,000 housing schemes," says a senior official speaking anonymously.

"However, finally the government felt the growing urban issues due to such ill-planned growth a couple of years ago, leaving it with no option but to start preparation of master plans of districts, including some development authorities."

The practice of consuming agriculture land by its conversion to residential and commercial use continued for a long time—until starting and preparation of the master plans. And now no one can develop any

housing scheme or launch any commercial or industrial project at the land not notified / approved as per master plan for this purpose, the official said.

The consumption of agricultural land for unplanned housing schemes, said the official, has not only caused reduction in the agriculture produce but also affected Punjab adversely in terms of negative climate change and environmental impact (smog, pollution etc).

According to him, the problem was realized after the government faced severe urban issues which forced the authorities to establish a dedicated project management unit and assign it with the task to get the master plans of all districts in close coordination with the deputy commissioners and municipal and development authorities.

The master plans address the growth in next 20 years until finalisation of boundary for the designated land zones for residential, commercial and industrial zones.

The master and zoning plans of 32 districts, which have been prepared and some of them have been approved by the deputy commissioners included Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Okara, Sahiwal, Khanewal, Vehari, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Mohan, Jhelum, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Hafizabad, Attock, Chakwal, Bhakkar, Khushab, Minerwal, Chishti, Gujrat, Mandi Bahaudin, Narwal, Pakpattan, Lodhran, Layyah, Rajanpur and Bahawalnagar. The district which of plans have

been approved included Sialkot, Gujranwala, RY Khan, Bahawalpur, Sahiwal, Okara, Khanewal, Vehari, DG Khan and Multan.

"The government has asked the department to get all remaining plans approved by the DGs by Feb 5," the official said, adding that the doors for planned, unbundled and mesh-room growth of the housing schemes in the non-designated land have been closed forever. The official said under the land use and zoning plans, every district would have a central business district for commercial and mixture zone following the best practices under concept of engine of economic growth.

He said to monitor and

Continued on Page 14



THE construction of fifth water tank in front of railway station underway. — White Star

Justice Minallah concerned at lack of focus on animal rights

Dawn Report

LAHORE: Supreme Court Judge Justice Arshad Minallah has expressed concern over the lack of attention paid to animal rights in the country.

Speaking at the first-ever International Animal and Environmental Rights Conference held here at a hotel on Sunday, Justice Minallah emphasised the importance of addressing this neglected issue, alongside fundamental human rights.

He highlighted the Islamabad High Court's rulings on various matters, includ-

ing enforced disappearance, prisoners' rights, and fundamental freedoms.

He mentioned a petition related to a zoo and recounted how animals, such as elephants, also have emotions and feelings similar to humans.

Sharing a historical perspective, Justice Minallah recalled how a three-year-old elephant calf was brought from Sri Lanka to Pakistan on the orders of late dictator Gen Zia-ul-Haq, who sought the animal for his daughter.

The baby elephant, he said, was initially kept in a

Continued on Page 14

Huge lint stocks at ginning units call for strategy to improve consumption

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Despite a sharp decline in the national cotton production during the financial year 2024-25, piling up of lint stocks in ginning factories highlights the need for a strategy to increase cotton consumption.

The crop data released by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) the other day, reveals that a total of 5.49 million bales of cotton reached the ginning factories across the country as of January 15, which

is a record 34 percent less than the figures for the same period last year.

As per the PCGA, cotton production in Punjab decreased by 15pc and in Sindh 12pc.

The cotton production target for the crop during 2024-25 had been set at 11m bales. However, market watchers expect that the total cotton production may not go beyond 5.5m bales this season.

Ironically, not a single meeting of the Cotton Crop Assessment Committee (CCAC) has been held during the sowing

season to revise the crop production estimates to enable the stakeholders to formulate their strategies accordingly. It is a deviation from the past practice when three to four meetings of the committee used to be held during a season.

Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsanul Haq points out that despite a 34pc decline in production, cotton stocks available in ginning factories have increased by 11pc compared to the previous year because cotton purchases by textile mills has dropped by a

record 34pc as compared to the last year.

The main reason for this, he says, is Export Finance Scheme (EFS) under which the import of cotton and cotton yarn from abroad is exempted from sales tax, while 18pc tax has been imposed on the local lint. Due to this tax, textile mills have imported the highest volume of cotton and yarn from abroad in the country's history this year, he adds.

He claims that the mills have also started importing a large volume of cloth under this

scheme, which may further affect the sale of local cotton yarn.

He says that four major districts of Punjab — Pakpattan, Okara, Sargodha and Kanur — have stopped producing cotton. These districts had been playing a prominent role in the crop production during the last few years.

"There is zero cotton production [in these districts] there this year, while it is also being feared that more districts will quit cotton sowing in the coming years," he adds.

Begum Afifa Mamdot passes away

By Our Correspondent

DERA GHAZI KHAN: Begum Afifa Mamdot, a distinguished personality and a former federal minister, passed away in Lahore on Sunday at the age of 97.

Her father Nawab Sir Muhammad Jamal Khan Leghari first represented Dera Ghazi Khan in the Punjab Legislative Council in 1921. He had the honour to chair the first session of the West Punjab Legislative Assembly after independence.

Begum Afifa Mamdot was married to Nawabzada Zulfikar Ali Khan Mamdot, the son of Nawab Shah Nawaz Khan of Mamdot and one of the chief stewards of the Pakistan Movement, and the Muslim League.

She served as the federal minister for health, social welfare and special education, and as a representative of the country at the United Nations.

Her family includes notable figures such as her elder brothers Nawab Muhammad Khan Leghari, Sardar Atta Muhammad Khan Leghari and Sardar Mahmood Khan Leghari. She was also the aunt of former president Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari.

Her last rites will be held on Tuesday (tomorrow) at 3 pm, at 110 G Model Town, Lahore.

'Whistleblower' cop suspended by DPO

By Malik Aurangzeb

CHHOT: District Police Officer (DPO) Abdullah Ahmed has suspended from service the moharrar of Kot Waswa police station on corruption and misconduct charges, after the official filed a report in Roznamcha (record book), leveling serious allegations against the station house officer (SHO) and other policemen.

In the report filed on January 18, the moharrar accused the SHO of inaction, stating that a large number of complaints received through 15 helpline about robberies and dacoities were pending since long.

He alleged that on being informed about the complaints, SHO Muhammad Ali Hani asked him not to register any first information report (FIR) on any application or 15 helpline call.

He alleged that the SHO locks people up illegally on false charges and later releases them after accepting bribe.

The moharrar also accused the readers of the DPO and city circle sub-divisional police officer (SDPO).

He alleged in the report that the SHO also shelters hardened criminals at his house and patronises them.

The report, also uploaded on the district police website, says that because of the SHO's misconduct, the complainants have to move courts for registration of FIRs.

On the other hand, SHO Hani also lodged a report in the record book, leveling counter allegations against the moharrar.

The SHO claimed that he recovered a matchbox and a pack of cigarettes from a suspect in the police station's lock-up and warned the moharrar of improving his performance, but to no avail.

A police spokesperson told Dawn that the moharrar had been suspended from service on corruption and misconduct charges.

He said a probe has also been initiated by investigation wing DSP Zafar Iqbal into the allegations against the SHO.

The suspended moharrar says that despite no corruption complaint against him, he has been suspended from service.

He said he had filed the report in the record book to inform police high-up of the grievance of the public, particularly the victims of thefts and dacoities in the area.

More portfolios for Marriyum

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Sunday gave additional portfolios of tourism, archaeology and museums to Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb.

The SAGAD's cabinet wing notified that the chief minister is pleased to assign additional portfolios to Ms Aurangzeb, in addition to her duties and all further orders.

She is currently holding the portfolios of minister for planning and development, environment protection and climate change departments as well as forest, wildlife and fisheries. — Staff Reporter

HARKING BACK

Aibak and the way slavery endures within all of us

By Majid Shabb

It is interesting to learn of the large number of slave rulers we have had in Lahore. Slavery as a way of life is ancient, and in a way continues even today, though we remain blind to it. The way we treat our low-paid employees is proof enough of our deep caste-thinking.

In a way we are no less than our caste-ridden, caste-neighbourhood. But then it is a bit of a surprise that the slave rulers of the sub-continent have been Turkish in origin. Come to think of it even the early Aryan movement eastwards from the west were, primarily, of Turkish or Turkish influenced Central Asian origin. As they swept eastwards they came across the Dravidian origin people, who were darker in skin-colour.

This racist difference and given the military strength of the Turkic-Persian Aryans - with the word Aryan meaning 'rich and noble' - gave rise to the caste system.

In Hindivism, the word 'arya' is one of the names of the deity Durga. For that matter the Rig Vedic god 'Aryaman' means a partner, or the wife of Shiva. Thus we see the reli-

gious conversion of the 'dark-skinned' into lower caste people. That racism still exists in our country and mind.

Before we dwell on slave rulers of Lahore, it would be interesting to note that the very first human specimen to inhabit Wales in Britain were the Neanderthals, whose origin is more central Asia than Europeans. Over 2,000 years ago the first Turkish slaves landed there. Even today the Welsh have dark hair and their DNA is clearly over 15 per cent Turkish. I mention this because the element of slavery in Turkish rulers was overwhelming.

Even the word Urdu, which the Turks call 'Urdu', means an 'Army Camp' - consult Encyclopaedia Britannica 11th Edition, Urdu - as a language that evolved from Persian, Hindi, Persian and Turkish in the military camps around Delhi. It was a creation of our past slave rulers. But no more to the beautiful Urdu language of Ghazal and Iqbal and Faiz.

For that matter even the first Muslim conqueror coming to our lands was the ruler and looter Mahmud based in Ghazni, who clearly was of Turkish origin. Those tribals all had slaves, which was a

rare commodity. When Mahmud ransacked Lahore, he removed over 200,000 women, children and young men, all of whom he sold as slaves in faraway markets. For that matter his male lover Aram was a 'beautiful' Georgian slave purchased in the Istanbul slave market.

Over 165 years after Mahmud ransacked the sub-continent 17 times between 1,000 AD to 1,027 AD, it is estimated that he took away, besides tonnes of gold and silver, over 1.7 million slaves over 27 years. By the time Shahabuddin Ghori conquered Ghazni in 1150 AD it took him another 17 years before he captured Lahore after defeating the Ghakkars.

It was in November 1206 that Muhammad Ghori and his slave military commander Qutubuddin Aibak came to Lahore and quelled the Ghakkars. Ghori left and occupied at Dampak - probably Rohtak - where while he was praying three Ghakkhar soldiers came across the river and murdered him. This led to the first Slave ruler of India coming to power.

After defeating Tajuddin Yildiz, Aibak in 1206 established himself at Lahore as the very first slave ruler of India and Lahore. The very

first development work was to set up a massive graveyard at Mazra. The very word 'Mazra' in Turkish means a graveyard. The graveyard was in the middle between Lahore and Ichhra next to a small village of five or six houses. Called Miani Sahib, the name of the graveyard, according to Karahiya Lal Kapoor in his famous book 'Tirthat-Lahore' says the name has been taken from Khawaja Hazrat Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Rindagi, a teacher and Sufi of the Mujaddidi Ahi Sani tradition. The word Miani is common use in Punjab for village teachers.

One often wonders just why slaves were made rulers. This calls for a look at the sociological history of Turkish society at that stage in history. We have read in considerable detail about how the Mongols and earlier Turkish rulers faced battles for power from their own brothers. From the Mughals onwards to Aurangzeb, even later, we see deadly battles for power between brothers. The Turkish rulers recruited smart and strong-looking slaves from the places they conquered.

Let us have a look at the first slave ruler of Lahore, Qutubuddin Aibak belonged to Turkistan and was sold into slavery as a child. The

Qazi of Nishapur purchased him and after training him in horseriding and archery sold him for a good price to Muhammad Ghori at Ghazni. He rose to become an officer of the royal stables.

In the Ghazni Wars, he was captured by Sultan Shah, and as a favour to Ghori was released. In 1192, he was made in-charge of Ghori's Indian northern territories. After Ghori was killed while praying, Aibak fought a battle with another slave general Tajuddin Yildiz, advanced to Ghazni but then headed to Lahore to become the very first slave ruler of Lahore.

Just for the record the word 'Aibak', pronounced as 'Aybak' in Turkish means 'brown faced'. The detailed history of the life of Aibak makes very interesting reading of a man who fought against all odds to become the ruler. He competed with other slave generals like Bahauddin Tughril. Before becoming the ruler of Lahore and India, he had defeated the Khakhars.

The list of slave rulers that followed Aibak include Aram Shah, Ghumish, Bahauddin Tughril, the Empress Razia Sultana, Ghiasuddin Balban, etc. You name the great rulers of Lahore, and a disappointed

slave connection emerges. It is sad that our historians completely ignore this fact of our history.

This brings me to the beginning of a relatively recent ruler, that being Z.A. Bhutto. Among his first orders was to rebuild the grave of Aibak. As a PT Reporter I met him at the Lahore Airport and asked him about this order. He said "Aibak was one of the greatest rulers, and because he was of a slave origin, we ignore him."

Over the years he often took up the topic of slave-minded people. When he introduced his 'arami' dress, it was a step to make the clothes of slaves a common factor. Sadly, when he was sentenced to death by the Lahore High Court, I happened to be the only journalist present as he emerged. He smiled, nodded his head and moved towards a waiting police van. The slave-king ruler kissed the gallows. As like now the an abridgement always wins.

All these facts about our slave rulers and our embedded caste behaviour needs to be studied in great depth. We have inherited our amazing religion, yet in life we practice the opposite. We remain a people who would best see the end of slaveholders. The tragedy continues.

Teenager killed by uncle over old enmity

By Our Correspondent

BAHAWALNAGAR: A teenager was shot dead in Ghumandpur allegedly by his maternal uncle to take revenge on the deceased, along with other members of his family, had stripped and threatened the suspect over a land dispute, filmed the incident and uploaded it on social media.

Police said Waris Ali of Chak Habibullah had an old land dispute with his brother-in-law Barish Ali and Barish, his son Shahbaz and their accomplices, stripped Waris, brutally tortured and humiliated him in October 2024.

