

Eight die in road mishap  
F.P. Report

CHAKWAL: Eight people died after a passenger bus traveling from Karachi to Swat veered off the road and plunged into a ravine near Neela Dullah on the M-2 Motorway. Five people died instantly, while 18 others sustained injuries. Three more passengers succumbed to their wounds at the hospital, raising the death toll to eight.



@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXII

No. 33

Regd. No. 241

SHABAAN 30 1446 -- SATURDAY, MARCH 01 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30



NEWSHERA: People gathered after a suicide blast at Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania in Akora Khattak.

## PM: Pakistan to send first astronaut to space station

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that Pakistan, in collaboration with China, will send its first space manned mission to China's space station.

Addressing a ceremony after witnessing the exchange of a cooperation agreement between Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPPARCO) and China Manned Space Agency, the prime minister said that this was yet another wonderful gesture from Chinese government to further deepen bilateral cooperation in this field.

He emphasized that under the dynamic leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping, not only the space programme was progressing speedily but also mega projects in other sectors were built in Pakistan under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which had really transformed the country's landscape. He highlighted that Pakistan's participation in the China Space Station program reflects the deep-rooted ties between the two countries and will contribute to mutual knowledge-sharing and the broader vision of peaceful space exploration for the benefit of humanity.

Under the agreement, two Pakistani astronauts will undergo training at the Astronaut Center of China. One selected astronaut shall be trained as a scientific payload specialist, preparing for specialized research aboard the China Space Station (CSS). The astronaut selection process will be completed by 2026, with the aim of flying in an upcoming mission as per CSS planning.

The first national astronaut's mission at CSS will involve conducting cutting-edge scientific experiments in various fields, including biological and medical sciences, aerospace, applied physics, fluid mechanics, space radiation, ecology, material sciences, microgravity studies, and astronomy.

Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal termed the agreement a historic milestone, underscoring its role in accelerating technological innovation, capacity building, and research. He stated that the collaboration with China extends beyond astronaut training, laying the

groundwork for Pakistan's long-term growth in human spaceflight and exploration. Director General of China Manned Space Agency (CMSA), Dr Lin Xinqiang expressed his enthusiasm for this partnership, reaffirming China's dedication to strengthening international cooperation in space exploration.

He highlighted that Pakistan's participation in the China Space Station program reflects the deep-rooted ties between the two countries and will contribute to mutual knowledge-sharing and the broader vision of peaceful space exploration for the benefit of humanity.

Chairman SUPPARCO Mohammad Yousaf Khan regarded the agreement as a landmark in Pakistan's space journey, emphasizing perseverance, adaptability, and technological progress. He invited youth, professionals, and academia to actively participate in Pakistan's astronaut program, encouraging them to contribute to the nation's space exploration efforts through research, innovation, and skill development.

**Macroeconomic conditions improved due to govt efforts:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said that due to efforts of his economic team the macroeconomic conditions in the country had improved significantly, however the government would have to work further to improve conditions at the microeconomic level so that the benefits of economic progress could reach people.

He was speaking here during a meeting with a delegation of prominent industrialists and businessmen of the country. The prime minister said the government was working on priority basis for the promotion of industry and business. He said business community and industrialists were backbone of the country's economy and it was our top priority to resolve the issues faced by them.

He said the government was striving for putting in place business and investment friendly policies. The prime minister said investors and business community were provided an easy and simple platform of Special Investment Facilitation Council where facilities were being provided through a one window operation.

(Continued on Back Page)

## Ramazan moon not been sighted

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The moon of Ramazan-ul-Mubarak has not been sighted in Pakistan, the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee announced on Friday.

The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee held its meeting in Peshawar, chaired by Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad, to determine the sighting of the new moon. However, there were no reports of the moon being sighted in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar or any other part of the country.

The Islamic month of Ramazan will begin on Sunday (March 2, 2025) in Pakistan. The moon sighting meeting included religious scholars from all schools of thought of Islam and weather experts.

Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad noted that while the weather was cloudy in most parts of Pakistan and clear in others, no moon sighting was reported from any location in the country. The Ministry of Religious Affairs later confirmed this through an official notification.

The meeting was attended by members of the Central and Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committees, and members from various institutions, including the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Pakistan Meteorological Department, and the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission.

## 10 injured in Quetta explosion

F.P. Report

QUETTA: An explosion on a busy road in Quetta injured 10 people including a Frontier Corps (FC) soldier, officials said. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Anwar Ali told reporters that the blast happened near an FC convoy on Jan Muhammad Road, damaging five shops and an FC vehicle.

"The injured FC personnel and others were taken to Civil Hospital Quetta and its Trauma Centre," he said. DSP Ali added that the explosion was caused by a remote-controlled device, using about 2-3 kilograms of explosives.

The provincial health department stated that Trauma Centre head Arbab Kamran Kasi declared an emergency.

Health Department Spokesperson Dr Waseem Baig said one person is in critical condition, while all injured are receiving medical care. He confirmed that all ten injured were taken to the Trauma Centre at Civil Hospital.

Meanwhile, at least five burned to death after three oil-laden vehicles collided in Quetta's Washak area. According to levies authorities, the incident occurred in the Patuk area of Basima. The victims, who were from Mastung and Quetta, burned to death in the accident, the bodies have been shifted to the Civil Hospital. Earlier, at least four children died and 10 others sustained injuries in a collision between school van and tractor trolley in Pir Mahal tehsil of Toba Tek Singh.

# The Frontier Post

OGRA slashes LPG price  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) slashed the price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) before Ramazan. As per the notification issued by the OGRA on Friday, the LPG rates have been reduced by Rs6.15 to Rs247.82 per kilogram. The new prices will be in effect from Saturday, March 1, 2025.

# Maulana Hamid among 7 killed in suicide blast

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: Maulana Hamidul Haq, administrator of Darul Uloom Haqqania along with seven people killed and 18 others sustained injuries in a suicide blast that targeted the historic seminary's mosque here Friday.

DPO Abdul Rashid told media that it was a suicide blast and its target was the Maulana Hamidul Haq of JUI Samiul Haq group. He said blast occurred in the front row soon after Friday prayers as worshippers were leaving the congregation at the Darul Uloom Haqqania mosque in Akora Khattak, located about 60 kilometres (35 miles) east of Peshawar.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General Police (IGP) Zulfiqar Hameed told media that Maulana Hamid-ul-Haq Haqqani, the son of Maulana Sami-ul-Haq Haqqani, was the target of the attack. Maulana Hamid, the vice administrator of Darul Uloom Haqqania and emir of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Sami (JUI-S), succumbed to his injuries as he was undergoing emergency medical treatment, the IGP said.

Hameed said that police teams were present at the site of the explosion, and a search operation was also underway in the surroundings. Forensics and investigation teams dispatched to the incident site, and the district police officer was also present there, the IGP said. The mosque is located inside the compound of the madrassa, whose students were set to go on leave, as it marked the final day of their academic year.

The sprawling campus is home to roughly 4,000 students who are fed, clothed and educated for free.

Security arrangements at the mosque include the presence of several policemen and a police mobile van, while seminary workers monitor visitors.

The administration and medical staff of Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) were directed to remain prepared for receiving casualties. The hospital spokesperson said a high alert and emergency had been declared at the medical facility to deal with any situation.

The latest reports suggest that the blast took place near the gate of the mosque from where Maulana Hamid was returning to his residence. The bodies of four deceased have been kept at the Qazi Hussain Ahmed Medical Complex, while the other injured are receiving treatment. Meanwhile, Hamid's body is at Nowshera CMH.

Separately, a powerful explosion rocked Sama bazaar in the Mamozai area of Upper Orakzai on Friday, killing one person and injuring several others. In a statement the Kohat deputy commissioner said police and rescue teams swiftly arrived at the scene, launching relief operations and securing the area. The injured were immediately shifted to THQ Hospital for medical treatment.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur strongly condemned the explosion, calling it a tragic and deplorable act. He directed authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into all aspects of the incident and submit a comprehensive report.

The chief minister also instructed officials to ensure the best possible medical care for the injured. "Targeting innocent people in a place of worship is an inhumane act,"

Gandapur said, adding that no words were enough to condemn such an attack.

He emphasised that all available resources should be utilised to bring the perpetrators to justice. In a statement, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) spokesperson Aslam Ghauri, condemning the suicide blast, said that the incident at Akora Khattak was deeply tragic. He urged party workers and volunteers to extend full cooperation in relief efforts. Ghauri also appealed to JUI-F members to donate as much blood as possible for the injured.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday strongly condemned the suicide blast at Darul Uloom Haqqania in Akora Khattak. The president and the prime minister, in their separate statements, prayed for swift recovery of those injured in the blast including Amir of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Sami (JUI-S) Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani.

President Zardari expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives in the blast, terming the act of targeting innocents in the mosque, as a heinous crime. "Terrorists are the enemies of the country, nation and humanity, the president added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the relevant authorities to provide all possible medical care to the injured. Such cowardly and reprehensible acts of terrorism cannot weaken our resolve against terrorism, the prime minister said, expressing the determination to completely eliminate all forms of terrorism from the country. He also summoned a report regarding the blast.

## 2 new polio cases detected

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH) has confirmed the detection of two new wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) cases.

The lab confirmed one case each from District Kambar in Sindh and District Mandi Bahauddin in Punjab. This is the third polio case from Sindh and the first from Punjab this year, bringing the total number of cases in the country to five.

Last year in 2024, a total of 74 cases were reported. Of these, 27 were from Balochistan, 23 from Sindh, 22 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and one each from Punjab and Islamabad. Polio is a paralyzing disease that has no cure. Multiple doses of the oral polio vaccine and completion of the routine vaccination schedule for all children under the age of five is essential to provide children high immunity against this terrible disease.

The Polio Programme is implementing a rigorous vaccination schedule to protect children from paralytic polio and interrupt virus transmission. The first nationwide polio campaign of 2025 reached over 45 million children with the vaccine earlier this month, while a fIPV-OPV campaign is underway in Karachi and Quetta Division to vaccinate nearly one million children with the injectable and oral polio vaccines for an added immunity boost.

This campaign is aligned with the big catch-up also being implemented nationwide by the Expanded Programme on Immunization to immunize missed or under-vaccinated children against 12 preventable childhood diseases. A targeted vaccination activity in 104 union councils bordering Afghanistan or having Afghan refugee camps and populations is also in progress (February 24-28) to vaccinate over 0.66 million children, to reduce the risk of cross-border and internal poliovirus transmission. The Polio Programme urged all parents to get their children vaccinated against polio at every opportunity to keep them protected from this devastating disease.