The attackers uploaded the video of the violence on social media. A case was registered over the matter against 19 people on Oct 16 with Minhalabad police. After the incident, Waris Ali threatened to take revenge and tried to attack Barish and his sons but they escaped.

On Jan 17, when 16-year-old Shahbaz was present at a tailor's shop, Waris and four of his

accomplices shot him dead after humiliating him and fled.

Police spokesperson said that a case had been registered against four nominated men with the Ghumandpur Police Station on Jan 18.

The suspects are still at large.

ARRESTED: A woman who tried to enter Bahawalnagar District Jail on the pretext of meeting a prisoner was arrested with pistol bullets and a cartridge during the search.

The FIR registered with the B-Division police, on the complaint of the assistant superintendent of the jail, stated that Jatti Bida of Bahawalnagar tried to enter the jail on pretext of meeting her son, Muhammad Ahmad, on Jan 18.

The lady police found two pistol bullets and one cartridge on her during the search.

After checking the jail record, they came to know Muhammad Ahmad had been released from jail on Jan 17. B-Division Police arrested the woman and registered a case against her.

DG Khan admin swings into action ahead of CM's visit

By Our Correspondent

DERA GHAAZI KHAN: The long-awaited visit of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has sparked a flurry of activity in Dera Ghazi Khan with civic administration, police and municipal departments springing into action to show a better picture of the city.

Scheduled to arrive on Monday (today), the CM's visit has led to road repairs, cleanliness drives and traffic management initiatives, which have been warmly welcomed by the residents.

For the first time in years, encroachments from city roads were cleared, roads leading to key locations, including the Ghazi University, were repaired and traffic safety measures such as cat's eyes were installed in front of the university's entrance to ensure the safety of students, faculty and visitors.

The residents, however, expressed mixed feelings, with many emphasising that such improvements occur only during the visits of the dignitaries, demanding the need for consistent efforts by the administration to maintain

civic facilities. Preparations for the chief minister's arrival were in full swing on Saturday and Sunday with administrative officers, police, waste management teams and corporation officials working tirelessly to ensure a clean and secure environment.

Large welcome banners featuring pictures of Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz Sharif were displayed on major roads, intersections and even on fruit stalls at traffic squares.

During her visit, the chief minister is expected to distribute laptops among the students in a special ceremony, review the ongoing development projects and meet various political delegations.

Senior officials, including the parliamentarians, additional chief secretary south Punjab, additional IG South Punjab, commissioner and RPO Dera Ghazi Khan, will be present to welcome her.

The city residents are hopeful that the visit will result in sustained improvements and it would prompt the administration to maintain cleanliness and infrastructure on a regular basis.



FARSALEBAD: Migratory birds perched on a denuded tree along the canal. — Online

Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Vehari police show top performance as per new KPIs

Rawalpindi worst performer

By Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: The Gujranwala, Sahiwal and Vehari police topped their respective groups by achieving the highest score in the month of December following the assessment evaluated on the basis of the 36 key performance indicators (KPIs), the mechanism introduced by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to hold the underperforming police officers accountable and reward those achieving targets.

These three districts remained at the top in their respective groups consecutively for the last three months by showing outstanding performance as per the KPIs.

All the 36 districts of the province were divided into Group-I, Group-II and Group-III by the CM while launching the evaluation mechanism in June last year, aiming at deciding the future posting criteria of the field officers.

According to a report, Gujranwala obtained 79.53 out of 100 marks in October, 81.51 in November and 81.96 in December 2024; Sahiwal 82.70 in October, 81.16 in November and 81.91 in December while Vehari police showed notable performance by obtaining 89.20 marks in December, 86.25 in November and 79.35 in October.

The report highlighted that these three districts improved performance under the command of Gujranwala City Police Officer (CPO) Rana Ayaz Saleem, the then Sahiwal District Police Officer (DPO) Faizal

Shahzad who was recently transferred and posted as Sahiwal DPO and Vehari DPO Mansoor Aman.

Multan, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi were part of the Group-I while the Group-II comprised 14 districts and Group-III 17 districts.

The KPIs, which assessed the performance of the field officers, included the marks of FIRs, crime control efforts, improvement in investigation of cases, action against drug dealers, law and order situation, protection of women and vulnerable groups, complaint handling and accessibility to public, security, public service delivery, special initiatives, etc.

Marks were allocated following the assessment made by the senior police officers in the Central Police Office (CPO) Lahore and the Special Branch of the Punjab Police before sending the reports to the CM.

Rawalpindi police showed the worst-ever performance by obtaining lowest marks in its group. On the other hand, the government recently transferred Rawalpindi Operations SSP Kamran Asghar and posted him as Bahawalnagar DPO, contrary to the claims of holding the officers from the underperforming districts accountable.

According to some independent police circles, no action was proposed or initiated against Rawalpindi CPO Syed Khaliq Hamdani or the regional police officer (RPO), making the evaluation of the performance of supervisory officers just an eye-wash or a futile exercise. They said the system was being followed actively by the police officers

serving as RPOs and DPOs to assess the performance of the station house officers (SHOs), a major criteria set by them for the postings and transfers of the SHOs.

Unfortunately, the police officers said, the same was not applicable so far in letter and spirit to decide/judge the transfer and postings of the senior field police officers.

In the Group-II, district Jhang was at the

last position for having just 66.81 scores.

In the earlier settings, Lahore district was part of the Group-I to judge the performance of the head of the provincial capital police. However, the government, in consultation with the KPI, separated it from any group for unknown reasons.

In the new arrangements, the government just assessed the performance of the divisional RPOs of Lahore.

25-year-old dispute over 3-kanal plot in Khanpur city continues

By Irfanul Haq

BAHEM YAR KHAN: A 3-kanal prime location plot in Khanpur city has been a point of conflict for the past 25 years between the irrigation department and a neighbouring town owner. The alleged lack of interest by the school administration and the irrigation department has lingered the issue.

The land is adjacent to the Land Record Centre in Khanpur and enclosed by a boundary wall. The piece of land been claimed by both the irrigation department and the town owner. According to Khanpur Irrigation Sub-Divisional Officer Muhammad Khalid, the plot was in the department's possession before 2000. Then, town owner Rashid filed an application with the Khanpur assistant commissioner (AC) for the demarcation of the land.

The irrigation department requested that the demarcation be completed using the latest machinery, however, after the manual demarcation, the then deputy commissioner (DC) ordered the AC to hand over the land to Rashid, Mr Khalid added.

The irrigation department later approached the Board of Revenue (BoR) in Lahore, which overturned the DC's orders and decided in favour of the irrigation department after a new demarcation. Mr Rashid, however, filed a writ petition in civil court claiming that the demarcation had already been completed by the AC.

After an 18-year legal battle, the civil court in 2018 issued a decree in favour of Rashid, declaring the BoR's decision null and void. In 2018, Rashid filed a writ petition with the Lahore High Court (LHC) if Bahawalpur Bench against the AC's reluctance to hand over the land.

The LHC directed the AC to give possession of the land to Mr Rashid, but the AC failed to implement the court's order.

Mr Rashid filed a contempt of court petition against the AC. The irrigation department responded by filing three different appeal petitions in the sessions court, LHC Bahawalpur Bench and the Supreme Court, but all were dismissed by 2022.

Following the disposal of the appeals, Mr Rashid invited irrigation department officials to conduct a new demarcation of the land using GPS. As a result, the AC Khanpur handed over two kanals to Mr Rashid. However, Mr Rashid again approached the DC for a fresh demarcation.

Repeated attempts to contact the town owner's spokesperson, Faisal Kaseed, for comment were unsuccessful, as he did not respond to calls. When contacted, Senior Engineer Khalid Mahmood said this correspondence about the dispute over the prime irrigation land persists. He added that the Khanpur executive engineer (ENEN) would soon provide an explanation. However, three days have passed, and the ENEN has yet to respond.

اِنَّ لِلّٰهِ عِلْمًا لَّيْسَ بِرَاجِعٍ

It is with profound sorrow that we announce the passing of **BEGUM AFIFA MAMDOT** for her heavenly abode on Sunday, January 19, 2025.

Her father, Nawab Sir Muhammad Jamal Khan Leghari first represented Dera Ghazi Khan in the Punjab Legislative Council in 1921. He had the honour to chair the first session of the West Punjab Legislative Assembly after Independence. Begum Afifa Mamdot was married to Nawabzada Zulfikar Ali Khan Mamdot, the son of Nawab Shah Nawaz Khan of Mamdot and one of the chief stewards of the Pakistan Movement, and the Muslim League. She served as the Federal Minister for Health, Social Welfare and Special Education, and as a representative of the country at the United Nations.



Qul Khwani will be held on Tuesday, the 21st of January, at 3 p.m. Address: 110 G Model Town, Lahore.

BEREAVED:

Abdul Qadir Khan Mamdot, Aiysha Tiwana, Asma Mamdot, Saleha Mamdot, Syeda Salma Gailani, Suhaila Mahmud, Saniyah Mahmud

PESHAWAR

Sunset 05:34pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 07:15am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 08°C
Maximum 18°C
Outlook Cloudy

METRO
North

Djokovic books
Alcaraz clash in
Australian Open

Pg. 18 SPORT



A BOAT stuck in the shallow water on the bank of Kabul River at Sardaryah pier point near Peshawar due to paucity of rain. — White Star

Gas supply to CNG stations suspended to improve pressure for domestic consumers

CNG association rejects decision; transporters threaten to increase fare

By Ali Hameed Sacha

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced suspension of gas supply to the CNG stations across the province from Jan 20 to 31 to ensure smooth supply to domestic consumers.

However, the business community and transporters rejected the decision and described it as unilateral. The transporters warned that if the decision was not withdrawn they would increase the fare on intercity and inter-city routes by 10 per cent from Monday (today).

The decision was taken under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, according to a notification issued here on Sunday with signature of additional chief secretary (home) Abid Majed.

It was stated that the onset of winter season and cold temperature had been delayed and was still in progress and non-availability of natural gas for domestic consumers could lead to public agitation and law and order situation in the province.

The notification said anyone found violating the order shall be proceeded against under Section 188 of Pakistan Penal Code.

Meanwhile, All Pakistan CNG Association, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Fiaz Moqeen Khan rejected the decision and said it was a unilateral action taken by the provincial government.

He told this correspondent that the province had sufficient gas reserves to meet the local needs but even then the provincial government failed to take a stand on the issue.

He said that the decision was violation of the Article 158 of the Constitution because under the law a province with a wealth of natural gas would be preferred for the gas supply to the other parts of the country.

He said the province had sufficient gas reserves but the government was least bothered to raise voice for the provincial rights.

Mr Moqeen criticised the political leaders for what he called not raising voice on the matter.

He said as most industrial units in the province had stopped production due to power and gas crisis, the closure of CNG stations would cause unemployment and financial problems for the people.

He said that the provincial government was raising hollow slogans against the federal government but it was unable to take a firm stand against the "illegal" stops.

"We expected that the provincial government will take stand for the provincial rights but it failed to do so," he lamented. He said that due to weak policies of the government the people were suffering.

Similarly, Urban Transport Union president Khan Zaman Afridi said that the gas supply remained suspended from Jan 15, but the transporters did not overcharge the passengers. He said that the passenger vehicles plying on roads inside Peshawar and to other districts of the province were on CNG.

"The office-bearers of public transport unions will meet today (Monday) to decide future line of action. We will definitely increase the transport fare by 10 per cent in a state of compulsion because we could not afford the petrol price," he said.

However, the people belonging to different localities complained about gas outage and demanded of the relevant officials to ensure smooth supply to the domestic consumers. They said that despite the suspension of gas to CNG stations the supply to residential localities had not improved.

PTM leader sent to Swat jail

SHANGLA: Police arrested Abdul Samad Khan, a lawyer and leader of banned Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), in a narcotics smuggling case and shifted him to a prison in Swat.

According to Alipat police station SHO a man identified as Farmanullah was arrested with 500 kilograms of hashish some four days ago in Machar area. He said that the arrested man told police during investigation that the hashish was provided to him by Abdul Samad Khan, a resident of Bannu district.

He said that Farmanullah of Baly Bala confessed to narcotics smuggling and nominated Abdul Samad Khan in the case so the investigation team included Abdul Samad as co-accused in the case under Section 364 of Narcotics Substances Act and arrested him.

The SHO said that Abdul Samad Khan was in the custody of Chitral police in a case of similar nature before he was arrested by Shangla police. After confession by Farmanullah, Chitral police handed over Samad Khan to Shangla police. He was produced in Shangla before a judge, who sent him to prison.

Advocate Waqif Shah, president of Shangla Bar Association, said that Abdul Samad Khan was a senior leader of PTM and also a senior lawyer, who had been the district president of ANP in Bannu before joining PTM.

He president said that after arrest of Abdul Samad Khan, police produced him in a court and sought his custody but he requested the judge that he was a great and senior lawyer so should be sent to jail instead of granting his custody to police.

Mr Shah said the judge sent him to district prison in Swat. Lawyers and local leaders of PTM condemned the arrest of Abdul Samad Khan and termed it political victimisation for holding a judge in Khyber tribal district in October last year. — Correspondent

Police van damaged in Bannu roadside explosion

By Our Correspondent

LAKKI MAHWAT: A police team escaped a bomb attack on Miranish Road in Bannu on Sunday.

An official said a police patrol party was targeted with an improvised explosive device near Aziz Mandi area on the busy Bannu-Miranish Road. "The explosive device planted by unknown miscreants along the road went off with a bang when a police van passed by," he said.

The official said the van was partially damaged in the explosion. He said all policemen remained unhurt in the attack. "After the blast the road was temporarily closed to enable police experts to collect evidence from the spot," he said, adding the law enforcers also launched a search operation in the area to track down the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, a man was killed and a young boy was injured when two groups exchanged fire over a property dispute in Jabbarkhel area here on Sunday.

Police identified the deceased as Hidayatullah, 35, and injured as Mohammad Adnan, 20, saying the shooting incident occurred in the limits of Saddler police station.

They quoted a complainant, Samiullah, as saying that Karim Khan, Juma Khan and Mohammad Adnan entered their house and opened fire on his brother, Hidayatullah, killing him on the spot.

However, Mohammad Adnan from the other side told police he was injured when Ghazalullah, Rashidullah Khan and Namatullah opened fire on him inside his house.

Separately, a young boy was murdered over a petty dispute in Sarag Khonakhel area in the limits of Shahbazkhel police station.

Death anniversary of Bacha Khan, Wali Khan today

PESHAWAR: Different events to mark the 37th death anniversary of Fakhir Afghan Bacha Khan, also known as Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and the 19th death anniversary of Khan Abdul Wali Khan will begin today (Monday).

According to a statement issued here on Sunday, Awami National Party central president Aimal Wali Khan will formally kick off the celebrations at Bacha Khan Markaz here.

ANP secretary general Dr Mohammad Saleem Khan, provincial president Mian Iftikhar Hussain, provincial general secretary Hussain Shah Younsafzal and other central and provincial leaders will attend the ceremony.

It was stated that stalls of books, traditional clothes and various other types would also be set up on the occasion. New books will also be launched at the ceremony.

Meanwhile, Mian Iftikhar, in a separate statement, paid rich tribute to the late leaders and appreciated the services they rendered for welfare of people. — Bureau Report



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PRAYER	
Fajr	05:51
Zuhar	12:27
Asr	04:56
Maghrib	06:34
Isha	07:01
Starting time in Peshawar	

REFLECTIONS

“IT ALWAYS KEEP THREE THINGS IN MIND: DEATH, YOUR DEEDS AND THE LIFE HEREAFTER. IN THIS WAY YOU WILL ALWAYS BE READY TO FACE DEATH AND IT WILL NOT CATCH YOU UNAWARES.”

— HAZRAT ALI (A.S.)

PESHAWAR

PTI nominees win traders union polls

By Our Correspondent

SWABI: Atif Khan and Khaw Faraaz of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were elected as president and general secretary of Anjuman-e-Tajirun Razakar (AT) defeating Shahi Ravan and Akhtar Ali of Awami National Party (ANP) on Sunday.

The voting started at 8am and continued till 4pm without any interval.

MNA Shahram Khan Tarakai, his brother Faizal Khan Tarakai, minister for elementary education, and his nephew MPA Mumtaz Tarakai backed Atif and his group.

Shahi Ravan and his supporters were supported by ANP leaders including Mazhar Sahil mayor Ghulam Haqqani. Atif Khan secured 768 votes and the same number of votes was also received by Khaw Faraaz while their rival candidates Shahi Ravan and Akhtar Ali got 827 votes each.

About 25 votes were rejected and a total 2,829 votes were polled. Soon after announcement of the results, the winners passed through various markets in a big procession in tribal headquarters Khaw Faraaz.

In his victory speech, Atif said that their top priority was to serve the traders of Razakar and coordinate with traders of rest of the province. “The traders of Razakar should task me with a great responsibility by electing me president for the third time,” he said.

Khaw Faraaz said that it was a big day for traders of the area as they voted for them, who always contributed to their progress by providing them with an opportunity to strengthen their trade linkages.



THE TMA staff demolishes illegal structure during an anti-encroachment drive in Ghazikhet Bazar, Lakki Marwat on Sunday. — Dawn

PHC rejects bail plea of accused arrested for assaulting woman

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court has rejected bail plea of an accused arrested on charges of sexually assaulting a married woman at her residence in district Lower Chitral last year.

A single-member bench consisting of Justice Muhammad Naeem Arwar while rejecting petition of the accused Anwarullah Khan observed that the trial before the trial court was in progress and so far only statement of the alleged victim had been recorded as prosecution witness whereas the prosecution had yet to examine the remaining witnesses.

The bench observed that at this initial stage the statement of the victim couldn't be appreciated in isolation for granting bail to the petitioner rather it was the sole prerogative of the trial court to adjudicate its evidentiary value in conjunction with statements of the remaining prosecution witnesses, which stage was yet to come.

The FIR of the alleged occur-

rence was registered at police station Kohat, Lower Chitral on Sept 26, 2024, under section 376 (punishment for rape) and other provisions of Pakistan Penal Code.

The complainant in the FIR was husband of the alleged victim who claimed that on the fatal night he was present in Chitral bazaar in connection with morning livelihood. He stated that at morning time, he received telephonic information that an unknown person had entered his house and sexually assaulted his wife.

He claimed that the said unknown person was overpowered by some neighbours while he was departing from the scene of occurrence.

A police party had visited the spot and taken into custody the said person who was identified as Anwarullah Khan (petitioner).

His bail petition was earlier rejected by the high court on Oct 31, 2024, on merit.

The petitioner again approached the court on fresh

ground that during the pending trial when the victim appeared as prosecution witness she had made material contradictions in her cross examination about allegations of sexual assault against the petitioner.

He stated that in view of these latest developments he may be set free on bail.

The bench observed that it appeared that the petitioner was bent upon to seek several remedies at the same time as his application for acquittal under section 265-K of the Code of Criminal Procedure was also pending before the trial court.

Without waiting for the decision of the said application, the petitioner preferred to file the instant bail petition on fresh ground.

“It is settled law that when accused person has an alternative remedy at his/her disposal then extension of post arrest bail cannot be extended in favour of an under trial prisoner unless there are exceptional circumstances in the field which is not

the case here,” the bench observed.

In the earlier judgment of rejecting the petitioner's petition, the high court bench had observed that the record revealed that the accused petitioner had directly been nominated in the FIR by the complainant for committing the offence when the victim was all alone inside the premises of her house and that too during odd hours of the night.

It was added that arrest of the petitioner meant the venue of crime prima facie indicated that he had committed an offence of lurking house trespass at night time upon the house of victim.

The bench had ruled that punishment provided for the offence of rape also attracted the restrictive clause of section 497 of the CrPc, while the material on record prima facie suggested involvement of the petitioner in commission of the offence, which was not only heinous in nature but against the basic norms of this traditional part of the country.

Literati urged to promote cause of linguistic diversity

Abasin Arts Council gives away awards to writers of Urdu, Pashto and Hindko books

By Sher Alam Shinwari

PESHAWAR: Abasin Arts Council announced its annual awards for poets and writers on their best literary works in Urdu, Pashto and Hindko published during the year 2023, acclaiming telephonic appreciation owing to their quality, substance and impressive style.

Literary circles, linguists and scholars congratulated AACF for acknowledging literary

contributions of poets, researchers and writers, asking them to continue contributing to society through their creative talent to advance the cause of linguistic diversity and national unity.

Despite onslaught of social media, local poets, writers and research scholars remained engaged in writing books on variety of topics covering several aspects of literary and cultural traditions that triggered a spirit for promoting and preserving their linguistic heritage, said office-bearers of AAC.

Noted writer and senior vice-president of Abasin Arts Council Prof Naeem Ali Syed on the occasion termed the tradition of awarding poets, writers and researchers on their best works a great milestone towards preserving values and customs of their pluricultural society having a long history and rich cultural backdrop.

He said that in addition to Urdu, Pashto and Hindko, poets and writers of other lingos should also contribute to their respective mother languages for promoting the cause of linguistic diversity and national unity.

He said that Abasin Arts Council

had been carrying on the legacy of acknowledging the selfless contributions of literati with an objective to praise senior wordsmiths and encourage budding talents.

Six awards were announced two each for Pashto and Hindko and four for Urdu poets and writers namely Khalid Sahaid Malik, Naeem Naeem, Tahir Sheraiz, Bakht Bhangsh, Forat Afridi, Akhtar Naeem and Naeem Daud and Prof Adam Taseer Afridi for producing best literary works both in poetry, prose and research published during the year 2023.

Prof Adam Taseer Afridi told this write that he received justice Kiyani award from AACF on his Urdu publication titled ‘Pakistan Zaban Aur Adab’ a research work and called it a great achievement in his literary journey.

Prof Khalid Sahaid Malik, recipient of Allah Bakhsh Yousaf award for his best Urdu prose work titled ‘Monsoon’, said that local market of books showed a deep slump over the several years but literati, intellectuals and research scholars would continue their efforts to device their time and creative strength for furthering the cause of national integration, peace, social cohesion and linguistic diversity.

Need for building community resilience stressed to combat GBV

Training session held for stakeholders to help combat social problem in Chitral

By Zahuruddin

CHITRAL: Key community stakeholders representing different walks of life were imparted awareness about gender-based violence (GBV) and how to combat this in a district like Chitral, where this social problem is rampant.

The two-day training session was organised by Legal Awareness Programme for Human Rights (LAPH).

Financially supported by Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, the event brought together the diverse group of participants representing the human rights monitoring committee, youth forums, local educational institutions, media organisations, seminars, police department and other civil society leaders.

The sessions were designed to tackle the complex issue of GBV with a particular focus on empowering communities to take proactive and preventative measures apart from providing an in-depth knowledge about various forms of the issue.

The participants explored the socio-cultural factors contributing to GBV in Chitral, and developed strategies to prevent it, while facilitators emphasised the importance of building resilience within communities, empowering local leaders, and creating support systems that can respond effectively to instances of violence.

The social media platforms were termed the new vehicles of GBV, which had pervaded the society, and women and children were particularly vulnerable to exploitation by the elements harbouring negative thinking.

Addressing the concluding session, LAPH programme manager Qasr Irfan said that through such initiatives, the organisation was working toward a future where GBV was not tolerated and communities were equipped with the knowledge and tools to actively combat it.

He said that training had been an essential step in this long journey, providing the foundation for sustainable change and promoting a more equitable society in Chitral and beyond.

Educator Zuhra Shah said the training session helped the participants know the repercussions of GBV on the people.

He said that the exhaustive discourse on the misuse of social media platforms was really an eye-opener for the participants, who did not perceive the gravity of the issue and how it had led to the desperate act of a number of suicides over the past many years.

He hailed LAPH for forming and organising the special committee on GBV consisting of all stakeholders, who were contributing towards the solution of the social problem.

ICE HOCKEY: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be represented by two teams from Chitral at the National Ice Hockey Championship to be held in Naltar valley of Gilgit-Baltistan next week.

The players of the two teams – KP Wolves (men) and KP Doves (women) – left for the venue here on Sunday headed by coach and patron Asif Iqbal.

The two teams had qualified for the national event by emerging as winner and runner-ups in the ice hockey tournament held in Shandur ground in December. It was arranged by KP Culture and Tourism Authority.

One of the teams had participated in the national event in GB last year and had reached the semi-finals.

Earthquake-hit Oghi hospital yet to be rebuilt

By Our Correspondent

MANSEHRA: Residents of Oghi are without adequate healthcare facilities as the historical Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, which was grounded after developing dangerous cracks in the 2005 devastating earthquake, is yet to be rebuilt.

“The government performed the groundbreaking of this health facility about seven years ago, but its reconstruction couldn't be completed as yet due to a shortage of funds leaving locals dependent on quacks and unskilled birth attendants,” Javed Sikandar, a local peasant councillor, told reporters in Oghi.

Flanked by a group of locals, he said that the hospital built in 1991 had developed dangerous cracks during the earthquake almost 19 years ago and its reconstruction work was suspended some two years ago due to a shortage of funds. “An alternative health facility is running nearby but is unable to meet the healthcare needs of people, resulting in patients being shifted to quacks,” Mr Sikandar said.

He said children and women were the worst affected by this situation and were compelled to seek treatment at Khyr Abad Health Teaching Hospital in Mansehra or Ayub Medical Complex in Abbottabad. “We have raised this issue with the health department's higher-ups and local lawmakers numerous times, but to no avail,” Mr Sikandar said.

He demanded of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and local MPA Akramullah Khan to take notice of the grim situation and ensure the early release of funds so the hospital could be completed.

Meanwhile, Oghi assistant commissioner Fahad Zia and DSP Waseem Khan asked private clinics and hospitals to arrest quacks allegedly involved in performing surgeries and providing medications.

Two killed in Kohat incidents

By Our Correspondent

KOHAT: Two persons were gunned down in separate incidents in Ghazikhet Bazar on Sunday.

In the first incident, Chaffar Khan reported to police in the hospital that he was sitting in his junk shop in the bazaar when his wife came and told him that his two sons had a serious altercation.

He ran towards his home near the Khushalgarh Railway Bridge in Mohallah Kamal Khel and found the dead body of one of his sons, Waqar, which was shifted to the hospital for post-mortem by relatives.

He nominated his other son, Idris, aged 30/31, in the FIR under section 302 of Pakistan Penal Code for killing his brother with gunfire and repeated strikes of dagger.

Similarly, Sughra Bibi wife of Idris, age 27/28, belonging to Mohallah Khadar Khel reported that there were daily fights between her sons Adnan and Taj, an addict. The former asking his brother to relinquish drugs that had spoiled their home peace.

Both had an intense fight on Saturday and Taj pulled out a pistol and killed his brother Adnan. The mother of the victim has nominated her other son, Taj, in the FIR under section 302 of PPC for the murder.

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COURT NOTICE

GUJARI KHAN

At the Court of Honable Chief Judge

Gondal Chief Judge Gujari Khan, Raja Muhammad Ishaq son of

Muhammad Razaq alias, Sui for

Declaration etc. To Dama Begum

daughter of Wajid Hussain, born

Muhammad son of Sultan Mahmood,

Faisal Jinnah, Naeem Zafar son of

Zafar Iqbal residents of Mayal, Tahsil Gujari Khan, District Rawalpindi,

Presently residing Abroad. You are directed to appear before the Court in person or through legal representative or through counsel on 21-01-2025 failing which an

ex parte will be entered against you. (23/01/2025)

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DIRECTORATE OF WORKS GOMAL UNIVERSITY D.I.KHAN

E-Mail: worksgom@gmail.com Phone No: 994-9288911

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

Gomal University, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites sealed bids from firms/contractors for “Construction of Boundary wall behind the IIR Department, Quaid-e-Azam Campus, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan”. The bidder should be registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC).