## KP cabinet reviews one year performance

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet on Friday reiterated to unanimously work for the economic transformation and prosperity of the Province by implementing mega projects in each and every sphere of life.

The resolve was reiterated in the 26th meeting of the cabinet held here under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur wherein the one year performance and achievements of the Provincial Government were reviewed. The achievements have been compiled in a booklet based on real facts and figures encompassing 625 achievements in 25 key sectors.

The meeting was attended by cabinet members, Chief Secretary, Inspector General of Police, Additional Chief Secretaries, Senior Member Board of Revenue, Advocate General and Administrative Secretaries. The Chief Minister appreciated the exemplary performance of the cabinet and departments and said that all this was accomplished despite facing enormous challenges. It is our good performance that speaks louder than the words, he remarked. He emphasized for team work to further improve the performance and achieve the targets

fixed for the uplift of the province.

It was informed that during the last 25 cabinet meetings held during the last one year as many as 661 decisions were made, out of which 610 had already been implemented with 92% success rate. The meeting also took stock of achievements and public finance management, service delivery and infrastructure, public excess to services and information, engagement of citizens and transparency, social protection and inclusion, economic growth and job creation, education and human capital development, tourism and cultural heritage promotion, and particularly health facilities to each and every citizens of the province without any discrimination.

At the outset of the meeting, the cabinet condemned the suicide attack on Darul Uloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak and offered Fatiha for the departed souls and prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured ones. The Cabinet approved special compensation of Rs. one million per person for the legal heirs of 16 deceased individuals from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who lost their lives in a boat incident in Libya.

The cabinet accorded approval in principle for arranging Iftar meals in the shelter homes the province over. The Cabinet approved

establishment of 12 Permanent intra-provincial and Inter-Provincial Joint Check Posts (IJCPs) for Anti-Smuggling. This CPs will be established at Khyber, Malakand, South Waziristan, Nowshera, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, D.I.Khan and Peshawar. Anti-Smuggling being the federal subject as per Article-97 of the Constitution and Federal Board of Revenue/Customs is the leading agency/department dealing with anti-smuggling measures, whereas the Provincial Government is providing assistance to the Federal Government. It was therefore, the Provincial Cabinet approved forwarding of request to Federal Government for arrangement of funds Rs. 3.11536 billion for this purpose.

The Cabinet approved release of Rs. 10 million as annual Grant-in-Aid for Hamza Foundation during the current financial year. It was also directed to check if such services could be included in the sehat card scheme so that such entities get rid of making such requests every year. The Cabinet also approved enhancement of cost of the ADP project for 06 Type-D Hospitals in the Merged Districts through Health Foundation (AIP) and operationalizing such two other hospitals by the Health Department itself.





# Sindh set to officially take over Green and Orange Line BRT on March 10

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government will officially take control of the Green Line and Orange Line BRT on March 10, 2025.

The Sindh Mass Transit Authority Board has approved taking over the control of the Green Line and Orange Line BRT. The 14th meeting of the Sindh Mass Transit Authority Board was chaired by Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon.

The meeting was attended by Sukkur Mayor Arsalan Islam Sheikh, Hyderabad Mayor Kashif Shoro, Transport Secretary Asad Zamin, Managing Director of SMTA Kamal Dayo, Member of Planning and Development Sikandar Sheikh, DIG Traffic Pir Muhammad Shah, consultants, and other key stakeholders.

Experts participating in the meeting presented their suggestions for the effective management of the Green Line and Orange Line BRT. Discussions



were held on sending the documents related to the Green Line and Orange Line BRT agreements to the Law Department for legal validation. It was also approved to retain the existing human resource structure of the Green Line and Orange Line BRT for three months.

During the meeting,

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Sindh government is committed to providing modern and high-quality travel facilities to the public. The transfer of the Green Line and Orange Line BRT will further improve the public transport system. The Sindh government will work on further develop-

ing the Green Line and Orange Line BRTs. He further added that to provide fast, comfortable, and excellent travel facilities to the public, more reforms are being introduced in the transport sector. The Sindh government will utilize all necessary resources to make this system more stable and effective.

## Contractor arrested for overcharging worshipers at Faisal Mosque

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration arrested a contractor responsible for managing shoe storage outside Faisal Mosque for allegedly overcharging worshipers during Friday prayers.

The action was taken by Assistant Commissioner Industrial Area Farwa Batool, marking a swift response to public complaints, said the spokesman of ICT administration here.

During the busy Friday prayers at Faisal Mosque, worshipers reported being charged extra fees for shoe storage by the contractor managing the service. This led to widespread dissatisfaction among the public, prompting immediate action from the district administration. Assistant Commissioner Industrial Area Farwa Batool intervened, ensuring the contractor was apprehended and the issue addressed.

The incident highlights the challenges faced by citizens during peak prayer times, where essential services like shoe storage become crucial. Overcharging not only disrupts the experience of worshipers but also undermines trust in service providers. The arrest serves as a reminder that such practices will not be tolerated, and authorities are committed to protecting public interests. This swift action by the administration reflects a broader effort to maintain order and fairness in public spaces, especially during religious gatherings. It also underscores the importance of accountability for those entrusted with providing essential services to the community.

## Minister orders for developing new parking sites in city

LAHORE (APP): A meeting chaired by Punjab Local Government Minister Zeeshan Rafiq reviewed matters related to Lahore Parking Company on Friday and ordered for developing new parking sites in the city.

Lahore Parking Company Chief Executive Officer Naveed-ul-Islam Virk briefed the minister about various ongoing and future development plans. The minister sought suggestions on outsourcing of on-road parking, and ordered for regularising private parking matters. He ordered for making the mechanism more effective for preventing overcharging in terms of parking fees. He said that Lahore Parking Company had the potential to collect revenue. "I am happy to know that Lahore Parking Company has increased its revenue through its measures," he said.

The parking company CEO said strict action was being taken against overcharging at parking sites. After the warning, FIRs were also registered. He assured that as per the instructions of the provincial minister, a survey for the preparation of new parking sites will be started soon.

## Railways new reservation timing

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Railways administration has announced revised working hours for reservation offices across the country during the holy month of Ramadan.

According to a notification issued on Friday, the morning shift will operate from 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM, while the evening shift will function from 12:30 PM to 5:30 PM.

Additionally, on Fridays, there will be a break for Juma prayers from 12:30 PM to 2:00 PM.

However, reservation offices that operate on a single shift will continue with their existing working hours. The new timings will remain in effect until the 15th of Ramadan, after which all reservation offices will revert to their previous schedules.

This adjustment aims to facilitate passengers and staff during the fasting month, ensuring smooth operations while accommodating Ramadan routines.

# Governor KP, Punjab discuss inter-provincial activities

## LAHORE

(APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Friday met with Governor Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, at the Governor House Lahore.

During the meeting, both leaders discussed party organizational matters, political activities, and various issues of mutual interest. They also deliberated on inter-provincial harmony and the overall political situation in the country.

The two governors agreed to strengthen relations between the federation and the provinces and to enhance cooperation on public welfare projects.

Governor Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, emphasized that inter-provincial harmony is essential for national progress.

Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, stressed the need for all provinces to work together to address public issues effectively.

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agreed to strengthen relations between the federation and the provinces and to enhance cooperation on public welfare projects.

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Faisal Karim Kundi, visited the shrine of the renowned Sufi saint, Hazrat Data Darbar. During his visit, the Governor laid a floral wreath at the shrine and offered special prayers for the country's progress, peace, and stability, particularly for the restoration of peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He also participated in the distribution of langar (free meals) among devotees, continuing the tradition of serving the community.



KARACHI: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Ameer Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman addressing a press conference. —INP Photo

# Türkiye consul general calls on Punjab LG minister

LAHORE (APP): Consul General of the Republic of Türkiye Durmus Bastug called on Minister for Local Government Punjab Zeeshan Rafiq at his office, here on Friday.

According to a press release, Secretary Local Government Shakeel Ahmed Mian was also present. During the meeting, bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest were discussed. The provincial

minister mentioned the recent visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Pakistan and said that the history of friendship between the two countries spans decades. "Türkiye has supported Pakistan in difficult times," he remarked.

Zeeshan Rafiq told the Turkish consul general that the Punjab government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam

Nawaz, completed several public welfare projects in a short period of time. "All possible facilities are being provided to Turkish investors in Punjab," he added.

The consul general thanked the provincial minister for the meeting and assured that the Turkish government would continue its cooperation with Pakistan, particularly the Punjab government.

# Ipsos Pakistan reports improved consumer confidence

ISLAMABAD (Online): Ipsos in Pakistan unveiled its latest Consumer Confidence Index Survey on Friday at a press conference held at Movenpick Hotel, Islamabad. This special edition marks the completion of one year of the current government and presents valuable insights into how Pakistanis perceive the country's economic direction and their own financial well-was.

Abdul Sattar Babar, CEO and Managing Director of Ipsos in Pakistan, presented the findings to an audience comprising senior journalists, economists, academicians, and representatives from the public & private sector. The data reveals an improvement across all key indicators of consumer confidence — including country direction, economic conditions, household purchasing comfort, and

investment confidence — compared to the previous year.

Some indicators even recorded their highest-ever positivity levels since Ipsos started tracking consumer confidence in Pakistan. However, the results also highlight that consumer sentiment remains largely negative, indicating persistent concerns regarding the economy and governance.

Babar emphasized that despite visible improvements, the majority still perceives the economy, job security, and overall country direction as weak. This underscores the need for a well-coordinated and sustained policy effort to build public confidence. He also compared Pakistan's performance with similar countries like Türkiye, Brazil, and South Africa, as well as neighbouring countries like India and China, noting that while Pakistan continues to lag significant-

ly behind India and China in consumer confidence levels, it has maintained a position above Türkiye — reflecting the structural economic and governance challenges requiring long-term attention.

The study was conducted independently by Ipsos, without any external partners or sponsors, ensuring complete objectivity and neutrality in its findings, with the intention to share the understanding about the world we live in and how citizens around the globe think & feel about their world.

The event concluded with an interactive discussion and Q&A session, where participants emphasized the importance of creating policy stability, promoting private sector growth, and enhancing economic transparency to further boost consumer confidence in Pakistan.

# FIA busts human-trafficking network, arrests 7 suspects

LAHORE (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala Zone has arrested seven human traffickers, including wanted criminals, in a major crackdown on human smugglers as well as visa fraud in the raids conducted in Wazirabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Gujrat, and Gujranwala.