1. Tender form and BOC can be received by the office of the Works Directorate, till one day prior to opening of the tender documents on payment of sum of Rs. 2,000/- in cash or by draft (Non-Refundable) on submission of application showing permanent postal address of the Firm/Contractor along with following documents:

a. Photocopy of updated renewal of Registration in C&I Department.

b. Photocopy of Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council valid up to last date of calendar.

c. Photocopy of National Identity Card.

d. Registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority.

2. The eligible contractor/ firms are required to submit their financial bids along with bid security accompanied with the tender form in favor of Director Works, Gomal University and reach to the office of the Director Works at 09-02-2025 at 10:30 AM.

3. The tender will open by the works committee on same date i.e. 09-02-2025 at 11:00 AM.

4. If tender not opened on said date due to any reason, the same will be opened on 11-02-2025 at said time.

5. The contractor shall submit the additional security in the light of KPRA notification No S.R.O (34) VOL-1-240037-22, dated 04-05-2022.

6. The bid should be quoted in above/ below system on MRS 2024 (2) (B Annual).

7. Conditional telegraphic tender shall not be entertained.

Director Works, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan

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Govt to appoint 16,000 teachers in schools, says MPA

Taj says Rs70m okayed to rebuild 2005 quake-hit schools

By Our Correspondent

BATTAGHAM: The provincial government has announced a major initiative to address longstanding issues of teacher shortage in public sector schools.

MPA Taj Muhammad Khan, chairman of standing committee for education, on Sunday said that the government would soon recruit 16,000 fresh teachers to fill the vacancies in schools across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"This significant move is aimed at providing quality education to students and equipping government schools with necessary facilities," he said.

The announcement was made during a prize distribution ceremony held at the deputy commissioner's office, where students, who excelled in divisional and provincial level co-curricular competitions, were honoured.

MPA Taj Muhammad emphasised that the government was committed to improving the education sector, which has been neglected in the past. He noted that government schools' students were equally talented as those in private institutions, but the lack of resources and facilities had affected the quality of education.

"This has created a disparity between public and private sector institutions, making it challenging for students from government schools to compete with their counterparts from private schools."

"To address the issues, the government has planned to advertise 16,000 different cadre positions, for which necessary preparations have been made. This recruitment drive is expected to improve the quality of education and provide opportunities for character building, which were previously only available to students in private institutions," the lawmaker said.

"In addition to recruiting new teachers, the government has also allocated Rs70 million to rebuild schools damaged in the 2005 earthquake. This fund will be utilised to speed up construction work based on need, with a focus on schools that were severely affected by the disaster," he said.

MPA Taj Muhammad distributed cash and presents among the position holders. He congratulated the students on their achievements and encouraged them to continue working hard to achieve their goals.

Deputy commissioner Asif Ali Khan and district education officer Asim Raza Khan also spoke on the occasion, praising the students for their outstanding performance. They noted that students from Battagram, which is a backward district, excelling in divisional and provincial level co-curricular competitions was a remarkable achievement. They expressed hope that these students will show similar performance in our regular competitions as well.

Lakki police accused of manhandling trader, arresting his father

LAKKI MAHWAT: District police officer Muhammad Jawad Ishaq has taken notice of a video circulating on social media, in which a trader accused the Narasing police officials of robbing his golden, manhandling him, forcing him to pay bribe and seizing tea products worth Rs2 million.

An official said that the district police chief had called the businessman to his office today (Monday) to address his grievances. "After hearing the trader, an inquiry will be initiated into the incident to bring facts to light," he said.

In a video clip, trader Ibraheemullah, who hails from Mohmand district, said he deals with the business of selling dry tea products in Narasing town.

He alleged a party of Shabaz Ammarullah Khan Khattak police station raided his golden, arrested his elderly father, Shaukhatullah, and took away bags of dry tea worth over Rs2 million.

He claimed that the policemen also forced them to pay a bribe of Rs250,000 to them. "Our only lack is that we belong to Mohmand district and have come here to carry out a business," he said.

The trader said that he had been running the business in the town for last seven years and no such irreligious incident ever happened to them at the hands of police.

Meanwhile, the business community called an emergency meeting, condemning the incident, and demanding an inquiry into it.

They also demanded removal of the SHO, release of the arrested trader and return of cash and goods.

The traders said they would again meet on Monday (today) to chalk out a future line of action.

The meeting was chaired by shopkeepers' union president Haji Ammarullah.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MPA and chairman of provincial assembly's standing committee on home and local affairs department Tariq Saad Khan said he had discussed the matter with the authorities concerned with the request to look into it.

"Let me assure the people of my constituency that justice will be done in this irreligious matter and other such incidents," he declared.

He said harassment of innocent people was intolerable. SHO Ishaq said there was no room for irreligious treatment with people, involvement of police officials in such practices and illegal acts.

He, however, asked people to avoid spreading fake news and false propaganda against the force on social media with regard to the incident till the completion of an inquiry. — Correspondent

Funds 'okay'd' for Lower Dir roads

LOWER DIR: District development advisory committee chairman Ubaidur Rehman has said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has approved funds for several roads in his PK-17 constituency and work on them will start soon.

He said this while addressing a function after inaugurating a road project in Badkhan Munda village coastal zone on Sunday. "The project will cost Rs14.2 million," he said. The lawmaker said that 450 kanals of land had been allocated for DUE University, for which Rs100 million had been approved.

He rejected the reports that the Dir University project had been dropped from the Annual Development Programme.

Mr Rehman said that he did not believe in mere slogans, and was committed to resolving public issues.

Criticising the federal government, he said that fake and baseless cases had been registered against the PTI founder Imran Khan and other party leaders and workers. He insisted that the former prime minister would make no deal with the government for his release from the jail.

He said that Rs150 million had been approved for the Munda-Samarbagh Road and construction work would start on it by the end of February.

The lawmaker claimed the government had allocated Rs40 million for the Shabkani link road.

He said that the main roads in PK-17 as well as link roads of the northern areas would also be constructed with quality work. — Correspondent

Fresh snowfall in Swat draws tourists from all over country

Visitors revel in picturesque landscapes, winter festivities

By Faizul Khaliq

SWAT: The upper region of Swat district has been transformed into a breathtaking winter paradise as a fresh wave of snowfall on Sunday blanketed the area. This natural wonder has drawn tourists from across the country, eager to experience the charm of snow-covered valleys and mountains.

Popular tourist destinations such as Kalam, Malam Jabba, Babrian, Maskiyal and Gabris Jabba are brimming with activity as visitors revel in the picturesque landscapes and winter festivities.

The snowfall has created a magical atmosphere, attracting families, friends, and adventure seekers from cities, including Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Lahore, Faisalabad, and beyond. For many, it is their first time witnessing live snowfall, and the experience has left them awestruck.

Malam Jabba, known for its



ski resort, has become a hub for adventure enthusiasts. Tourists are seen enjoying skiing, snowboarding, and chairlift rides while taking in panoramic views of the snow-clad peaks.

In Kalam, visitors are mesmerised by the serene beauty of the snow-covered Usho Forest and Mahabud lake, while Gabris Jabba, often referred to as the Switzerland

of Pakistan, offers a tranquil escape with its snow-blanketed meadows and hills.

Ahmed Raza, a tourist from Islamabad, described his first encounter with snowfall as magical. "This is my first time seeing snow, and it's absolutely mesmerising. The mountains and valleys are breathtaking, and Swat feels like a fairytale land in winter. I can't imagine a

better place to experience this," he said with excitement.

Farah Khan, who travelled from Lahore with her family, praised the local hospitality and scenery. "The people here are so welcoming, and the snow-covered landscapes are simply stunning. Malam Jabba was a highlight for us, especially the skiing and the chairlift ride. It's been a perfect win-

ter vacation," she shared. Ali Nawaz, a university student from Faisalabad, was captivated by Gabris Jabba's beauty. "The untouched snow, the peaceful environment, and the breathtaking views make this place a dream destination. We've taken countless pictures, and this trip has been unforgettable," he said.

The influx of tourists has provided a much-needed boost to the local economy, with hotels, guesthouses, and restaurants bustling with activity. Traditional dishes, warm beverages, and unique winter activities are being offered to enhance the visitor experience. Local vendors are also thriving, selling handmade crafts and souvenirs.

Authorities have ensured smooth access to the tourist spots by clearing roads and providing necessary support to visitors. With more snowfall expected, Swat is set to welcome an even larger number of tourists, solidifying its reputation as a premier winter destination in Pakistan.

For some, the snow-clad valleys, meadows, and peaks of Kalam, Malam Jabba and Gabris Jabba continue to enchant visitors, offering them a magical escape and memories to cherish for a lifetime.

Mamad Gat hospital on verge of closure due to financial crisis

Partner organisation asks govt to clear its dues

By Ashtaq Yousafzai

PESHAWAR: Category-D Hospital Mamad Gat in Mohmand tribal district is facing financial crisis and the partner organisation has warned of closure of operations in case the outstanding amount is not paid by the government, according to sources.

The hospital was outsourced to a private organisation in 2020. It is being run under Public Private Partnership Act. The government extended three-year contract of the partner organisation after its expiry in June 2023.

The extension was given because of the non-existence of Board of Governors of Khyber Health Foundation (KHF), a public sector entity established for outsourcing hospitals to non-governmental organisations.

The contract kept extending and the latest agreement expired last year.

Medical Emergency Resilience Foundation (MERF), which is running Mamad Gat and six other hospitals in the province, has been asking the government to clear the unpaid dues so that it could resume operations.

"The government should pay us a total of Rs1 billion for all the hospitals, including Rs104 million for 46-bed Mamad Gat Category-D Hospital so we could resume work," Dr Adnan Taj, the managing director of Health Foundation, said. He said that they had hired specialists and other staff but all quit owing to lack of salaries, which led to closure of work in the health facility.

"From Monday, we are going to start emergency and labour room services just on humanitarian grounds," he said.

Sources said that the government had selected new organisations to hand over the health facilities to them but it was delayed through a decision of RoG, recently announced by health department.

The managing director of Health Foundation in a letter to health department that he had received from the deputy commissioner of Mohmand on

January 13, sought clearance of dues. In the letter, he said that MERF clearly stated that without clearance of its outstanding liabilities it would not be able to continue services beyond January 1, 2025.

Explaining the situation, he said that upon the expiry of contract of MERF, a different organisation was selected for contract according to Mamad Gat hospital, but due to non-existence of RoG of Health Foundation the contract was yet to be awarded to the new implementing partner. He said that the RoG was the approving authority for outsourcing hospitals.

The said hospital is the only Category-D health facility in Sati tribal of Mohmand district. The hospital is being run by MERF and it is providing quality health services to people since 2020. In case of exit of MERF, the hospital will be closed as no recruitment has been made on sanctioned posts by government, ultimately the local community will suffer.

"Furthermore, with the existing HR strength at district level, we are not in a position to run the said hospital if the

current implementing partner exits," said the letter. It said that finance department should be approached by for clearance of the outstanding liabilities.

The letter said that the current implementing partner, MERF, should be directed to continue health delivery services till awarding of the contract to the new organisation or to depose staff for Mamad Gat hospital as per the approved schedule of new expenditures to ensure provision of uninterrupted health services to people of the area.

The government has been awarding contract to private organisations to run public hospitals in line with Public Private Partnership Act to improve patients' care.

The selection of hospitals for outsourcing is recommended by a committee as the hospitals don't function properly because the staffers don't want to get posted in far flung areas. Under the law, the partners recruit the staff, including specialists and female medicals, and the government pays them the sanctioned budget for the respective facilities.



MEMBERS of Minal Army Jirga stage a protest outside Peshawar Press Club on Sunday against 'poor' law and order situation in Waziristan. — White Star

Wapda former DG dies

PESHAWAR: Former director general of Wapda Syed Chaudh Bahadur Bakhtai breathed his last on Sunday.

His Nimroz-Jamra was offered at Sheikh Mahsoon Town, Mardan.

The deceased was the elder brother of Syed

Said Bahadur Bakhtai, Chiefed, Secretary Finance, Syed Azeem Bahadur Bakhtai (Sessions Judge, Dera Ismail Khan), Naveer Bahadur,

Ahmad Bahadur, Mirza Bahadur (Wapda), father-in-law of Engi Muhammad, Jalos and Uncle of Dr Karim Bakhtai, Dr Maryam Bakhtai, Dr Anam Bakhtai, Ahs Nizam Bakhtai, Ahs Daud Shah, Engi Jafar Shah, Engi Yousaf Shah, Azeem Bakhtai and Munir Bakhtai.

A condolence session for the departed soul will be held at H No 23, Sector-I, Sheikh Mahsoon Town, Mardan. — Bureau Report

Edwardians donate 250 pints of blood

PESHAWAR: The students of Edwardian College donated 250 pints of blood during a camp organised by Hamza Foundation Welfare, Thalassemia Centre and Blood Services Peshawar.

Organisers and students of historical institutions said that the camp was held in collaboration with HM Close Blood Donor Society on Sunday, according to a statement.

The camp was conducted under the supervision of Prof. Zahid Shah Muhammad, the head of the society, with the active participation of society's president Saad Ahmed Jan, senior vice-president Muhammad Sami Hamza, general secretary Talha Zia and other members of cabinet. The enthusiastic participation of Edwardians made the event a historic achievement, marking 19 years of dedicated service by Hamza Foundation.

The medical director of Hamza Foundation, Dr Tariq Khan, conducted medical checkup of students and 17 of them were found medically unfit for blood donation. About 250 healthy volunteers donated their blood for saving precious lives of 1,504 registered patients

of Hamza Foundation.

Prof. Shagor Ali Khan, the principal of the college, praised the spirit of students and commitment to the noble cause. He highlighted the importance of serving humanity. He encouraged students to continue the tradition of altruism, underlining that every donation could potentially save three lives.

Jar Ali Khan, the chairman of Hamza Foundation, expressed his gratitude to the principal, the blood donation team and volunteers. He thanked all for contributing to alleviating the suffering of those in need of blood transfusions.

Azizur Rehman and Razaullah Jan of Hamza Foundation presented commemorative shields to Principal Prof. Shagor Ali Khan and head of blood donors society Prof. Zahid Shah as a token of appreciation for their support and collaboration.

"The successful blood donation drive stands as a testament to the deep-rooted spirit of giving at Edwardian College Peshawar and its unwavering commitment to humanity," said the press release. — Bureau Report

Bajaur villagers threaten protest against 'mining hazards'

By Our Correspondent

BAJAUR: The residents of Enzari area in Khar tehsil have threatened to stage protest if a safety wall is not built to protect their homes from hazards of nephrite mining.

They said journalists here on Sunday that the contractor of nephrite mines failed to construct a safety wall to protect their homes from hazards. They said that it was clearly mentioned in the lease agreement between villagers and contractor, signed in 2015, that the latter would be only allowed to work in the mine located in the mountain.

However, they alleged that the contractor with the support of some officials included their private lands adjacent to the mountain in the mining map.

Local elders Faizul Rehman, Hazrat Muhammad, Taj Muhammad, Amir Gulab, Siraj Khan and Ziauddin said that



The nephrite mining site in Enzari area of Bajaur. — Dawn

they agreed to allow the contractor to include their private lands in the mining map after he signed a written agreement to construct a 53 feet safety

wall between the mining site and residential area.

They said that the contractor did not honour his commitment. They said that absence

of safety wall not only put several houses of locals at risk but also caused a number of unpleasant incidents.

They said that the district

administration on their complaints also directed the contractor to stop work some three months ago. However, they said that the contractor, who was allegedly backed by some high-ups of mining and mineral department, continued mining activities.

Locals demanded of chief minister, director general of mineral and mining department, chief inspector of mines, deputy commissioner of Bajaur and other relevant officials to take serious notice of the issue and order the contractor to build a protection wall immediately.

According to them, they have decided to arrange a massive sit-in in Civil Colony, Khar, if their issue was not resolved.

A senior official of district administration, when contacted, said that they had taken notice of the matter and decided to summon the contractor along with local elders very soon.

INSIDE

Setting clear priorities I P2 | Switching gears and generations I P3 | Setting market growth I P3 | Boosting growth in a durable way I P3 | At the mercy of climate change I P4 | **Tracking & Tracking** Data points I P4

Rekodiq's golden promises

The mine may start producing copper and gold by 2028 — right when the market for copper is at its tightest

By Ammar H Khan

▶ THE global demand for copper is expected to surge on the back of the electrification of mobility, the surge in renewable energy projects, and an insatiable demand for electricity to meet the growing demand for computing power. All such advancement remains contingent on the availability and supply of copper, which is expected to remain constrained in the near term.

In an exclusive interview with the President and CEO of Barrick Gold, Mark Bristow suggests that Rekodiq remains the largest untapped resource of copper in the world. The history of Rekodiq has been marred by political turmoil and judicial overreach, but as things are put in motion, as work progresses, the mine may start producing copper and gold by 2028 — right when the market for copper is at its tightest.

Watch the full interview on All Things Money on Dawn News English



Barrick Gold estimates that an initial capital expenditure of \$3.5 billion will be incurred to develop the first phase of the mine, which may be referred to as a starter mine, that can produce 200,000 tonnes of copper concentrate, and 250,000 ounces of gold annually. A subsequent expansion

refined copper accounts for the copper concentrate, while the remaining is effectively the cost of energy. So, the lower the cost of energy, the more competitive a refinery can be.

In the case of Rekodiq, the mine would effectively be exporting all of its output, as copper refineries do not exist in the country. At current prices of roughly \$2,000 per tonne of copper concentrate, this would result in exports of \$2.6bn annually for a mine producing 400,000 tonnes of copper.

Similarly, assuming a gold price of \$1,800 per ounce, this would be an additional export of \$450m. Cumulative exports from the first phase of the project would be in excess of \$3bn annually. However, this is potentially just the beginning.

As the mines scale up, so does overall production and the ability to benefit from economies of scale. At around 600,000 tonnes of production, it will make sense to establish copper refineries in the region to further add value to produce and export value-added output. More importantly, a carefully calibrated industrial policy would double down on forward integration by establishing downstream industries that utilise copper as a raw material.

A transition from exporting low-value-added raw material in the form of copper to an industry exporting high-value-added goods remains critical to avoid the resource curse. The inability to have a coherent industrial policy and being comfortable with inefficient utilisation and pricing of natural resources has resulted in criminal wastage of natural gas, which could have been converted into an exportable surplus. A similar strategy of inaction in the copper industry can further compound the resource curse.

Given the remote location, logistics for the mine would be managed through a railway track that is being established in partnership with Pakistan Railway. Important to note here is that railway tracks have been in place for more than a century, and the inability to use them for economic benefit is yet another illustration of a resource or infrastructure curse. The railway tracks

Continued on Page 3



MARK Bristow, President and CEO of Barrick Gold

may call for capital expenditure of another \$3.5bn, which would double the size of the mine to 400,000 tonnes of copper and 500,000 ounces of gold.

Rekodiq has one of the better grades of copper globally at 0.53 per cent, meaning that for every tonne of ore (or raw rock) that is mined, five kilograms of copper is extracted. Following the expansion of the subsequent phase, the mine would provide over 50 million tonnes of ore annually.

The output of a copper mine is copper concentrate, which has to be refined to obtain usable copper. It is estimated that 90pc of the price for



Exaggerated benefits of IPP renegotiations

The entire exercise may help cut power tariffs by less than Rs2 per unit if the government decides to pass on the benefit

By Nasir Jamal

▶ IT seems that the hopes of major relief in the electricity prices on account of ongoing scrutiny and revisions of the power purchase agreements of power producers to slash the huge burden of nearly Rs2.1 trillion capacity payments in consumer tariffs were exaggerated after all.

The entire exercise is likely to help cut the power tariffs by less than Rs2 per unit, provided the government decides to pass on the benefit to the consumers at all.

Contrary to the earlier messages relayed by the Shohrazid Sharif government about intending to examine the Power Purchase Agreements of every power generation company — private, public and Chinese — set up in the independent power producer (IPP) mode to reduce capacity payments to slash power prices substantially, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on energy, Muhammad Ali, has disclosed that the authorities are looking at capacity payments of [just] Rs100 billion.

In other words, the army-backed task force on power is basically "targeting private power companies set up under or before the 1994 and 2002 power policies with a share of approximately Rs210bn in capacity payments". Besides those, the purchase agreements with all private wind, solar, and hydel plants, representing capacity payments of Rs130bn, are being examined and revised. The only public sector IPPs being continued are the PLNG-based plants that the government plans to privatisise.

Without naming the nuclear power plants or other projects financed by Chinese banks under and outside the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative, Mr Ali told a dialogue organised by the Parliamentary Forum on Energy and Economy led by Dr Hafiza Shuh in Islamabad last week on "Renegotiating IPP Agreements: A

Step Forward in Resolving the Energy Crisis?" that the reopening of the contracts of strategic projects could be very disruptive for the country.

In the same breath, however, he claimed that "the electricity tariffs would be slashed by Rs1 per unit in the summer" as the task force on power, which is renegotiating with the private IPPs, is also looking at and addressing other factors responsible for higher electricity prices.

So far, the task force has terminated the contracts of six IPPs, renegotiated agreements with 14 others, and

at Rs180.3-191.3bn in annual savings over the remaining life of these plants.

Capacity charges of Rs18.39 per unit account for 21 per cent of the total consumer tariff compared to the cumulative share of 30pc of taxes, surcharges and duties. The electricity charges account for just 18pc of the consumer tariff, according to Khaleel Mansoor, the former CEO of Hubco.

"Capacity payment of 11,500MW has jumped from Nipera's [National Electric Power Regulatory Authority] reference of Rs27.5bn to Rs14.5bn due to adverse macro environment, rupee devaluation from Rs177 per US dollar to Rs278, increase in Ufco [London Interbank Offered Rate] from 0.45pc to 5.5pc per annum as well as Kfco [Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate] and lower than anticipated dispatch considering average load factor of less than 45pc compared to reference load of 60pc."

"Their average capacity tariff was Rs2.78 per unit upon tariff determination in 2015-16; however, now it adds over Rs18 per unit due to macro factors and lower dispatch," Mr Mansoor said.

Recently, the government is reported to have received a formal notice regarding a claim from the British owner of the Halmora Power Company pursuant to the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) between Pakistan and the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, warning that the investor reserves his right to submit his claim to international arbitration under Article 8(2) of the BIT to ensure that his legal rights are fully protected and enforced in Pakistan.

According to the notice, the media reports said Pakistan has gradually reneged on its promises to some IPPs, including Halmora. "In 2021, Pakistan forced Halmora to accept several concessions, including a reduction of its guaranteed rate of return from 15pc to 13pc, which caused a financial loss of

revised the fuel price of bagasse-based plants. This has resulted in annual savings of Rs117.3bn.

Recently, power minister Awan Khan Leghari claimed that the renegotiations completed so far had achieved a cumulative saving of about Rs1.4tr in future payments, resulting in the removal of Rs137bn annual burden on consumers.

Negotiations with solar and wind power owners and revisions of the terms of PLNG plants are expected to result in savings of another Rs 64-78 bn. Overall, the government is looking

The task force on power is targeting private power companies set up under or before the 1994 and 2002 power policies with a share of approximately Rs210bn in capacity payments

Continued on Page 3

Education wins big in tax dodge efforts

Loans to the sector surged to Rs182.1bn in October from about Rs28bn in September as banks looked for ADR loopholes

▶ WHEN you think of big bucks, what industries come to your mind? Probably finance or technology? For the more old-school people, maybe it would be real estate or some sort of trading business. While exceptions always exist, some sectors are not typically associated with money. Education is probably the greatest example, in part because the state traditionally provided it for free.

Since then, times have changed, and for better or worse, education has been privatised around the world. The same holds true for the private

when you limit the lens locally. Over the last five fiscal years, the education sector has accounted for an average of just 0.3pc of outstanding private business loans through scheduled banks.

However, something changed a few months ago and all of a sudden, education apparently became one of the most capital-worthy avenues for funds in the country. From almost Rs28 billion in September 2024, scheduled banks' loans to the sector surged to Rs182.1bn by October before settling in at Rs180.9bn. That's a lot of money and a major jump.

So what exactly happened, and where did all the money go? Well, there is a short answer and a long one. If you are short of time, this was likely just a window-dressing exercise as banks sought new "borrowers" in order to avoid the onerous tax on advances-to-deposits (ADR) of under 50pc. By August end, the industry stood at a record low of 36.4pc, leaving a Rs4 billion deficit with just four months left.

The moment demanded speed and innovation — two things bankers are known for — so they rushed to find new and old borrowers to avoid the additional tax. As a result, credit activity picked up at a pace like never before, with multiple sectors, including the usual non-banking financial third, including the usual non-banking financial third, including the usual non-banking financial third. But when it rains, it pours with some trickling down to traditionally less attractive industries like education.

In essence, the story ends here. But if you are one for fun facts and would like to understand just

how insane the numbers are, carry on.

To put the lending frenzy in context, we looked at other sectoral indicators. For starters, education businesses have maintained average deposits of Rs101.8bn between FY20 and FY24, resulting in a loan-to-deposit ratio of 29pc. As a share of the sectoral gross domestic product, financing averaged 1.8pc.

But in October, everything changed: the sectoral ADR surged to 136.1pc before rising further to 154.9pc, while financing-to-GDP reached 8pc. Luckily, the State Bank's detailed reporting allows for analysis at the sub-category level, with classifications including pre-primary, general secondary, technical and vocational, higher education, sports and recreation, cultural education, support services, and an "other" category.

Funny, but unsurprisingly, the entirety of new financing was directed toward the "other" category, which basically incorporates continuing vocational and non-formal education like upskilling courses or sports classes. The question naturally arises: how big is it really? Other than "big enough", the answer may not be as precise.

In terms of deposits, the two largest segments within the sector are higher and pre & primary education. "Other" comes in a somewhat distant third. By number of institutions, the trend was slightly similar — in part thanks to the existence of state provision — with primary and secondary schools naturally the largest category.

Unfortunately, there is no data on how many "other" education institutions exist, but at least

anecdotally, that number is not going to be too high. That said, there definitely has been an upsurge in such organisations lately. Think of those upskilling platforms teaching you how to earn dollars through Amazon or Upwork. But it's highly unlikely that they would be 1) big enough already to absorb such liquidity or 2) precisely even documented to clear banks' know-your-customer requirements.

Let's expand the "big enough" bit. In the last 10 quarters, the average outstanding loan amount to education businesses is Rs15.6m while the number of borrowers is almost 2,100. That means that for banks to lend so much capital to the sector, it requires either the volume or the mean to go up substantially in an order of magnitude.

Based on this September's 1,700, banks needed to find 9,820 additional borrowers during the last quarter. The only problem is that there aren't enough education companies registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan. Maybe some of the beneficiaries were those without formal incorporation? Alternatively, the mean size of the loan should have surged to Rs102.6m.

This whole saga is Goodhart's Law in its purest form: the moment ADR became a target for taxation, it stopped being a meaningful measure of banking depth in promoting credit activity. That's how it usually happens with such hard cut-offs, unless, of course, you are talking about lending to small and medium businesses or women. Somehow, even Goodhart's Law

The Week...