A spokesperson for the FIA said, the arrested suspects had been identified as Muhammad Irfan, Shaukat Ali, Umar Sultan, Awn Irtaza, Riyasat Ali, Ali Hassan and Muhammad Asghar. They were involved in fraudulently promising foreign employment and extorting millions from citizens. The accused col-

lected large sums of money by offering fake job opportunities in Oman, Albania, Cyprus, Italy and Dubai. One of the suspects, Asghar allegedly took Rs 2.6 million from a citizen, promising a job in Italy. He attempted to send the victim via a dangerous sea route, but he refused and returned to Pakistan.

<b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b> Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Muhammad Shah with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Nader Khan citizen number 1730115724735 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs: 1.Arnab (Daughter)2.Helena (Daughter)3.Aza Bibi (Daughter)4.Basmina (Daughter)5.Muhammad (Spouse)6.Faraz Shah (Son)7.Muhammad Shah (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA RING ROAD-DSFU	<b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b> Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Inayat Ur Rehman with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Shams Ull Arifan citizen number 15350306492005 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs: 1.Bibi Mumtaz (Daughter)2.Shamim Akhtar (Daughter)3.Naveed Bibi (Daughter)4.Aysha Bashir (Daughter)5.Naseem (Son)6.Naseem (Son)7.Naseem (Son)8.Naseem (Son)9.Naseem (Son)10.Naseem (Son)11.Naseem (Son)12.Naseem (Son)13.Naseem (Son)14.Naseem (Son)15.Naseem (Son)16.Naseem (Son)17.Naseem (Son)18.Naseem (Son)19.Naseem (Son)20.Naseem (Son)21.Naseem (Son)22.Naseem (Son)23.Naseem (Son)24.Naseem (Son)25.Naseem (Son)26.Naseem (Son)27.Naseem (Son)28.Naseem (Son)29.Naseem (Son)30.Naseem (Son)31.Naseem (Son)32.Naseem (Son)33.Naseem (Son)34.Naseem (Son)35.Naseem (Son)36.Naseem (Son)37.Naseem (Son)38.Naseem (Son)39.Naseem (Son)40.Naseem (Son)41.Naseem (Son)42.Naseem (Son)43.Naseem (Son)44.Naseem (Son)45.Naseem (Son)46.Naseem (Son)47.Naseem (Son)48.Naseem (Son)49.Naseem (Son)50.Naseem (Son)51.Naseem (Son)52.Naseem (Son)53.Naseem (Son)54.Naseem (Son)55.Naseem (Son)56.Naseem (Son)57.Naseem (Son)58.Naseem (Son)59.Naseem (Son)60.Naseem (Son)61.Naseem (Son)62.Naseem 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PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah chairing inaugural Secretaries Committee meeting.

## CBP to launch second phase major operation against encroachments

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: After the successful operation against temporary encroachments started on Feb.19, the Cantonment Board Peshawar has now launched the second phase against permanent encroachments. This operation has been launched to remove permanent encroachments including illegal structures and obstacle on the lands, roads and streets of Peshawar Cantt to provide better facilities to the citizens. This will not only improve the beauty and cleanliness of the city but also significantly improve traffic management, as the removal of encroachments will enable the restoration of right of way, public roads and public spaces to be used for their original purpose again. This operation has been launched following the instructions of the Director General Military Lands and Cantonments Department (DGML&C) and its daily monitoring is

being done by the CEO Cantonment Board Peshawar himself. CEO Chaudhry Babar Hussain, while discussing the importance of this operation, said, "Cantonment Board Peshawar has always taken steps to improve the convenience and living standards of its citizens, and the aim of this operation is to provide better facilities to the citizens. Through this operation, CBP will remove all types of illegal encroachments within the boundaries of the cantonment so that the public can get a safe, clean and well-maintained environment." He further said, "No one will be allowed to encroach on public places in the cantonment. This operation is very important for the restoration of public roads and the improvement of the traffic system. We will ensure that no public place, road or path can be illegally occupied by any individual."

In this regard, a prelim-

inary ground survey is also underway in different areas of Peshawar Cantt and important areas like Saddar Bazaar, Shubha Bazaar, Khyber Bazaar, Bara Road and Warsak Road are being surveyed for identification of encroachments. The survey team also includes surveyors from the Cantonment Board, Lands Branch officials and representatives from Building Control, who will identify the encroachments while the enforcement team will take immediate steps to remove them. According to the spokesperson of the Cantonment Board Peshawar, the encroachers in the markets have already been informed through notices, announcements and banners so that no one complains during this operation. The encroachers have been given a fair opportunity to remove the encroachments voluntarily, but if they do not do so, strict action will be taken against them under the

operation.

The operation is conducted in coordination and supported by the local police, officials of Lands Branch, building control and Traffic Police, and in addition, heavy machinery will also be used to make the process of removing the encroachments faster and more effective. The Cantonment Executive Officer said, "We will make this operation successful by using all possible resources and our operation against encroachments will continue without discrimination." In the first phase, with the operation against temporary encroachments, action will now be taken against permanent encroachments in the second phase. Through this operation, not only the cleanliness and development of the cantt will be ensured but also a better, safe and clean environment will be provided to the citizens in which public places and roads will also remain open and uncontroversial.

## EUTA oath taking held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The oath-taking ceremony of the Engineering University Teachers Association (EUTA) was held here today. The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali, administered the oath to the newly elected office bearers, including Prof. Dr. Feroz Shah as President, Prof. Dr. Zahid Wadood Mufti as Vice President, Dr. Atif Sardar as General Secretary, Dr. Rehan Ali Shah as Joint Secretary, and Dr. M. Amir as Finance Secretary. The executive body also took the oath in the presence of Senior Dean, Prof. Dr. Rizwan Gul, heads of departments and senior faculty members.

The Vice Chancellor emphasized the importance of strengthening EUTA and using the platform to address faculty issues. He highlighted the need for unity and collective efforts to resolve challenges faced by the university, encouraging members to work with dedication for the betterment of society and to seek eternal rewards in the hereafter. Prof. Dr. Feroz Shah expressed full confidence in the Vice Chancellor's leadership. He requested the Vice Chancellor to resolve the issue of long-pending selection board and address faculty concerns related to time-scale promotions and hardship cases for those meeting the criteria defined by the Higher Education Commission (HEC).

## Prof. Dr. Zia assumes additional charge as VC ICU

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Professor Dr. Zia ul Haq, Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, has officially taken on the additional responsibilities as Vice Chancellor of Islamia College University, Peshawar. He assumed the additional charge in the presence of the university's Registrar, Daud Zahid, last day. According to the notification issued by the Higher Education Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Professor Dr. Zia Ul Haq has been entrusted with the additional charge of Islamia College University, Peshawar.

## The soaring prices of Ramadan: A betrayal of Islamic values

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

RAMADAN is approaching, and even before its arrival, the prices of essential food items have already begun to soar. This phenomenon has become an annual occurrence in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, where, instead of facilitating the people in this sacred month, market forces exploit the demand for profit. This stands in stark contrast to other Islamic countries, where governments and business communities work together to ensure that prices remain stable or even decrease in the spirit of Ramadan. Even Western nations, despite not being Muslim-majority, extend special discounts to accommodate their Muslim citizens, recognizing the importance of this Holy month. However, in Pakistan, the situation is completely reversed-rather than easing the financial burden, the cost of basic necessities doubles, making it increasingly difficult for ordinary people to afford the essentials required for Sehri and Iftar.

One may question whether boycotting these overpriced goods would resolve the crisis. While temporary boycotts can create momentary price fluctuations, they are not a long-term solution. The real problem lies deeper-within a system plagued by unchecked profiteering, weak regulation, and a lack of accountability. Shopkeepers often justify the rising prices by blaming wholesalers, who, in turn, claim that they are simply responding to market trends and supplier rates. This chain of excuses exposes a fundamental question: Who exactly is responsible? Is there no authority to regulate these behind-the-scenes forces driving inflation during Ramadan? When will this recurring issue be permanently resolved?

Islam provides a clear framework regarding fair trade and market ethics. The Holy Qur'an warns against deceit in business transactions: "Woe to those who give less [than due], who, when they take a measure from people, take in full. But if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss" (Surah Al-Mutaffifin 83:1-3). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also emphasized just dealings in trade, saying, "The merchants will be raised on the Day of Judgment as wicked except those who fear Allah, are honest, and speak the truth" (Tirmidhi). These teachings highlight that those who manipulate prices for personal gain, particularly during Ramadan, are engaging in a deeply unethical and un-Islamic practice. Islam not only discourages unfair pricing but also encourages honesty and compassion in business dealings, especially during times of religious significance.

If Islam is so explicit in condemning hoarding and price gouging, why does this practice persist in a country that claims to uphold Islamic principles? The failure to control artificial inflation during Ramadan is a collective moral and administrative failure. Administrative institutions responsible for price control either lack the enforcement capacity or are complicit in the problem. The business community, instead of embracing the spirit of generosity, sees the month as an opportunity for excessive profits. Consumers, though frustrated, often find themselves helpless, with no real alternatives.

This helplessness stems from several factors. First, there is a lack of stringent administrative oversight. Regulatory bodies often issue price control lists, but they remain ineffective due to poor enforcement and the influence of powerful business cartels. Second, the absence of consumer awareness and collective action allows this exploitation to continue. In countries where consumer rights are protected, price hikes of this nature would trigger investigations and penalties. However, in Pakistan, the common citizen rarely has the platform or resources to challenge such exploitation effectively. Additionally, the lack of coordination between government agencies, local administration, and market regulators creates loopholes that profiteers exploit without consequence.

The solution lies in a multi-pronged approach. The administration must strengthen price control mechanisms and impose strict penalties on those who artificially inflate prices. Strict action should be taken against hoarders who withhold goods to create scarcity and drive up prices. At the same time, society must demand accountability, using consumer pressure and boycotts selectively against those businesses that engage in unethical practices. The role of religious leaders is also crucial; they should actively educate traders about their moral obligations in light of Islamic teachings and emphasize that exploiting consumers in Ramadan is not just an economic crime but a grave sin.

In addition, fostering a culture of corporate social responsibility is necessary. Businesses should be encouraged to adopt ethical pricing models and provide discounts during Ramadan rather than seeking excessive profits. The media can also play a pivotal role in exposing unjust market practices and pressuring policymakers to implement necessary reforms. Furthermore, Islamic banking and financial institutions can introduce interest-free micro-financing options to support small traders who struggle with high supplier costs, thereby reducing the need for excessive price hikes.

If Islamic values were truly upheld, the arrival of Ramadan in Pakistan would bring relief to the people rather than financial distress. Until there is a sincere effort to align economic practices with the ethical teachings of Islam, the cycle of price hikes and helplessness will continue. The question remains: When will we, as a society, rise above individual greed and embrace the true essence of Ramadan-a month of mercy, generosity, and communal well-being? Only through collective responsibility, strong governance, and adherence to Islamic principles can we hope to break free from this cycle of exploitation and create a just and equitable society for all.

## Poor cleanliness situation in Gulbahar Bilal Javid wants action from City administration

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Senior trader leader and social activist Ghulam Bilal Javid has expressed strong concern over the poor cleanliness situation in Gulbahar, a key commercial and residential area of Peshawar, and has urged the administration to take immediate action. He stated that the large garbage drum placed at Gulbahar's entrance is not only spreading foul odor and filth but also ruining the beauty of the area.

He pointed out that while the administration makes claims about keeping the city clean, the reality is quite the opposite. Despite heavy traffic congestion and a severe parking crisis, no serious effort has been made to remove this garbage drum. If it is relocated, at least three to four vehicles could be parked there, which would significantly improve traffic flow.

Ghulam Bilal Javid demanded that the government and relevant authorities immediately relocate the garbage drum to a suitable location and restore the area to



its original state. He further stated that if the administration resolves this issue, he will personally take the initiative and use his own resources to beautify the surrounding wall so that visitors entering Gulbahar are welcomed by a pleasant sight. "Peshawar was once the City of Flowers, but poor management has turned it into a city of garbage heaps. If we do not take action to improve our city, no one else will. Cleanliness is half of faith, and it is our duty to keep our surroundings clean."

He also appealed to the citizens to recognize their responsibility and press the administration to improve the poor waste management system so that Peshawar's true beauty can be restored.



PESHAWAR: IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Zulfiqar Hameed called on Advisor to the Chief Minister on Finance, Muzammil Aslam.

## Pakistan faces severe environmental challenges

### Urgent actions needed to protect glaciers: experts urge

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Experts from various sectors, including environment, policymaking, academia, and civil society, gathered to discuss Pakistan's environmental responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities. Speaking at a crucial workshop organized by Alternate Development Services (ADS), ADS Chief Executive Amjad Nazeer, and Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), Ubaid Ullah Chaudhry stressed that Pakistan must ensure a strong provincial response and the provision of financial resources to fulfill its international environmental commitments. Nazeer highlighted the importance of addressing political challenges hinder-

ing the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) 3.0, emphasizing the need for collaborative consultation to find practical solutions. This workshop focused particularly on climate change challenges in Pakistan, with special attention to the situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in the context of the Paris Climate Agreement. Policymakers, environmental experts, academics, and representatives from civil society actively participated in the event. Notable speakers included Assistant Chief of Environment at the Planning and Development Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ozair Rahim; IM Sciences Professor Muska Mukhtiar; and Dr. Zeeshan Shafiq from the National



Centre of Artificial Intelligence, and Centre for Intelligent System and Networks Research (CISNR), among others. The primary objective of the workshop was to review the challenges and opportunities related to Pakistan's environmental responsibilities under the Paris Climate Agreement. Participants were briefed on the significance of

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as a core component of the Paris Agreement, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and aligning global efforts to mitigate climate impacts.

It was noted that Pakistan had already submitted its second NDC in 2021 and is now preparing to submit its third NDC by mid-2025. The event high-

lighted the transition process from NDC 2.0 to NDC 3.0, identifying key gaps, opportunities, and the importance of an effective implementation framework. Participants also discussed strategies to enhance coordination between federal and provincial governments. Ozair Rahim underlined the importance of data-driven policymaking and

the critical role of provincial governments in addressing governance gaps. ADS Chief Executive Amjad Nazeer introduced the concept of NDCs, elaborated on environmental challenges and opportunities, and reiterated the urgent need for a strong provincial response and adequate financial support to meet Pakistan's international commit-

ments. Project Manager from CPDI, Ubaid Ullah Chaudhry, highlighted political hurdles obstructing the implementation of NDC 3.0 and stressed the need for realistic environmental strategies considering the country's limited financial resources. Experts unanimously agreed on the importance of a robust environmental action plan supported by financial resources, with seamless cooperation between federal and provincial governments. They also highlighted issues such as policy discontinuity, weak implementation mechanisms, and the crucial role of fostering public-private partnerships to accelerate progress towards environmental goals. Recommendations were

also made for technology-driven initiatives to enhance climate resilience. Discussions covered lessons learned from previous NDCs, the role of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's government institutions, the participation of civil society, academia, and the private sector, and the need for a joint environmental action plan focusing on challenges like glacier protection. While acknowledging Pakistan's financial constraints, experts emphasized the nation's commitment to protecting its ecosystems and biodiversity. They called for data-driven decision-making, increased funding for climate-resilient projects, and effective global representation to unlock climate financing opportunities.





## In brief

### Blood donation camp held F.P. Report

BUNER: A blood donation camp organized in which District Police Officer and Deputy Commissioner donated blood for patients especially children suffering from thalassemia. The camp held at Police Line Daggar where besides DC and DPO other police officers and personnel also donated blood in large numbers. Before donating blood, screening and medical tests were done on all individuals to ensure that healthy and disease-free blood was provided. The DC and DPO have appealed to the people of Buner, especially the youth, to play a role in saving the lives of Thalassemia-affected patients especially children by donating blood.

### Housing society embezzlements F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: According to the details, Mian Abbas Chief Executive of Little Paradise Private Housing Society, talking to the media said that I have built a private colony of about 6 acres in Gojra Road Toba Tek Singh for three years. In which the District Council Toba Tek Singh file was submitted to get NOC for commercial market and the fee was also deposited in the bank. But I have not been issued the NOC by the district council yet. He further said that when I approached the district council for the NOC, the District Planning Officer (DOP) Hafiz Shoaib asked for 500,000 Rupees as a bribe to issue the NOC and said that we will not issue the NOC to you unless you pay us 500,000 rupees. So I had to pay a bribe of 500,000 rupees to District Officer Planning Hafiz Shoaib to get the NOC. Mian Abbas said that despite taking a bribe of 500,000 rupees, NOC has not been issued to me yet, but District Officer Planning Hafiz Shoaib caused me a loss of lakhs of rupees by vandalizing the roads of my colony. Mian Abbas said that I contacted the District Council and they said that the NOC of your colony was not done due to which we had to take action against your colony. Mian Abbas told District Officer Planning Hafiz Shoaib that you had taken a bribe of 500,000 rupees from me to issue NOC to me.

### Uniform bank at govt schools F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In order to provide free of cost uniform to children of poor and less resource people, uniform banks are being setup at all school in the district. This was stated by the Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Muhammad Akram Ashraf while inaugurating uniform bank at Government Girls High School Rasulpur Tarar. Assistant Director Education Amjid Ali Bhatti, Headmistress and other teachers of the school were also present on this occasion. CEO Education said that objective of establishment of uniform banks at schools is provision of uniform to deserving and poor students so that no child could be left out of school due to lack of financial resources. He said that that uniform banks were being established with financial assistance of school staff and philanthropist while uniforms were being provided to student with dignity and respect. He said that uniform banks not only would be proved helpful to provide equal opportunities to children of poor family to continue their study without any financial obstacle but also to achieve target of hundred percent enrolment of children in the schools under the education friendly vision of the Chief Minister, Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif.



ABBOTTABAD: Senior Judge, Muhammad Faheem Wali inaugurating Bar Room for female lawyers.

## KKKU hosts seminar on integrating AI

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University (KKKU) Karak, organized a one-day seminar with the theme of "AI and Climate Change: Integrating AI to Fight Climate Change." The event, held under the Prime Minister's Green Youth Movement initiative, drew enthusiastic participation from students and faculty members.

The seminar aimed to highlight the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in addressing the pressing challenges posed by climate change. Esteemed speakers and experts shared insights on how AI can be leveraged to develop innovative solutions for environmental sustainability.

Dr. Fasih Ur Rehman, Director of Academic and Research at KKKU, delivered the welcome address, emphasizing the university's commitment to fostering research and initiatives focused on environmental protection and sustainable development.



The keynote speaker, Dr. Muhammad Zubair, Director of the Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC), delivered an insightful presentation on the practical applications of AI in climate change mitigation and adaptation. He elaborated on how AI-driven technologies can be utilized for tasks such as monitoring environmental changes, predicting weather patterns, optimizing resource management, and developing sustainable energy solutions.

Dr. Shad Muhammad, Focal Person of the Green Youth Movement at KKKU, delivered a heartfelt thank you speech, expressing gratitude to the

speakers, organizers, and participants for their contributions to the seminar's success. He reiterated the importance of youth involvement in combating climate change and praised the Green Youth Movement for its active role in promoting environmental awareness.

The Registrar of KKKU, Dr. Ghani Ur Rehman, graced the occasion with his presence and appreciated the efforts of the organizers. He assured the university's full support for such initiatives, emphasizing the institution's commitment to promoting research and activities that contribute to the sustainable development of the region and the country.

## Admn holds kuli katcheries in Lachi F.P. Report

KOHAT: The District Administration Kohat held separate Kuli Katcheries in Shakardara and Sodal areas of Tehsil Lachi, Kohat District. The Katcheries besides Shehryar Afridi MNA, Daud Shah Afridi MPA, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, Tehsil Mayor Lachi Ehsan Khan, officers of the district administration, police and line departments, was also attended by the elders of the area and common people in large number.

Addressing on the occasion, Shehryar Afridi, Daud Shah Afridi and Abdul Akram said that it is the mission of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to resolve the problems of the people at their doorsteps and these Katcheries will not be restricted just to sitting but will be fruitful.

The problems of the participants were related to the sectors such as water, gas, electricity, shortage of staff in schools and hospitals, drinking water, roads and irrigation.

The speakers said that Kuli Katcheries would significantly reduce public complaints and most of the common problems of the people would be resolved at the local level. They assured that the important issues of the area would be raised with the high-ups at the relevant forum, which would definitely yield positive results. They added that the collective issues of the area would be resolved on priority basis.

They declared that the decisions taken here would be implemented in latter and spirit and action would be taken against those who did not implement within the given deadline. The elders of area welcomed the holding of Kuli Katcheries and stressed the need for its continuation and thanked the Deputy Commissioner Kohat and the members of the assembly.