Telecom Operators Association (TOA) raises concerns over a 300pc price rise of fibre broadband routers, claiming it goes against the Digital Pakistan Vision and could jeopardise the broadband expansion in the country

Finance Minister Muhammad Asanogori discusses plan to launch a

\$250m

Green Impact Fund to channel international commitments for climate change to finance local green micro and small enterprises

Economic Coordination Committee of the cabinet endorses a proposal to shift annual electricity re-basing to Jan 1 instead of July 1

The World Bank pledges

\$20 bn

to Pakistan under the 10-year country partnership framework to support inclusive and sustainable development within the country, as per an official statement

Federal cabinet approves a new power supply system for special economic zones and industrial estates, aiming to accelerate industrial development and simplify electricity management

Permittees via exchange companies remain robust during the first half of FY25, with

\$2 bn

sold to banks and an additional \$2bn in the open market

Diplomats of 16 friendly countries gather at a Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade dinner to discuss trade and investment opportunities in the province, cultural exchange programmes and objectives of the two-day Balochistan Business Summit planned for the last week of January

The current account posts another surplus of

\$582m

in December 2024, following an even larger one just last month — \$644m — bringing the total surplus for the first half of FY25 to \$1.2bn

IT exports hit highest-ever mark of \$348m in December 2024 — surpassing the 12-month average of \$299m — despite internet disruption and firewall challenges

FINANCE

KSE 100-share index fluctuations



Rupee report

Weekly rupee-dollar parity



Setting clear priorities

Imports have started growing even though large-scale manufacturing output is not picking up

By Mohiuddin Aazim

NATIONAL security and broader alignment with the emerging world order have emerged as Pakistan's new priorities, something politicians and the public need to understand, as a delayed reckoning of this reality could be counter-productive for both.

The hybrid regime is rolling out several legal and technical measures that promise better governance and ensure the vigilance of Pakistan's cyberespionage as a key checkpoint of the national security paradigm. This means diminishing space for expressing dissent and anything the establishment may define as detrimental to the state's interests; the Digital Nation Pakistan Bill is one big example.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has secured its first long-term (2026-2035) World Bank Partnership, which initially promises \$20 billion in funding in six key areas over the next decade. Moreover, we have apparently managed to strike a balance between our ties with the world's two superpowers — the US and China.

The signing of the 10-year partnership with the World Bank and balancing of ties with the US and China indicate that the Pakistani establishment can be expected to align the country at least broadly with the emerging world order.

This places critical emphasis on diminishing any kind of terrorism, militancy, religious and sectarian intolerance and usurpation of the rights of women and other minorities and marginalised groups; a tall order indeed. How well this hybrid regime maintains national security is not clear right now.

However, with time, it would become

clearer, first to the top tiers of Pakistan's political and bureaucratic structures and then to most educated Pakistanis. People, industries, and businesses that have been monitored and regulated under a national security paradigm and are searching for interconnectedness with the world at large may also be checked to learn that the old days may be gone.

The relative calm in the rough seas of our external economy has emboldened the present hybrid regime to envision such a National Priorities Plan. But how long this regime can maintain this calm is not clear yet because so far external funding — be it from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, or friendly countries like China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — has contributed more towards maintaining some form of stability than actual economic growth.

Since external funding from international financial institutions and even funding from friendly countries is always tied to some "open" and possibly "undisclosed" conditions, the hybrid regime has been focusing on growing exports, remittances and foreign investment with varying degrees of success in such areas and at varying costs. The 10-year, long-term \$20bn partnership with the World Bank has been secured

while keeping in view the country's potential for losses earnings through exports, remittances, and foreign investment.

Most of the projects that the civil-military-run Special Investment Facilitation Council hopes to construct with massive foreign investment in the pipeline are such that it would take several years to come into operation. And not all of them will

industrial revival be more realistic to help the country avoid economic crises of unmanageable proportions between now and 2035. That is where the long-term country partnership with the World Bank matters. Though the initially declared funding under this 10-year partnership is \$20bn, it could rise to \$30bn to \$40bn, according to media reports.

In addition to partnering with the World Bank to secure funding facilities, the country's economic managers are also trying to get something from global great powers by presenting to world organisations its need for and capacity to utilise these funds efficiently.

Pakistan has already been in talks with the IMF to top up its \$7bn ongoing lending programme with at least \$2bn additional funding to undertake green projects in the country. In all, the tide of green fund inflows is much less uncertain than the actual timing and size of the inflows.

That is why we not only see a push for boosting exports and remittances but also continuously hear about the launching of sovereign bonds. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has recently said that Pakistan plans to issue Yuan-denominated Panda Bonds by June of this year to raise \$200 million to \$250m.

Imports have started growing even though large-scale manufacturing (LSM) output is not picking up. LSM output fell five per cent year-on-year in November 2024 and contracted 1.3pc in July-November. Rising imports coupled with external debt servicing may start testing the relative calmness we see in exchange rates, if not now, then anytime during the April-June quarter.

Switching gears and generations

Brands must turn their attention from Gen Z to Gen Alpha, which is set to number over 2bn globally by 2025 if they hope to maintain a loyal customer base

By Syed Waqas Azhar

IT'S no secret that Gen Z is one of the most influential consumer groups today. Despite not having the deepest pockets, they bring an unprecedented ability to shape culture, establish trends, and ultimately decide what's in or out. For brands, understanding Gen Z is like holding the future of retail in their hands, and it's a future that looks increasingly digital, mobile, and social.

Gen Z grew up in the digital age, seamlessly incorporating smartphones into their daily routines. For them, shopping isn't bound by physical stores or even desktop computers. It's a mobile-first experience and a convenience-based ecosystem they carry in their palms. In Pakistan, as e-commerce grows to new heights, this preference for mobile shopping has only become stronger.

This demographic in Pakistan has unique online shopping habits that are shaped by global trends and local influences. Social media platforms are central to their shopping journey, with 22 per cent making purchases based on influencer endorsements that provide authenticity. They value convenience, preferring seamless platforms with quick transactions, in-app payments, and peer reviews to guide decisions.

Gen Z also seeks community-driven shopping experiences where user-generated content and shared endorsements matter. Social and environmental responsibility strongly influence their preferences, as they gravitate toward brands that align with their values. While they prefer online shopping, 30pc still visit physical stores after online research, and they are most engaged by visually appealing

and humorous content in video or reel format. However, brands are now turning their focus to an even younger demographic: Gen Alpha. By 2025, this generation will number over two billion globally, becoming the largest generation in history, according to a McKinsey report.

Known as "iPad kids," Gen Alpha has been exposed to touchscreens and gadgets since they were toddlers. They are growing up watching their older Gen Z siblings engage in digital shopping, forming their own preferences in the process.

Interestingly, while Gen Alpha shows some shopping tendencies with Gen Z, they have distinct values and aspirations. Research by DigDay shows that about 30pc of Gen Alpha have a strong sense of purpose, often dreaming of careers that help people or animals. For brands, this suggests a rising generation that values impact and purpose in their purchases, signaling a potential shift towards

more socially conscious consumer behaviour. Yet, Gen Alpha's spending power remains connected to parental influence. With millen-

products or tech gadgets making their way into young children's shopping carts, products already embraced by their parents too.

In Pakistan, these consumer behaviours are becoming more visible. Local brands are noticing that Gen Z and Gen Alpha like the lines of age-specific marketing. From q-commerce to fashion and skincare, the same products

appeal to tweens, teens, and even their millennial parents, thanks to a shared digital consumption of content on social media platforms. These items often gain a cult following through endless appearances across social media posts and stories. The result is the transformation of certain brands into symbols of belonging to an elite, digital-savvy community.

Brands that want to thrive in this landscape must stay adaptable and create loyalty among their young customers. Driving loyalty among Gen Z and Gen

Alpha consumers required brands to go beyond traditional customer engagement. Subscription models, particularly those offering exclusive perks, discounts, and personalised experiences, resonate deeply with these generations who value both convenience and individuality.

Influencers play a critical role in creating awareness and adoption of such programmes, as their endorsements often carry significant weight among young consumers. By offering tailored subscription models, brands can build a loyal customer base that is not just transactional but emotionally invested in their journey. Leveraging social media platforms for influencer marketing and community-driven shopping experiences are key strategies. Additionally, brands should focus on aligning with the values of these generations, such as environmental and social consciousness. By staying adaptable, companies can build lasting connections with these trendsetting consumers and thrive in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

To capture the attention of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, marketers must understand their unique motivations and preferences. This requires monitoring trends, experimenting with engagement techniques, and building genuine connections. By adopting a data-driven approach, brands can position themselves as meaningful contributors to these tech-savvy, socially conscious consumers' lives. The brands that succeed will be those that resonate with their values, adapt, and evolve.

The writer is the Marketing Director at Rockpanda

AGRICULTURE

Rethinking agricultural marketing avenues

The current exploitative channels assume total price control often leaving farmers with less than 25pc of consumer prices

By Khaid Saeed Wattoo and Dr Waqar Ahmad

IN Pakistan, the biggest flaw in the agricultural marketing system is the limited number of marketing channels available for farmers to sell their produce. This constraint adversely affects the farmers' market power (bargaining power) and, in turn, their profitability, often making farming itself unsustainable. As a result, farmers often seek subsidies and support prices for survival.

Historically, Pakistan inherited the Agricultural Produce Markets Act of 1939 from the British era and continued to rely on it for several decades with only minor amendments. Although Punjab and Sindh later enacted the Punjab Agriculture Marketing Regulatory Authority Act 2013 and the Sindh Wholesale Agriculture Produce Markets (Development & Regulation) Act 2010, respectively, these legislations have brought little meaningful change. They merely facilitated the establishment of some private sector-led markets alongside existing public sector markets.

In essence, the outdated framework set forth by the Agriculture

Produce Markets Act of 1939 continues to govern our operations. The overarching goals, structure, scheme, and prescriptive regime have remained largely unchanged in the new legislations. Consequently, the core challenges and inefficiencies of the marketing system persist, leaving key issues unaddressed. Historically, wholesale grain markets (ghalla mandis) and fruit and vegetable markets have been the primary, and often the sole, channels for most farmers, particularly small and medium-sized ones. Unfortunately, these markets are widely perceived — based on experience to date — as centres of exploitation, where farmers are subjected to unfair practices and systematically fleeced.

Artisan (middlemen) charge exorbitant commissions as high as three to five per cent of the sales value for grains and 5-10pc for fruits and vegetables. These rates rise further when farmers take short-term advances from them. Over the past two decades, these commission rates have steadily increased, even as the absolute amount of commissions has grown due

to rising crop prices. Artisan effectively pocket almost 15-20pc of farmers' profits in lieu of a few hours of service.

The system is especially exploitative in the fruits and vegetables sector, where farmers often earn less than 20pc of consumer prices, as they have no control over the pricing of their produce.

Additionally, malpractices such as under-weighing, secretive auctions (open bidding is not practiced in some markets), and poor physical infrastructure further worsen farmers' challenges. In recent years, delayed payments to farmers have become increasingly common in several grain markets, effectively, allowing artisan to use farmers' money as their working capital.

Despite these challenges, the government has failed to modernise the agricultural marketing system to align with societal changes in rural areas, transformation in the agriculture sector, and evolving local and global trade dynamics.

Through the Punjab Agriculture Marketing Regulatory Authority Act emphasises promoting alternative

marketing channels, such as virtual markets, farmer markets, specialised markets, and collection centres, no tangible progress has been made. The legislation is a classic example of being "quick in legislation, lax in implementation", which is a common trait of Pakistan's governance system. However, the private sector is making efforts to introduce non-traditional marketing channels. Notably, two models are gaining traction in the country. They have built-in mechanisms for providing agricultural credit (in-kind or cash) that help mitigate the pressure on farmers to sell their produce immediately after harvest to repay outstanding loans and fund the next crop.

Furthermore, the warehouse receipt system (WRS), successfully adopted in many countries, has been introduced in Pakistan in recent years. Farmers can currently store their maize, rice, and paddy in licensed/authorised warehouse facilities, get bank loans against the stored crops, and later sell to individuals directly or via the Pakistan Mercantile Exchange. WRS helps manage oversupply

during the harvest season, improve farmers' liquidity, and stabilise market prices. However, its widespread adoption by small and medium-sized farmers — 80pc of all farms — depends on factors such as loan interest rates, crop price volatility over the marketing season, and the ratio of warehouse rental charges to crop value.

In Pakistan, contract farming offers a viable solution to many challenges faced by farmers. Its core principle — a buy-back arrangement at pre-determined prices — helps mitigate market price volatility, particularly in the absence of minimum support prices in the country.

Farmers also gain access to high-yielding seeds, agricultural inputs, and advisory services from contracting buyers. Additionally, it accelerates investment and technology transfer in the country. However, to fully realise its potential, dedicated legal provisions and a binding arbitration mechanism must be incorporated into the outdated Contract Act of 1872 to ensure timely conflict resolution.

In conclusion, the government's efforts to date have primarily focused

on improving the physical infrastructure of the mandis — a traditional brick and mortar model — rather than bringing structural changes in the marketing system.

Pakistan's agriculture sector is highly diverse, with a wide range of agronomic and horticultural crops, along with various buyers, including processors, exporters, stockists, and large wholesalers. Therefore, the traditional one-size-fits-all approach of conventional markets is increasingly misaligned with the evolving national and global agricultural landscape.

The country needs a range of non-traditional agricultural marketing channels that can boost farmers' market power, reduce intermediaries, lower transaction costs, and eliminate exploitations. It is high time to draw lessons from other countries' success stories while factoring in the peculiar dynamics of Pakistan's agriculture sector.

Khaid Wattoo is a farmer and a development professional, and Dr Waqar Ahmad is a former Associate Professor at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad

CORPORATE WINDOW



Stifling market growth

Pakistani markets festering with private and state-owned cartelisation are undermining competition

By Kalbe Ali

SEVERAL silent but formidable forces have been hindering market competition in Pakistan's economic landscape: monopolies, cartels, and the dominance of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). These anti-competitive practices distort the market, exacerbate the price hike phenomenon, degrade product quality, and prevent new businesses from flourishing.

This remains a significant barrier to the country's economic progress and the welfare of consumers. At the same time, one of the key reasons for the limited performance of the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP), the regulatory body in this regard, is the significant number of cases pending in the courts. In one of the cases against a key sector of the economy, the Sindh High Court imposed a penalty of Rs20,000 on the CCP for requesting early hearings as the case was pending for almost 10 years.

A senior official of the CCP added that while cases were pending for years in the courts, the entities have had a free hand to increase prices at will or get involved in illegal business practices, leaving consumers vulnerable to price hikes and poor-quality products.

Cartels and collusions

Cartels are categorised as a threat to market health across multiple sectors as they manipulate market dynamics, controlling prices, restricting supply, and blocking the entry of new players.