## Patwaris elects new cabinet F.P. Report

MARDAN: Elections of Anjuman Patwariyan and Qanon Goyan Mardan have been completed, Sikandar Khan has been elected president with a huge majority while Adnan Ali has been elected as General Secretary, supporters of the association.

According to the details of the Anjuman Patwariyan and Qanon Guyan Mardan elections conducted under the supervision of Chief Election Commissioner Jannat Gul Gurdawar, Senior Vice President Khalid Iqbal and Fahad Ali, according to the final result, Sikandar Khan was elected president for the second time for the next three years with an overwhelming majority of 86 votes.

**Traders to cooperate with govt:** Provincial General Secretary of the Central Organization of Traders said that the traders are always ready for all possible cooperation to solve the problems faced by the traders community and there will be no compromise on the interests of the traders.

# Seminar on leadership held at GIK Institute

F.P. Report

SWABI: The Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology (GIK) hosted an insightful seminar on leadership, in its School of Management Sciences.

Adil Khattak, Member of the Board of Governors, GIK Institute, was the keynote speaker. The event, held at GIK Campus, was participated by a large number of faculty members and students from the School of Management Sciences (SMGS), Computer Science and Engineering Disciplines of the Institute, says a press release.

The event started with a welcome note by Professor Zaidi, Acting Rector GIK Institute. At the outset he expressed GIK Institute's profound gratitude for the Chief Guest for sparing time out of his busy schedule and spoke to the students and faculty on the subject. He urged the students to pay full attention to the talk owing to its profound importance.

He explained the background, attributes and qualities of the leadership along with the importance of emotional intelligence as essential requirement of running the successful organizations. He referred to the important role played by the global leadership in transforming their organizations and by following the best management practices and use of their leadership role insight and experience which they gained during their corporate leadership life.

He also referred to the role models and the challenges which they faced in running the organizations in the present era characterized by competitive landscape. He advised the students to learn the art of creating organizational culture and environment suitable for the area in which they will serve after passing out from an educa-

tional institution like GIK Institute which is famous for imparting quality education to the students enrolled on basis of merit and their character building during their stay in the Institute.

Khattak urged students to cultivate leadership skills by committing to continuous self-improvement, embracing challenges, and proactively seeking opportunities to take initiative. He emphasized that hard work, perseverance, and the ability to lead with vision, integrity, and adaptability are essential qualities for those aspiring to become successful leaders in their respective fields.

The event served as an inspirational learning experience for students and faculty, reinforcing GIKI's commitment to holistic education, leadership development, and industry-academia collaboration. By hosting such impactful sessions, the Institute continues to provide students with valuable insights from industry and other leaders, so as to prepare them to take on successfully leadership roles in their respective fields and rise in the corporate world.

Prof. Dr. Syed Muhammad Hasan Zaidi, acting Rector GIK Institute presented him the shield of the Institute and expressed deep appreciation for giving the students an opportunity to share such an inspiring learning environment. The seminar concluded with a lively interactive Q&A session, during which students actively participated in a stimulating discussion on leadership in corporate environments, emerging industry trends, and effective management strategies. Their enthusiasm reflected a strong desire to explore the changing dynamics of leadership in today's rapidly evolving world, particularly within industries driven by technological innovation and digital transformation.

## Dir elders pledge joint efforts to uphold peace

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Elders from Badwan, Khadagzai, Mian Brangola, Talash, and Dushkhel reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace in their areas during a grand jirga held at Government High School Brangola here the other day. The Lower Dir former district naib nazim Abdur Rashid chaired the event.

The gathering, attended by over 200 elders from various union councils, emphasized collective efforts to safeguard stability and peace in the area.

Representatives from the Qaumi Islahi Jirga Talash Dushkhel, Talash Youth Jirga, and Adenzai Qaumi Jirga, along with prominent elders from Badwan, Khadagzai and Brangola, including Malik Muhammad Ibrahim, retired Principal Aftab Alam, Youth leader Muhammad Raziq, Abdur Rashid, Jehana Bahadar, and Ashfaq ur Rehman addressed the meeting.

Participants expressed concerns over reports of suspicious individuals allegedly present in the Shin Kamar Barcharai and Manai forest areas, which border Talash and Khadagzai in Adenzai. In a unanimous declaration, the jirga categorically stated that neither militancy nor military operations would be tolerated in the area.

The elders urged the government and relevant state institutions to take swift and decisive action against any militant presence. They also pledged

that local communities would not allow external elements to disrupt peace.

Additionally, the jirga warned that any individuals found facilitating militants or engaging in subversive activities would face action from local elders. To further strengthen law and order, the assembly

courses. The ceremony was attended by military and civil officials, along with a large number of parents and local residents, who appreciated the students' extracurricular performances.

In their speeches, Lieutenant Colonel Nasir Iqbal, former MPA and



announced the formation of a separate jirga for Badwan, Khadagzai, and Brangola—similar to the one established in Talash—to combat street crimes and uphold peace in the region.

**Youth role:** Wing Commander, 185 Wing Dir Scouts, Lieutenant Colonel Nasir Iqbal, emphasized that the nation's hopes rest on the younger generation, who can play a vital role in national development through the acquisition of technical skills.

He expressed these views while addressing the annual awards ceremony organized by Maidan Computer Academy & Technical College as the chief guest here the other day. During the event, certificates were awarded to 80 students who successfully completed their training

Chairman of Maidan Action Committee Haji Saeed Gul, and the institution's Managing Director Akhunnada Hafeezullah, among other speakers, stressed that keeping pace with the modern era is only possible through technical education. They urged the younger generation to use modern media for research purposes and highlighted that skilled individuals are never unemployed compared to those with conventional education.

Lieutenant Colonel Nasir Iqbal also noted that girls are progressing in all fields, which is a positive sign and a symbol of national advancement. He urged the youth to make the most of their time to contribute to the country's development.

## Maryam Nawaz health clinics inaugurated

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Chairperson Chief Minister's Directorate of Inspection, Surveillance, and Monitoring, Brig (R) Babar Ala u Din, inaugurated Maryam Nawaz Health Clinics in Nia Lahore and Chak No. 321.

Accompanied by PML-N leaders Ch Khalid Javid Warraich, Uqba Ali Warraich and Ch Muhammad Haris Amjad, he emphasized the Punjab government's commitment to revolutionizing healthcare under CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif's leadership.

Officials, including AC Gojra Rana Kamran Ashraf, AC Toba Ali Sameer, CEO Health Dr. Kashif Mehmood Kamboh and DM (PHFMC) Muhammad Asif Rasheed attended the ceremonies. The clinics will provide free medicines, ultrasound, ECG, X-ray and other diagnostic tests. Dr.

Kashif Mehmood Kamboh announced an increase in medical staff to ensure timely and quality treatment for rural patients.

Awareness session on early cotton sowing held: In line with Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's directives, an awareness campaign on early cotton sowing is underway across the district under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Naem Sandhu.

A session, led by Deputy Director Agriculture Dr. Nosher Ali Khan, was organized to educate farmers on the benefits of early cotton cultivation. Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Iqra Nasir also participated in the event, highlighting modern agricultural techniques and strategies to enhance yield.

**Pakistan wheat cultivation records at 31.8 million ton:** Pakistan is ranked among top six wheat-pro-

ducing countries of the world and it has attained record 31.8 million tons of wheat last year due to favorable weather, said Dr. Abid Mahmood Chairman Punjab Agriculture Research Board (PARB).

He was addressing the opening session of a two-day international conference on "Climate Challenges and Food Security" organized by the Wheat Research Department of Ayub Agricultural Research Institute (AARI) here on Tuesday.

He highlighted the achievements of AARI scientists and said that they have so far introduced 710 varieties of various crops including wheat, vegetables, fruits and fodder. He said that new high-yield varieties developed by AARI scientists are playing a pivotal role in enhancing agriculture productivity across the country.





GAZA: Freed Palestinian prisoners flash a peace sign in Khan Younis, after being released from an Israeli jail as part of phase one of the ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel.

## North Korea opened its doors to a group of international travelers

SEOUL (AP): A small group of foreign tourists has visited North Korea in the past week, making them the first international travelers to enter the country in five years except for a group of Russian tourists who went to the North last year. The latest trip indicates North Korea may be gearing up for a full resumption of its international tourism to bring in much-needed foreign currency to revive its struggling economy, experts say.

The Beijing-based travel company Koryo Tours said it arranged a five-day trip from Feb. 20 to Feb. 24 for 13 international tourists to the northeastern North Korean border city of Rason, where the country's special economic zone is located. Koryo Tours General Manager Simon Cockerell said the travelers from the U.K., Canada, Greece, New Zealand, France, Germany, Austria, Australia and Italy crossed by land from China. He said that in Rason, they visited factories, shops, schools and the statues of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, the late grandfather and father of current leader Kim Jong Un.

"Since January of 2020, the country has been closed to all international tourists, and we are glad to have finally found an opening in the Rason area, in the far north of North Korea," Cockerell said. "Our first tour has been and gone, and now more tourists on both group and private visits are

going in, arranging trips," he added.

After the pandemic began, North Korea quickly banned tourists, jetted out diplomats and severely curtailed border traffic in one of the world's most draconian COVID-19 restrictions. But since 2022, North Korea has been slowly easing curbs and reopening its borders. In February 2024, North Korea accepted about 100 Russian tourists, the first foreign nationals to visit the country for sightseeing. That surprised many observers, who thought the first post-pandemic tourists would come from China, North Korea's biggest trading partner and major ally.

A total of about 880 Russian tourists visited North Korea throughout 2024, South Korea's Unification Ministry said, citing official Russian data. Chinese group tours to North Korea remain stalled. This signals how much North Korea and Russia have moved closer to each other as the North has supplied weapons and troops to Russia to support its war against Ukraine. Ties between North Korea and China cooled as China showed its reluctance to join a three-way, anti-US alliance with North Korea and Russia, experts say.

Before the pandemic, tourism was an easy, legitimate source for foreign currency for North Korea, one of the world's most sanctioned countries because of its nuclear program. North

Korea is expected to open a massive tourism site on the east coast in June. In January when President Donald Trump boasted about his ties with Kim Jong Un, he said that "I think he has tremendous condo capabilities. He's got a lot of shoreline." That likely refers to the eastern coast site. A return of Chinese tourists would be key to making North Korea's tourism industry lucrative because they represented more than 90% of total international tourists before the pandemic, said Lee Sangkeun, an expert at the Institute for National Security Strategy, a think tank run by South Korea's intelligence agency. He said that in the past, up to 300,000 Chinese tourists visited North Korea annually.