The data available at the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) shows that the price of cement increased by 150 per cent from Rs400 per bag in December 2020 to Rs1,420 per bag in December 2024. Similarly, the price of sugar, another essential commodity, has surged from Rs62 per kg in 2020 to around Rs155 per kg in 2024, representing an increase of over 150%.

The CCP, in 2022, filed major sugar producers after finding that they manipulated prices by hoarding bulk stock during peak demand periods, leading to artificial price hikes. Unfortunately, the order was challenged in court, and sugar prices continue to surge, now selling at an average of Rs150 per kg.

The report found that the cartel's coordi-

nated activities resulted in the average price of cement being 15-20% higher than the market equilibrium, benefiting large firms at the expense of consumers.

Steel price has also climbed significantly, reaching Rs245,000 per tonne in December 2024, compared to Rs126,000 per tonne in 2020, reflecting an increase of almost 97%.

These price hikes have severely impacted both consumers and small businesses, as cartels manipulate prices to maximise profits.



undermining competition and inflating the cost of living.

In 2023, the CCP issued a report revealing that a cartel involving cement producers led to inflated prices and higher profits for the manufacturers, while consumers bore the brunt of the price increase.

Misuse of dominance

The entities are also involved in the misuse of dominant positions, and it was a critical issue in Pakistan's markets, where large corporations and even the SOEs often leveraged their market power to suppress competition and exploit consumers.

For instance, the fertilizer sector has a few dominant companies controlling the production and distribution of urea. In 2020, the urea was fixed at Rs1,665 per 50kg bag, but by 2023, this price has skyrocketed to Rs1,300

per bag, making it unaffordable for many small farmers.

The CCP launched an inquiry into the sector in 2024 and found that urea manufacturers, in collusion with the Fertilizer Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council (FMPAC), were collectively fixing prices instead of independently submitting their respective prices to the government.

This price fixing cartel has artificially inflated urea prices, making it increasingly

difficult for small farmers to access this essential input. These practices have severely impacted agricultural productivity and food security in the country due to rising prices of edible items, mainly for urban consumers.

The unhealthy economy due to the lack of competition restricts the entry of new businesses into the markets and leads to limited growth in innovation and price reduction. The barriers to entry include high licensing fees, bureaucratic hurdles, and aggressive tactics by dominant players to suppress new comers. In many cases, these giants wield their market power to prevent smaller retailers from gaining market share, creating an uneven playing field that ultimately harms consumers.

SOE's stifling competition
Almost all sectors of the economy in the country have been dominated by the SOEs, and their overwhelming influence has con-

solidated market challenges. SOEs in the energy, telecommunications, and transportation sectors have long held monopolistic control, creating a stifling environment for competition.

In 2023, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) reported that Pakistan Electric Power Company (PEPCO) alone accounts for a significant portion of the country's Rs2.2 trillion energy sector debt.

PEPCO is a state-owned entity that controls over 60% of Pakistan's electricity distribution. Pakistan's electricity tariffs are among the highest in the region, with average rates at Rs24 per kWh, compared to Rs10-15 in neighbouring countries like India and Bangladesh.

While the CCP is the authority tasked with checking collusion practices, investigating cartelisation, and ensuring fair competition in the market, it faces a key challenge that many companies involved in anti-competitive practices have been successful in getting the CCP into prolonged legal battles, restricting the Commission to hold inquiries or issue decisions and even implement the orders.

Responding to the query, Chairman CCP Dr Kalbe Ali said that due to the high number of court cases, the Commission restructured its legal team to address a backlog of 567 cases. These cases involved penalties of Rs24 billion.

He added that since the restructuring 73 cases have successfully been decided, including 11 in the Supreme Court, 31 in the Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT), four in the Islamabad High Court (IHC), seven in the Lahore High Court (LHC) and 20 in Sindh High Court (SHC). Meanwhile, 177 cases have been bundled routinely to challenge the CCP's legal framework as ultra vires.

However, the number of cases challenging the establishment of the CCP or its activities was high in various country courts. There are 200 cases against the CCP in the apex court, 179 in CAT, 46 in the SHC, 43 in LHC and six in the IHC. Almost all the industry associations wherein the CCP took notice have challenged the establishment of the CCP and the competence of parliament to enact a law on the subject of competition.

Boosting growth in a durable way

Govt doubles down on efforts to increase export earnings as sole reliance on remittances becomes increasingly unsustainable

By Jawaid Bokhari

PAKISTAN'S economy remains trapped in a low-growth equilibrium despite improving macro indicators, and according to International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, lower-income countries, despite reform efforts, are in a position where any new shocks would hit them "quite negatively".

Oil prices climbed about two per cent to a four-month high last Monday based on expectations that wider US sanctions on Russian oil would force buyers in China and India to seek other sources of supplies.

Ms Georgieva said most countries should adopt reforms to boost growth durably, adding that, in many cases, this could be done while protecting their growth prospects.

If globalisation weakens, the developing countries that rely on exports for economic growth and job creation will be adversely affected, says Zeshan Hashmi, executive director of the independent, London-based Policy Research Institute. In the case of global value chains, he argues that reliance

on multiple countries makes it impractical and counterproductive to focus on a solely balanced trade relationship.

To diversify the risks, he adds, regional trade can serve as a valuable alternative. Regional trade can stimulate the creation of new industries and sectors, facilitating sustainable growth and diversification that ultimately reduces external vulnerability.

According to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific South Asia Growth Model, the potential for intra-regional trade in South Asia is estimated to be two times its current level. Moreover, around 40% of the world's poor live in South Asia.

Sometimes, Pakistan's efforts to boost regional trade seem to have gained momentum early last week, which, if pursued vigorously, would help reduce external vulnerability more effectively. While the government can create an enabling environment to facilitate regional trade, real efforts have to come from industry and trade.

Last Monday the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry signed a memorandum of understanding to form Pakistan-Bangladesh Joint Business Council to strengthen, facilitate and enable trade between the two countries. Most recently, an FPCCI delegation of over 30 members from diverse industries was visiting Bangladesh to increase bilateral trade.

Similarly, analysts at Dawn argue that relying on workers' remittances is not wise for external account stability. No matter how favourable an impact these have on economic growth, remittances cannot be a substitute for exports and foreign private investment, which increase domestic productivity and generate jobs. In the first half of this fiscal year, home remittances have surpassed export earnings.

Efforts to increase business-to-business trade have picked up lately. "We are going to establish the Azerbaijan Trade Centre in Lahore and Pakistan-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce to bring the business communities of both countries closer and open new avenues for mutual cooperation," says Azerbaijan's Ambassador Khazar Farhadov.

Regarding the positive impact of direct flights between the two countries, the ambassador revealed that bilateral trade volume has tripled since 2022.

In collaboration with Iran, Pakistan notified the opening of the fourth official border crossing point between Pakistan and Iran at Kohak Chaudhry area of Punjab on January 13, to facilitate legal trade activities between the two countries, discourage smuggling of goods, and provide employment and business opportunities to people living on both sides of the border. The new trade route in the Kohak Chaudhry area will boost business activities in the Punjab area of Balochistan.

On June 1, 2023, Pakistan provided a framework for initiating business-to-business trade. Businessmen have proposed importing rice, meat, fertiliser, fruits, vegetables and pharmaceuticals, while Pakistan could benefit from Iranian petroleum and industrial raw materials.

The two countries are also set to hold negotiations to extend their electricity sale agreement, which expires on December 31, 2024. Currently, Pakistan imports 100MW from Iran for the border areas of Balochistan, payments made through informal channels or under barter trade agreements between the two countries. Imports are within the limit of 18 million units per year. Moreover, on January 14, Pakistan and Iran signed a protocol to explore ways to strengthen bilateral economic cooperation.

Last week, Finance Minister Muhammad Asanoglu's talks with Hong Kong's Chief Executive John Lee explored setting up more joint ventures and secondary listings of Pakistani firms in the city. The president of Indonesia is arriving in Pakistan for a three-day visit with an investment team towards the end of the month. Pakistan needs to radically reduce its dependence on debt-financed imports. For example, the domestic demand for edible oil is estimated to be around 4.5M tonnes, with local production merely contributing 50M tonnes.

Speakers at the Seventh Pakistan Oil Conference have called for immediate action to grow palm oil trees to produce palm oil locally and reduce over 60% dependency on Indonesia and Malaysia as both countries increasingly use palm oil for biodiesel, raising concerns about an acute shortage in the coming years.

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Punishing conditions, paltry allocations

THE Prison Data Report, Pakistan's Prison Landscape: Trends, Data and Developments in 2024, paints a bleak picture of the state of prisoners. People expect the conditions in a jail system to be dismal — they are being punished after all — but three out of four in jails are those who are still under trial, hence technically not sentenced as guilty.

Punjab, the most populous province, houses the largest number of prisoners — approximately 62,000 — but spends a modest Rs600 per inmate daily. This allocation reflects the challenges of managing a significantly large prison population within the constraints of a provincial budget.

Sindh has the second largest prison population at 22,500 inmates and allocates a similar amount — Rs600 per prisoner per day. With one of the largest urban centres, Karachi, Sindh faces unique challenges in managing its inmate population, including addressing higher crime rates and ensuring adequate resources for both prisoners and prison staff.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which houses 13,000 prisoners, allocates Rs1,400 per day per inmate — a significantly higher

amount than Punjab and Sindh. Balochistan, the most sparsely populated and resource-constrained province, houses the smallest number of prisoners — just 3,000 inmates — but allocates the highest daily expenditure per prisoner at Rs1,500. While this might seem disproportionate given Balochistan's economic challenges, the high per-prisoner spending may reflect the logistical costs of managing prisoners in a geographically vast and underdeveloped province.

Given the massive overcrowding problems and sub-optimal living conditions, these allocations are vastly insufficient. Part of the problem lies with the Control of Narcotics Substances Act 1997 (CNSA), under which harsh punishments are doled out to those who are addicted. Under it, incarceration rates have increased, but conviction rates have plummeted. In Punjab, convictions dropped from 76% in 2022, to just 2% in 2023, according to the report. Roughly 98% of the people jailed for drugs were ultimately not found guilty.

In 2024, the prison population grew by only 1.7%. Given the state of extreme overcrowding, this is perhaps positive news though it is uncertain what it says about the country's law and order situation and security of citizens. In Karachi's Central Prison alone, prisoners are housed at 320% capacity — a jail built for 2,400 inmates houses 8,018.

At about 40 prisoners for every 100,000 individuals, Pakistan's incarceration rate is lower than the global average. Keep in mind that of those, three-quarters are under trial and hence not proven guilty. Pakistan is not known for its law and order conditions. While typing up this article, a message was circulating on one of the WhatsApp groups about a mugging incident with a plea for the

stolen bag to be returned if found. The odds are that many of those reading these words have been in a similar situation of being mugged. How many of us report to the police and expect the criminal to end up in jail?

As a result, the jails are overcrowded by people who may not be guilty living in abysmal circumstances. Series like 'Prison Break' and 'Orange Is the New Black' do not paint a pretty picture but those jails are in the US with much more humane conditions. In Pakistan, those outside jails have limited access to clean water for drinking or bathing and nutritious food, much less those incarcerated.

COMPANY NEWS

InfraZamin partners with HabibMetro

INFRAZAMIN Pakistan (IZP) has successfully issued its first short-term guarantee of Rs500m against a HabibMetro for Jaffer Business Systems, as per a press release. The facility will support Jaffer Business Systems (JBS), an established technology and business solutions provider, in expanding its business in digital and IT infrastructure solutions.

This guarantee structure will provide a boost to JBS's business operations and address the limited availability of trade finance lines for the import of vital IT infrastructure.

By mitigating credit risks associated with import letters of credit, the guarantee carries substantial economic and developmental benefits, with JBS planning to expand its client base and partner with multiple local firms to expand its domestic outreach.

Bisconni at the FMCG Asia Awards 2024

BISCONNI'S premium biscuit range has been awarded the 'Home Brand of the Year — Pakistan' category title at the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Asia Awards 2024 held in Singapore as per a press release.

The introduction of Bisconni's Premium range has proved to be a critical move for the company's growth and serving a consumer base that demands quality equivalent to imported products. Speaking on this milestone, Muhammad Saleh Godi, Chief Operating Officer of Bisconni, remarked, "Winning the Home Brand of the Year — Pakistan award signifies that a brand has been recognised for its excellence and overall market presence within the home goods sector in Pakistan. We plan to continue to innovate and expand the product range based on consumer feedback and market trends."

Exaggerated benefits of IPP renegotiations

Continued from Page 1

at least \$52m over the remaining term of the project.

"More recently, Pakistan has accelerated its efforts to revive energy sector arrangements forcibly, using coercive tactics to extract concessions from private businesses. The government has threatened to prosecute those who insist on their rights being respected."

The notice also highlights that Pakistan's actions are discrimina-

tory. While some privately owned IPPs, including Halmore, have been targeted, state-owned energy producers and other IPPs owned by Chinese investors have not faced the same treatment.

It further states that owner Karim-Ul-Din's investments in Halmore have been harmed by Pakistan's actions. "He, along with Halmore, has faced relentless coercion to renegotiate the company's tariff and contractual terms, stripping him of the guarantees that initially encouraged

his investment in Pakistan's electricity market."

Furthermore, it states that on November 11, 2024, Halmore's CEO was summoned and threatened with detention unless Mr Karim-Ul-Din — who resides in London — authorised the acceptance of pre-determined terms that could potentially lead to Halmore's bankruptcy. Although the CEO was eventually released, Pakistan has continued to exert pressure on Mr Karim-Ul-Din to compromise on his rights, placing

Halmore's future, as well as the security of its personnel, in immediate danger.

This is exactly the kind of situation the participating experts, practitioners and parliamentarians urged the government to avoid as they raised questions on whether IPP negotiations will lead to lower tariffs as projected in the absence of revision of contracts with the CPSC and government-owned projects, which constituted nearly 75% of the total capacity payments.