"North Korea has been heavily investing on tourism sites, but there have been not much domestic demand," Lee said. "We can assess that North Korea now wants to resume international tourism to bring in many tourists from abroad." The restrictions that North Korea has typically imposed on foreign travelers - such as requirements that they move with local guides and the banning of photography at sensitive places - will likely hurt its efforts to develop tourism. Lee said that Rason, the eastern coast site and Pyongyang would be the places where North Korea feels it can easily monitor and control foreign tourists.

## 'We cannot agree to Ukraine's capitulation'

WARSAW (Reuters): European leaders must resist "capitulation" to Russia over Ukraine, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said, ahead of a virtual meeting of EU leaders to discuss the war following US President Donald Trump's overtures to Moscow. "We cannot agree to Ukraine's capitulation to Russia's, however we call it, impudent demands, including territorial ones," said Tusk in a video posted on X.

The members of the EU Council of national leaders will hear a debriefing from French President Emmanuel Macron on his visit this week to Washington, where he met Trump.

Macron and Trump displayed stark differences in their approach to Ukraine, exposing a divide between the United States and Europe over Trump's bid for a quick ceasefire deal with Russia.

"We all hope for a quick end to the war, and Europe wants to have the most unambiguous position possible," said Tusk. He added that while Poland would not send soldiers to a future peacekeeping mission in Ukraine, it was ready to provide any logistical assistance "even on a larger scale, if there is such a need".

## EU beat COVID and ditched Russian energy

BRUSSELS (AP): Over the last five years, European Union countries have been forced to adapt to unprecedented circumstances. They pulled together to purchase tens of millions of vaccines and devised an innovative debt financing scheme to resuscitate their COVID-19-ravaged economies.

After President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine three years ago, Russia restricted the flow of natural gas to weaken Western support for Kyiv. In response, the 27 EU nations weaned themselves off a dependency on Russian energy in record time. Now, they face the challenge of ending their reliance on the United States to provide security.

In recent weeks, senior Trump administration officials have made clear that US priorities lie elsewhere - in Asia and along America's southern border - and that Europe should take care of itself, including Ukraine.

"For me, the absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that we can really achieve independence from the US step by step," Friedrich Merz, the likely next chancellor of Germany, told broadcaster ZDF after winning election. "I never thought I would have to say such a thing on a television program," Merz said, admitting surprise at apparent American indifference to the fate of Europe.

Despite being sidelined from Ukraine peace talks, he and other EU leaders appear determined to adapt to the new security realities. But it's unclear whether they can drum up the military and financial resources, or muster the political will, to defend their interests. NATO believes allies should spend at least 2% of gross domestic product on their defense budgets. Two EU heavyweights, Italy and Spain, do not come close. Nor do Belgium, Croatia, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovenia. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte has said member countries probably should spend 3.5-3.7% to execute the alliance's plans for defending Europe. Russia, Rutte worries, could be capable of mounting an attack on a European country by the end of the decade.

Those defense plans include US participation. Without US forces, the Bruegel think tank in Brussels estimates, Europe could need 300,000 troops and an annual spending hike of at least 250 billion euros (\$262 billion) to deter Russia. Bruegel said stopping a Russian advance might require 1,400 tanks, 2,000 infantry fighting vehicles and 700 artillery pieces.

## Putin warns Europe against sabotaging US-Russia rapprochement

MOSCOW (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin warned "Western elites" against trying to sabotage a potential rapprochement between Russia and the United States, saying Moscow would use its diplomats and intelligence services to thwart such efforts.

Addressing Russia's FSB security service, the successor to the Soviet-era KGB and an agency he once led, Putin said he was pleased with the way an attempted reboot in ties between Moscow and Washington was progressing, even though it was early days.

"I note that the first contacts with the new American administration inspire certain hopes. There is a reciprocal mood to work to restore intergovernmental ties and to gradually resolve the huge number of systemic and strategic problems that have built up in the world's security architecture," said Putin. He went on to hail the fact that Russia's current "partners" were demonstrating what he called pragmatism and realism and - in an apparent reference to Joe Biden's administration - abandoning the "ideological cliches" of their predecessors which he said had caused a crisis in international relations.

But Putin said it was clear that not all countries were in favour of the idea of warmer ties between the world's two biggest nuclear powers. "We understand that not everyone is happy with the resumption of Russian-American contacts. Some Western elites are still determined to maintain instability in the world, and these forces will try to disrupt or compromise the dialogue that has begun," said Putin. "We need to be aware of this and use all possibilities when it comes to diplomacy and our intelligence services to disrupt such attempts."

He did not spell out who he had in mind. But his comments looked like a reference to the European Union and Britain, which have raised concerns about the prospect of any Russia-US talks to end the war in Ukraine that do not have Kyiv and the EU at the negotiating table and are too soft on Moscow. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who is due to hold talks with Trump in Washington, has said he would be ready to send British troops to Ukraine as part of any postwar peacekeeping force, something Moscow opposes. French President Emmanuel Macron has also spoken in favour of deploying troops. In other parts of his speech, Putin told FSB chiefs that cyber attacks against Russia were on the rise and that Moscow had to strengthen its counter-intelligence efforts.

He also called on the FSB to continue its work against "international terrorism" and to

put special effort into preventative measures when it came to protecting military, industrial, transport and energy infrastructure. Putin, who said he still hoped it would be possible to create what he called a more balanced European and global security system, said he believed that the West itself was now in the midst of a serious crisis. "You and I can see it," he told the FSB. "They have begun to destroy Western society itself from within. This is evidenced by the problems in the economies of many Western countries and in their domestic politics."

Meanwhile, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Moscow could not consider "any options" for European peacekeepers being sent to Ukraine and that the idea was aimed at fuelling the conflict and making it harder to de-escalate. French President Emmanuel Macron spoke in favour of the concept during talks with US President Donald Trump, saying troops could be deployed to ensure that any peace deal was respected. Trump said he accepted the idea and that Russian President Vladimir Putin did too, though the Kremlin later indicated that Russian opposition to it was unchanged. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who is due to hold talks with Trump, has said he would be ready to send British troops to Ukraine as part of any postwar peacekeeping force.

But Lavrov, who has previously called the proposal "unacceptable," set out Moscow's objections to any deployment in some of the strongest terms yet, removing any doubt about the matter after Trump's suggestion that Putin had come round to the idea. "We cannot consider any options" when it comes to European peacekeepers, he said during a visit to Qatar. "Trump said that a decision on the deployment of peacekeeping forces would only be possible with the consent of both sides. Apparently referring to us and Ukraine. Nobody has asked us about this," said Lavrov, who some Western diplomats nickname "Doctor No" because of his habit of frequently voicing Moscow's objections to various Western initiatives.

"This approach, which is being imposed by the Europeans, primarily France, but also the British, is aimed at what I just mentioned: to further fuel the conflict and to stop any attempts to calm it down." Doubling down on Russia's so far maximalist approach to any potential settlement over Ukraine, Lavrov indicated Moscow still wanted full control over four regions it claims as its own in any deal, despite Ukrainian objections.



BARCELONA: Pakistan Counsellor General Barcelona Murad Ali Wazir hosted Sardar Waqar Shahzad advocate at Consulate. Sardar Waqar appreciated his services for overseas Pakistanis and business community.

## US abstains from WTO condemnation

GENEVA (Reuters): The United States abstained from a statement by members of the World Trade Organization condemning Russia's aggression in Ukraine, a diplomatic source and a Geneva trade official told Reuters.

It is the first time the US has not supported the statement that has been issued each year since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, in another signal of a shift in ties with Russia. Forty-four WTO members and Ukraine signed it, including the European Union, Britain, Canada and Australia.

"The decision not to co-sponsor was made in keeping with our position in the

United Nations Security Council and UN General Assembly earlier this week", a US official told Reuters. The Security Council adopted a US-drafted resolution that took a neutral position on the conflict - highlighting the dramatic change in Washington's position since President Donald Trump took office in January. The WTO statement condemned the devastating impact of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on people's lives and Ukraine's economy.

"We are gravely concerned about the consequences of this destruction for Ukraine and for global trade", including the supply of agricultural products, fertilizers and minerals from Ukraine to international markets, it added. Ukraine underwent a Trade Policy Review that aims to enhance transparency and understanding of WTO members' trade policies and practices.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine and the US had struck an initial minerals deal, which could provide security guarantees to Ukraine to ensure a lasting and fair peace. The deal is at the heart of Kyiv's push to win over Trump's robust support as the US president strives to clinch a rapid end to the war with Russia that Ukraine's supporters fear could come at the expense of its national interests.

## Jordan, Syria leaders agree to bolster border security

AMMAN (Reuters): Jordan's King Abdullah and Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa agreed to work together to secure their common border against arms and drug trafficking, officials said.

At a meeting with Sharaa in Amman, the Jordanian monarch also condemned Israel's strikes late on southern Damascus and in southern Syria near the Jordan border, the latest in a series of Israeli attacks on Syrian military targets. The leaders agreed that

coordination was crucial for border security and for curbing arms and drug smuggling, a phenomenon that Jordan struggled to contain along its border during the rule of ousted president Bashar al-Assad, the palace added.

Jordan has blamed the rampant drug and weapons smuggling on pro-Iranian militias that held sway in southern Syria during Assad's time. Sharaa pledged to stamp it out. The visit is the new interim leader's third foreign trip

along with Saudi Arabia and Turkey since he came to power after leading the rebel offensive that ousted Iran-backed Assad. Assad's relationships with most of the Arab world and his neighbours were strained throughout the nearly 14-year Syrian war.

Jordan, which hosted the first international conference on Syria a week after Assad was forced to flee, wants to see a peaceful political transition in Syria, fearing a return of chaos and instability along its borders.

## Mexico sends drug lord Caro Quintero and 28 others to US

MEXICO CITY (AP): Mexico has sent 29 drug cartel figures, including drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, who was behind the killing of a US DEA agent in 1985, to the United States as the Trump administration turns up the pressure on drug trafficking organizations.

The unprecedented show of security cooperation comes as top Mexican officials are in Washington trying to head off the Trump administration's threat of imposing 25% tariffs on all Mexican imports starting. Those sent to the US were brought from prisons across Mexico to board planes at an airport north of Mexico City that took them to eight US cities, according to the Mexican government.

Among them were members of five of the six Mexican organized crime groups designated earlier this month by US President Donald Trump's administration as "foreign terrorist organizations." Besides Caro Quintero were cartel leaders, security chiefs from both factions of the Sinaloa cartel, cartel finance opera-

tives and a man wanted in connection with the killing of a North Carolina sheriff's deputy in 2022. Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, a former leader of the Juarez drug cartel, based in the border city of Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas, and brother of drug lord Amado Carrillo Fuentes, known as "The Lord of The Skies," who died in a botched plastic surgery in 1997, was among those turned over to the US.

According to prosecutors in both countries, the prisoners sent to the US faced charges related to drug trafficking and in some cases homicide among other crimes. "We will prosecute these criminals to the fullest extent of the law in honor of the brave law enforcement agents who have dedicated their careers - and in some cases, given their lives - to protect innocent people from the scourge of violent cartels," US Attorney General Pamela Bondi said in a statement. The removal of the drug cartel figures coincided with a visit to Washington by Mexico's Foreign Affairs Secretary Juan Ramón de la

Fuente and other top economic and military officials, who met with their counterparts, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

In exchange for delaying tariffs, Trump had insisted that Mexico crack down on cartels, illegal immigration and fentanyl production, despite significant dips in migration and overdoses over the past year. "This is historical, this has really never happened in the history of Mexico," said Mike Vigil, former DEA chief of international operations. "This is a huge celebratory thing for the Drug Enforcement Administration." Mexico's surprise handover of one of the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives was weeks in the making.

Caro Quintero had walked free in 2013 after 28 years in prison when a court overturned his 40-year sentence for the 1985 kidnapping and killing of US Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena. The brutal murder marked a low point in

US-Mexico relations. Caro Quintero, the former leader of the Guadalajara cartel, had since returned to drug trafficking and unleashed bloody turf battles in the northern Mexico border state of Sonora until he was arrested by Mexican forces in 2022. In January, a non-profit group representing the Camarena family sent a letter to the White House urging the Trump administration to renew longstanding US requests for Mexico to extradite Caro Quintero, according to a copy of the letter provided to The Associated Press by a person familiar with the family's outreach. "His return to the US would give the family much needed closure and serve the best interests of justice," the letter states.

Pressure increased after Trump threatened imposing stiff trade tariffs on Mexico and designated several Mexican cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, according to a person on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomacy that went into Caro Quintero's removal.

## New Zealand says China has agreed to consider concerns

BEIJING (AP): China has agreed to consider concerns that its military did not give enough notice before staging live-fire exercises in the waters between New Zealand and Australia last week, the foreign minister of New Zealand said.

The drills prompted passenger flights between the two countries to divert in midflight after Chinese naval vessels warned pilots they were flying above a live-fire exercise. "I think it would be true to say that he took our concerns on board," Foreign Minister Winston Peters said after meeting and having dinner with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in the Chinese capital.

Peters said he put the issue in the context of the close ties that the two countries have developed since 2008. China is the biggest

export destination for New Zealand and Australia. "We're in the second decade of this arrangement, and this is a failure in it at this time, and we'd like to have it corrected in the future," he said. He added, "That is something which we believe is under consideration."

Australia has complained more vociferously about the lack of notification. Foreign Minister Penny Wong said she sought an explanation from China's Wang Yi when the two met in Johannesburg following a gathering of foreign ministers from the Group of 20 nations. At issue is how much in advance militaries should issue such warnings. China only gave "a couple of hours' notice," New Zealand's Defense Minister Judith Collins told Radio New Zealand, rather than the expected 12 to 24 hours.

A longer lead time would give airlines time to plan alternate routes. China's official Xinhua News Agency made no mention of the issue in an initial report on Peters' meeting earlier in the day with Chinese Vice President Han Zheng.

A Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson defended China's actions, saying the drills were in compliance with international law and did not affect aviation safety. Peters, who also is the deputy prime minister, is in the middle of an 11-day trip that began with stops in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. After Beijing, he is visiting Mongolia and South Korea before his return to New Zealand.

In his talks in Beijing, Peters said the return of President Donald Trump to

the White House came up more than he had expected. He didn't provide any details, but said that both sides agreed that "perhaps we should just wait and see what happens when the dust settles."

Peters said he also explained the unique relationship his country has with Cook Islands, which signed a series of agreements with China earlier this month that have raised concern in New Zealand. The government was angered when Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown refused to share the text of a draft cooperation agreement with China ahead of its signing. Citizens of Cook Islands have New Zealand passports, and New Zealand helps the small Pacific nation with its military and foreign affairs.



The Frontier Post

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# This is Zelensky's war

THE recent public clash between President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has reignited debates about Zelensky's role in the outbreak of war with Russia. A classical realist analysis provides the best framework for understanding both the conflict and Zelensky's role in it. Simply put, the classical realist framework holds that, in an anarchic international system, where no central authority enforces order, states must rely on their own power for survival. It further holds that an important consequence of this reality is the "security dilemma" - a dynamic that emerges when one state's attempts to enhance its security are perceived as threats by other states, triggering cycles of mistrust and escalation. These systemic pressures, combined with flawed leadership - marked by ambition, hubris and miscalculation - tell us much about how manageable crises can spiral into devastating wars.

The unfolding tragedy in Ukraine provides a powerful case of this dynamic, revealing both the role played by the insecurities of the various players and the role of human agency, especially that of Zelensky, in triggering the war. Some in the West have elevated Zelensky to the status of a 21st-century Churchill - a wartime leader standing resolutely against tyranny. But this comparison is misleading. Churchill confronted an existential threat from a power bent on global conquest. Zelensky, by contrast, operated in a context where diplomatic alternatives existed. His refusal to take these off-ramps, both before and after hostilities began, reflected a dangerous mix of incompetence, misunderstanding, overconfidence and nationalist fervor. Realism reminds us that while anarchy and the security dilemma create conditions for conflict, it is human agency that often converts these structural tensions into war.

The structural dynamics of the post-Cold War order progressively created the preconditions for the war in Ukraine. NATO's relentless eastward expansion, though framed as the desirable expansion of the liberal-democratic space, triggered deep-seated Russian insecurities. In an anarchic system, where no higher power guarantees state survival, Russia interpreted this expansion as a threatening encroachment. The critical juncture came at NATO's 2008 Bucharest Summit, where Western leaders declared that Ukraine and Georgia would eventually become NATO members. Realists recognize such commitments as destabilizing; absent credible security guarantees, they heighten the security dilemma. For Russia, Ukraine's NATO ambitions crossed a red line. Zelensky's subsequent pursuit of these objectives, despite Ukraine's limited strategic leverage, reflected a profound misreading.

The 2014 Maidan uprising exemplified the interplay between systemic pressures and human agency. While the West celebrated Maidan as a democratic victory, realists viewed it as a direct challenge to Russian regional influence. Russia's response - annexing Crimea and fueling conflict in Donbas - was thus predictable. The resulting insecurity intensified the regional security dilemma. Successive Ukrainian administrations, including Zelensky's, failed to implement the Minsk agreements, which could have mitigated tensions. Their reluctance, driven by nationalist fervor and Western encouragement, eliminated potential off-ramps and further entrenched the path toward conflict.

Zelensky's election in 2019 presented an opportunity to recalibrate Ukraine's strategic posture, yet he doubled down on NATO aspirations and closer ties with the West. In doing so, he not only underestimated Russia's willingness to act but also overestimated Western resolve. Realism emphasizes that misperceptions of power and resolve are among the most dangerous drivers of conflict. Zelensky's decisions demonstrate how human agency - colored by ambition, flawed assumptions and a poor reading of geopolitical realities - transforms structural tensions into war. Zelensky's domestic policies further aggravated these tensions. By marginalizing the Russian language and alienating Russian-speaking populations, his administration deepened internal divisions that Russia could exploit. In realist terms, domestic politics and international security are interconnected. Nationalist impulses can heighten external threats. Zelensky's assumption that Western rhetorical support would shield Ukraine from Russian retaliation revealed not only hubris but also a critical misunderstanding of Western strategic interests.

The fog of war further shaped outcomes. Early in the invasion, peace talks in Istanbul presented an opportunity for a negotiated settlement: Ukrainian neutrality in exchange for security guarantees and Russian withdrawal. Zelensky's decision to walk away from these negotiations, influenced by Western leaders offering conditional support, reflected both hubris and misunderstanding. Leaders, driven by ambition or misperceived leverage, often overestimate their strategic position during crises, foreclosing diplomatic exits and prolonging suffering.

Western complicity in this tragedy cannot be ignored. Western leaders championed Ukraine's right to choose its alliances but failed to provide the necessary backing to deter Russian aggression. Their strategic ambiguity - a hallmark of great power politics - emboldened Zelensky but left Ukraine exposed. Realism teaches that great powers act according to interests, not sentiment. Russia recognized this, but Zelensky did not. Ultimately, this war did not have to happen. The interaction of systemic pressures with human flaws drove Ukraine into conflict. The pre-history of this conflict - marked by provocative Western promises, Zelensky's strategic overreach and Russia's insecurities - demonstrates how human agency, when misaligned with structural realities, can transform tension into crisis and tragedy. Zelensky's failure to take available diplomatic off-ramps turned a manageable crisis into a prolonged tragedy.

This war, then, is not merely the result of impersonal structures. It reflects the enduring relevance of classical realism's emphasis on human nature and the leadership skills of key players. Unlike Churchill, who had no diplomatic alternatives, Zelensky had options. His inability to navigate the structural dynamics of an anarchic international system, compounded by his personal shortcomings, sealed Ukraine's fate. As long as ambition, fear and misunderstanding persist - intensified by the insecurity inherent in the anarchic international system - war will remain a tragic but predictable feature of human affairs.

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# How Zelensky learned art of deal and got to visit Trump

Stephen Collinson

THINGS change fast in Donald Trump's world. A few days ago, the US president falsely branded Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as a "dictator" who started Russia's war in Ukraine and had "no cards" to play. But on Friday the Ukrainian war hero will get a full White House welcome.

"We're going to have a very good meeting. ... We're going to get along really well. OK. We have a lot of respect. I have a lot of respect for him," Trump said Thursday. Zelensky has had his own epiphany. Last week, he accused Trump of ushering Russian President Vladimir Putin out of isolation after the US sent his officials to peace talks in Saudi Arabia without Ukraine. And he warned that the US president was living in a "disinformation space."