Establishing an industrial base that utilises indigenous resources for industrial growth and competitive exports is what any mid- to long-term plan should envision. The country needs an industrial policy, broken down into tactical, mid-term, and long-term goals. Winging may not be a strategy that works for long anymore.

The writer is the CEO of National Credit Guarantee Company Ltd, a member of the Tar Coal Energy Board and an assistant professor of practice at IBA, Karachi



— Farooq S. Akhtar

Tracing & Tracking

Childless American adults

The share of childless adults under 50 who say they are unlikely to ever have kids rose 10 percentage points between 2018 and 2023, from 32pc to 47pc in the US, according to the Pew Research Center

47%

Living on the streets

26pc

Homelessness in England has risen by 26pc in the past five years, according to The Economist

Rich live longer

Once Americans make it to their late 50s, the wealthiest 10pc live to a median age of around 86 years, roughly 14 years longer than the least wealthy 10pc, according to a study published in 2024 in JAMA Internal Medicine

14 years



A WOMAN walk past an electronic board showing the numbers of Nintendo's stock price (top, R) on the Tokyo Stock Exchange along a street in central Tokyo. Nintendo shares tumbled as much as seven percent last week after the Japanese games giant failed to impress with a teaser video of its hotly awaited Switch 2 console.—AFP

Data points



PROTESTERS hold posters and flags as they take part in a demonstration titled "We are fed up!" and demanding a socially just agricultural transition, in Berlin. The activists call on the next federal government and the EU to "secure our livelihoods, social unity and a good life for people and animals, in urban and rural areas, in Germany and around the world!"—AFP

The wealth whisperers

Marlene Engelhorn first understood that her family was wealthy when she noticed quite how much larger their house was than those of her childhood friends. Growing up, her family's financial adviser was such a constant presence that she thought he was her uncle. She didn't know exactly how rich her family was, however, until she was 27 when she was told she would inherit a fortune (\$28.3m) from her grandfather. Last year, she made global headlines by giving away her fortune. To other super-rich families, this must have seemed like self-sabotage. But for Engelhorn, who has long argued for higher taxation of inherited wealth on moral grounds, it was also an act of self-preservation — an attempt to salvage herself and her relationships from what she sees as the distorting effects of extreme wealth. A small industry has sprung up, devoted to preserving both family fortunes and well-being.

(Adapted from "The Wealth Whisperers Who Save Super-Rich Families From Themselves," by Sophie Elshof, published on January 10, 2025, by 1643 Magazine)

Creating a win list

If you're angling for a raise or a promotion this year, do this one thing before anything else: Start taking notes. Consistently documenting your wins and accomplishments to compile a record of your work is something not enough of us do. Consider this: If your boss asked you what you were doing last July, would you even remember? Regularly documenting will give you an instant go-to source for information. Keeping notes can help you stand out, especially at a time when companies are keeping raises in check, thinning the ranks of managers and offering fewer promotions. If the idea of regularly documenting sounds daunting, or just too tedious, think of it as a quick journal entries of accomplishments, feedback and experiences. You can use a spreadsheet, your phone's notes app or specialised apps made for workplace documentation. The goal is to have specific details on hand to prove your worth.

(Adapted from "Need To Get Noticed At Work? Do This First," by Ray A. Smith, published on January 5, 2025, by the Wall Street Journal)

Unemployment in the US

The US economy has added more than 2m jobs over the past year. But more people who are out of work are having a hard time getting back in. As of November, more than 7m Americans were unemployed, meaning they didn't have work and were trying to find it. More than 1.6m of those jobless workers had been job hunting for at least six months, according to the Labour Department. The number of people searching for that long is up more than 50pc since the end of 2022. On average, it now takes people about six months to find a job, roughly a month longer than it did during the post-pandemic hiring boom in early 2023, according to the Labour Department. The pain is largely in high-paying white-collar jobs, including in tech, law, and media, where businesses grew fast when the economy reopened after the pandemic but now have less need for new hires.

(Adapted from "Unemployed Office Workers Are Having A Harder Time Finding New Jobs," by Matt Grossman and Jasmine Li, published on January 5, 2025, by the Wall Street Journal)

India-Russia ties

Ever since the start of the war in Ukraine, the West has tried to persuade India to distance itself from Russia. Indian officials have pointed out — in often feisty exchanges — that the Kremlin has been a steadfast friend for decades. Russia also accounts for almost 60pc of India's arms imports over the past 20 odd years. Besides, they argued, India needs to nurture the relationship to offset warming ties between Russia and China, India's chief rival. But rather than winding down an old cold-war friendship, India is deepening defence, energy and defence relations with a partner it sees as a source of prosperity and security. And they hope their stance will be less controversial with the return of Donald Trump to the White House. Signing \$10bn of fresh deals with the Kremlin on oil and arms is a gamble that could pay off.

(Adapted from "India's Faustian Pact With Russia Is Strengthening," by The Economist, published on January 13, 2025, by The Economist)

Wildfire's celebrity destruction

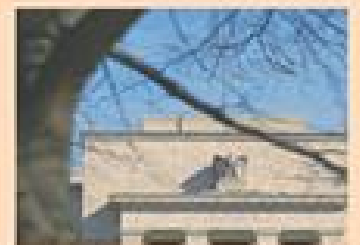
\$155 million

More than two dozen celebrity-owned homes in Pacific Palisades and nearby Malibu — worth more than \$155 million and counting — have been destroyed in the LA fires, as per the Wall Street Journal

Stock picking funds suffer

\$450 billion

Investors pulled a record \$450bn out of actively managed stock funds in 2024, underlining how passive investing and exchange-traded funds are hollowing out the once-dominant market for active mutual funds, according to the Financial Times



A VIEW of the US Federal Reserve in Washington, DC. The Federal Reserve announced it is pulling out of an international climate change initiative just days before Republican President-elect Donald Trump takes office. The Fed entered the Network of Central Banks and Supervisors for Greening the Financial System in December 2020, printing it at the time as a place to exchange ideas about the development of environment and climate risk management policies.—AFP

Budgeting gone awry

Given the needs of the country, underutilising the PSDP budget is not only a missed opportunity but borders on negligence

By Ahsan Subohi

▶ IT'S ironic that a democratic government prioritises the needs and privileges of the administrative machinery and the elite political class while neglecting to spend the limited funds allocated for development. This is happening in an environment where private investors are hesitant, and working masses are enduring the worst economic distress in recent history.

According to official data for the first half of the Fiscal Year 2025 (July-December 2024), total development spending amounted to approximately Rs148 billion. This represents 12.4 per cent of the twice-reduced Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of Rs1.1 trillion and barely 10.5pc of the original budgetary allocation of Rs1.4tr announced in June last year.

Defending the slow pace of development spending in Pakistan, the government asserts its commitment to delivering

for officers, are glaring examples of misplaced priorities. The risk of this strategy backfiring is significant. If the government continues with business as usual, growing public discontent could spill into the streets, potentially destabilising the political equilibrium and upsetting the apple cart," the analyst continued.

The PSDP is a key component of the federal budget, aimed at funding development projects across various sectors to enhance both physical and social infrastructure. Its importance becomes even greater when private investment is sluggish, as is the case in Pakistan. However, the allocations and utilisation of the government's development budget are often subject to revisions and adjustments to align with economic conditions, project requirements, and shifting government priorities.

In democracies, accountability and transparency in the use of precious public

resources are essential for improving governance and ensuring the system remains responsive to the needs of the electorate. Effective tracking of these funds is not just a matter of fiscal discipline but a cornerstone of public trust and progress.

Historically in Pakistan, development spending has often been the first casualty in efforts to achieve fiscal balance, while wasteful non-development expenditures remain largely untouched. Once again, this pattern has repeated. Before parliamentary approval, Rs250bn was slashed from the PSDP allocation, followed by an additional Rs50bn cut, bringing the final allocation to Rs1.1tr.

These reductions were reportedly made to address fiscal constraints and align the development spending with the government's stated target of achieving economic stabilisation.

The government is expected to prioritise development spending and focus on effec-

tively utilising development funds to complete ongoing projects while carefully initiating new ones. This approach is essential to reinvigorating crumbling and insufficient infrastructure, stimulating growth, creating jobs and improving basic public services.

However, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government seems to be withholding funds rather than deploying them efficiently and promptly. The massive under-utilisation of PSDP is, therefore, not only a missed opportunity but borders on negligence, given the pressing needs of the country.

PSDP utilisation in the first half of FY25 stands at about 12pc of the revised allocation, marking a decline compared to the same period last year when PSDP spending reached 15pc of annual allocation.

Reports indicate the Planning Commission authorised the disbursement of about 50pc of the annual target, amounting to Rs44.5bn. However, only Rs124.5bn was actually spent. A further breakdown reveals that ministries utilised 13pc of their annual allocations, while government commercial organisations managed to spend only 5pc.

Explaining the government's position Khuram Shihab, advisor to finance minister stated: "Several factors may have contributed to the underutilisation of PSDP funds, including procedural delays, capacity constraints, and the need for more effective project planning and execution."

"To enhance efficiency, we're prioritising the completion of ongoing projects with an outcome-driven approach, focusing on tangible results rather than merely meeting spending targets. Simultaneously, the government is implementing reforms in key areas, including right-sizing, pensions, energy, and state-owned enterprises, to strengthen fiscal discipline and improve resource allocation."

"These reforms aim to optimise government institutions, establish a sustainable pension system, improve the energy mix, and enhance the efficiency of state-owned enterprises. These efforts demonstrate government's commitment to prudent financial management, better governance, and sustainable development."

Mr Shihab added: "The government recognises the pressing needs of its citizens, particularly in regions with poor social indicators. However, it's crucial to strike a balance between development spending and fiscal sustainability."

"It's also important to note that social sector spending, particularly in critical areas such as education and healthcare, now falls under provincial jurisdiction following devolution. This shift has created both opportunities and challenges for governance reforms and strengthening sub-national state capacity."

At the mercy of climate change

Frequent exposure to weather anomalies undermines rural folk's economic capacity and deters them from making any long-term investments altogether

By Nasir Ali Panhwar

▶ THE climate is changing rapidly, resulting in a range of new risks and vulnerabilities for rural people. The sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finds that because of human activity, global temperatures have already increased by 1.1°C compared to temperatures in the pre-industrial era, and this increase is projected to reach or exceed 1.5°C within the next 20 years, if not sooner.

As a result of climate change, extreme weather events are intensifying and becoming more frequent, heat waves are increasing in intensity and duration; seasons are changing, and global water cycles are intensifying, leading to more frequent and severe droughts and floods.

Studies show that these changes have profound effects on agricultural systems and on the livelihoods of the rural people who depend on them. The most direct effect is the impact on agricultural production and productivity. Among the key challenges posed by climate change to agriculture are the effects of global warming. Crop production, livestock production and fish production are all highly sensitive to extreme temperatures.

While climate change is a global crisis, its impacts on different countries, communities and individuals are highly unequal. Inequalities are also great within countries: Differences in resource endowments, livelihood orientations, biophysical environments, and access to services, markets, and institutions make some people considerably more vulnerable to climate change than others.

Many of these differences are rooted in historically and socially embedded processes of exclusion and marginalisation, which result in stark disparities in people's abilities to cope with and adapt to climate change, thus not only exposing the social and economic inequalities between people and communities but also perpetuating and deepening them.

Rural people are often found to be particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. This vulnerability is due to several factors, including the importance of climate-dependent agriculture in livelihoods, high rates of poverty and food insecurity, and the weakness and limited availability of markets, services and institutions.

Moreover, people in rural areas face a diversity of social and economic challenges, which leads to substantial differences in climate vulnerability within rural areas. Structural inequalities related to wealth, gender and age, among other social identities, can shape people's access to resources and information, decision-

making power and the social agency required to respond to a rapidly changing climate. As a result, some groups of people are much more vulnerable to climate change than others.

Extreme weather events are widening income gaps within rural communities and limiting prospects for inclusive growth and poverty reduction. Furthermore, extreme weather events such as floods and heat stress reduce the incomes and well-being of poor and female-headed households more than those of other segments of the rural population. The magnitude of these losses is staggering.

For vulnerable people, this interaction can reinforce and perpetuate conditions of poverty and marginalisation in two primary ways. First, reductions in productivity caused by climate-related events can undermine people's economic capacity to invest in future production and adaptation measures, including investments in farm inputs, technologies, labour and equipment.

Second, frequent exposure to climate-related events has important psychological effects and can make people less willing to make new investments in their agricultural systems, pushing them to prioritise short-term investments over longer-term ones. These effects are strongly influenced by the resources and services, including credit and insurance services, that are available to a person to mitigate income losses and adapt to future climate stresses.

The livelihoods and production systems of rural people living in poverty exhibit distinct features that can increase their sensitivity to climate change. People living in poverty are more likely to rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Moreover, they tend to operate production systems that are very small in scale and make limited use of capital-intensive inputs such as improved seeds, technology, and fertilisers.

They also often operate under rain-fed conditions, which are becoming more uncertain and erratic due to climate change. As a result, labour and land productivity are generally low among these populations, with production oriented primarily toward personal consumption over sales.

However, acknowledging rural people in policy documents is just the first step. Policy commitments must be translated into concrete and effective actions as well. ■

The author is a development professional and author of the book "Turfed Matters"

Join DawnMedia's Breathe Pakistan initiative to combat climate change



better outcomes for citizens by streamlining processes, enhancing project management capacities, and ensuring more efficient utilisation of development funds.

It acknowledges that effective utilisation of PSDP funds is critical for advancing its development agenda but advises critics to consider the demands of prudent financial management (read the International Monetary Fund's conditions) and inherent time lag at the start of the financial year before questioning the government's dedication for public welfare.

"Actions speak louder than words. If the government genuinely cares about the people and their right to live with dignity, it should save every penny and swiftly channel resources toward development projects to bridge the service delivery and investment gaps," commented an anonymous analyst.

"Instances of resource wastage, such as purchase of new vehicles worth Rs2bn

resources are essential for improving governance and ensuring the system remains responsive to the needs of the electorate. Effective tracking of these funds is not just a matter of fiscal discipline but a cornerstone of public trust and progress.

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