But Zelensky has learned a critical lesson: Give Trump the win. The Ukrainian president is traveling to Washington to sign an agreement for the US to exploit Ukraine's rare earth mineral resources. The first draft of the deal looked a lot like colonial-style pillage being forced upon a desperate nation; Zelensky refused to sign it, warning he couldn't sell out his nation's wealth. Trump had claimed he could make half a trillion dollars to pay back US taxpayers for the military and financial lifeline to Ukraine after the Russian invasion. The latest version appears far less onerous for Ukraine - which initiated discussions with the US last year about using its mineral stocks to finance the rebuilding of its devastated cities and infrastructure. There's talk of a joint reconstruction fund but no mention of Trump's initial claim for a \$500 billion value - which was a perfect metaphor for a foreign policy vision that sees the world as a real estate deal.

Perhaps. But even if he's managed to remove the most punitive aspects of the proposed deal, the truth is that Zelensky had little choice. He's trying to force his way back into the peace talks. And if Zelensky's first visit with Trump since his reelection cools fears Ukraine is set to be sold out, it may also hold the possibility of a long-term US relationship with the country - a prospect that seemed unlikely only a few days ago. Zelensky is styling the agreement as only a framework for a future pact - largely because he's trying to leverage Ukraine's mineral

wealth for future US security guarantees he sees as vital to the survival of any eventual peace deal.

So why the thaw? Trump offered a clue earlier this week during a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron. "I do deals. My whole life is deals," Trump said.

Just because the rare earth minerals deal with Ukraine seems likely to fall short of the president's expectations, it doesn't mean that he won't market it as an extraordinary victory for himself and Americans. "We're going to be signing an agreement, which will be a very big agreement," the president said before a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday. Trump's zeal for a deal even led him to conveniently forget his previous claim that Zelensky - against whom he bears a grudge because the Ukrainian president was on the other end of the call that led to his first impeachment - was a dictator.

"Did I say that? I can't believe I said that. Next question?" Trump said in the Oval Office on Thursday, with the hint of a smirk. A lot might have changed between Zelensky and Trump in recent days. But nothing has changed between Trump and Putin, and the US leader's latest display of complete trust in the Russian leader on Thursday set off a huge, flashing alarm bell about the kind of deal he might try to do with Russia.

"I think he'll keep his word. I've spoken to him, I've known him for a long time now, you know?" Trump said in the Oval Office alongside British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. "I don't believe he is going to violate his word. I don't think he'll be back when we make a deal." There's an argument that only Trump among Western leaders could get Putin to the table and end a war that has inflicted a devastating toll among civilians, destroyed vast swaths of Ukraine and rocked the world. And if the president secures a just and lasting peace, he'll deserve the Nobel Prize he craves. But there's tangible fear among US allies in Europe that Trump will settle for any deal with the Russian leader that validates his illegal conquest of about 20% of Ukraine's territory, sets the table for an even worse war in the future, and tempts Putin to try to bite off another chunk of Europe - perhaps the Baltic states.

Both Putin and Macron

this week made the point in stark terms in front of Trump. "We have to get it right," Starmer said during a press conference with Trump on Thursday. "There's a famous slogan in the United Kingdom from after the Second World War that is that we have to win the peace. And that's what we must do now, because it can't be peace that rewards the aggressor, or that gives encouragement to regimes like Iran."

Macron tried to impress upon Trump the impossibility of doing a deal with the Russian leader, reliving his frustration over his dealings with Putin before the invasion. "I had several discussions, especially (at the) beginning of 2022, several times, 7 hours with President Putin. Fifteen days before the launching of the attack, he denied everything," Macron said. There's no reason for Trump to believe in Putin's good faith. The last five US administrations have all tried to reset relations with Russia and its strongman leader. Each attempt failed. And Putin has repeatedly broken his word - most recently when he denied he had any plan to invade Ukraine, then did.

Trump's willingness to take the Russian president at his word - and the possibility that could lead to appeasement rather than a solid, lasting peace deal - worries many former senior officials. "I think it's important for the president, and I understand he's trying to get Putin to the table, but he has got to know that Putin is not trustworthy and that anything he does has to be verified," former CIA director and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told CNN's Erin Burnett on Thursday. Retired Adm. James Stavridis, the former NATO supreme commander, added: "I wouldn't trust him as far as I can throw him," saying that history shows why only US security guarantees could secure a peace deal. Stavridis paraphrased the message Trump should spell out to Putin when they meet - possibly in the next few weeks. "Tell him, 'The day you reinstate is the day we bring Ukraine in NATO,'" he said. "Or, 'The day you reinstate is the day US troops will join the French and the British troops in Ukraine.'" Trump may be listening to such viewpoints - but given his volatility and inconsistency, it's often hard to be sure.

"It's a - trust and verify, let's call it that," the president

said Thursday. "I know a lot of people that you would say no chance that they would ever deceive you, and they're the worst people in the world. I know others that you would guarantee they would deceive you and you know what? They're 100 percent honorable. So, you never know what you're getting." Starmer's visit was an example of the show that European leaders are being forced to put on to try to reach a president who is threatening to tear down an 80-year-old international liberal order in place since the end of World War II.

The prime minister, a disciplined and reserved former barrister, is not known for political theatrics. But he made a great show of pulling a letter out of his pocket in the Oval Office from King Charles III inviting Trump for a state visit. "The answer is yes. Your country is a fantastic country," the delighted president said and praised the king, the son of the late Queen Elizabeth II, who hosted Trump at a state visit in 2017. "He's a great gentleman. A great, great gentleman. Oh," Trump said, holding up the letter. "That's quite a signature, isn't it? Beautiful. And he's a beautiful man, a wonderful man."

Starmer, in one of the most unrestrained efforts to stroke Trump's ego of any foreign leader so far in his second term, laid it on thick. "It's an invitation for a second state visit. This is really special. This has never happened before. This is unprecedented." The British prime minister may find out that flattery will sometimes get you nowhere with Trump. But as it stands, the destiny of Ukraine may be on a tightrope between the pomp and pageantry of a trip to see the king on the one hand, and on the other, Putin - to whom the US president often genuflects.

But one veteran British political observer was appalled by the spectacle. "It was humiliating in a way," Vince Cable, a former Cabinet minister and former leader of the Liberal Democrats, told CNN's Jim Sciutto on CNN International. "I suppose one has to admire the fact that he's willing to accept this humiliation to achieve some kind of political result," Cable said of Starmer. "It embarrasses me as a British person to see this kind of abasement," Cable said. "But you know, if he can achieve anything, I guess we'll just have to accept that's the way it's necessary with this president."

CNN

# Trump's Riviera proposal for Gaza's day after

Richard Falk

US President Donald Trump surprised the world with his proposal for the reconstruction and development of Gaza after the genocide subsidies. The main features of the plan were the forced transfer of the surviving Palestinian population to neighboring countries and the takeover of the Gaza Strip by the United States to manage the formidable reconstruction effort, with financing mainly extracted from the Arab governments in the region, especially the rich Gulf countries.

Since its issuance on Feb. 4 at a press conference at which Trump was standing next to the visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the global response to the plan was largely one of shock unaccompanied by awe. Even the Israelis seemed puzzled by how to respond, Netanyahu displaying a soft form of support, likely pragmatically driven, for the general contours of the proposal, but with an explicit endorsement only of its most objectionable feature - a clear commitment to the ethnic cleansing of the entire Palestinian population of Gaza, which currently numbers over 2 million traumatized Palestinians. So far, Israel has officially refrained from responding to the real estate and imperial aspects of the plan, that is, the vision of a Middle Eastern Riviera and an imperial US grab of land over which they had neither a prior claim nor a present connection.

From a human rights and international law perspective, the plan's population transfer aspect drew the strongest opposition - not only from Palestinians but also from human rights advocates and governments worldwide. A weak form of justification was offered by Trump and his most loyal supporters, mainly in the US, in the form of insisting that nothing previously had worked, so it was time to try something different. Yet an outlandish, one-sided proposal that serves Israel's interests by depopulating the occupied Palestinian territory in the largest and most dramatic removal of Palestinians since the nakba (catastrophe) of 1948, when upwards of 750,000 Palestinians were coerced and terrorized to leave their homes, discover that their villages were being demolished, and learn that their right of return bestowed by international law was permanently denied. The most persistent abuse in Palestinian history is the denial of their fundamental right to self-determination. This right, enshrined in Article 1 of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ratified in 1966), has long been recognized as essential in resisting colonial rule. The UN, often criticized by Israel for supporting Palestinian rights, played a key role in undermining them in 1947 by proposing the partition of mandate Palestine - a continuation of Britain's colonial "divide and conquer" strategy.

The Zionist movement accepted the partition proposal, as set forth in General Assembly Resolution 181, while the Arab countries and the Palestinian people rejected it, leading to the 1948 War. Such a division was to be expected as all along the Zionist project was opportunistic in taking what it

could get in various political climates but never abandoned its ambition to have all of Palestine.

This tactical ploy of pretending to be satisfied by an improvement of their position in relation to their goals was a master stroke of international public relations. In this sense "partition" was an improvement on the UK colonialist Balfour Declaration that pledged support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine but not a state, while partition offered the Jewish people a state of their own. From a Palestinian perspective the UN was furthering the colonialist goals of Britain, which sought to neutralize Palestinian nationalism by the counterweight of Jewish immigration, and its competing nationalist vision, which indeed backfired by producing a Zionist phase of anti-colonial struggle seeking the removal of Britain's hegemonic presence in Palestine under the guise of being the mandatory power with a supposed "sacred trust" from the League of Nations to promote the well-being of the people under its protective control.

Trump's proposal is a radical extension of policies that deny Palestinians agency over their own future as a people or a nation. The initiative issuing from the White House presumes an imperial prerogative and a reminder that Orientalism persists in the 21st century, here taking the form of superior Western civilizational management and entrepreneurial skill when it comes to global problem-solving. As if to be unashamed of such an approach, Trump makes not the slightest claim that he has consulted with respected Palestinian leaders or even sought genuine Arab or Turkish advice, much less overt endorsement.

The only possible saving grace is to suggest that this is an application of Trump's preoccupation with deal-making in international relations. The purpose of his Riviera proposals is to agitate other political actors to put forward alternative plans of their own, and sure enough the Gulf governments are meeting prior to an Arab summit in Cairo with Gaza on the top of the agenda, both in relation to assuming some economic responsibility for restoring viability to the social existence in the Gaza Strip and offering to allow substantial number of Gazans to be transferred to their respective countries. Even if this dynamic produces a more plausible plan for Gaza, its evolution seems to exclude Palestinian participation or consent, and if anything, will likely stir a new cycle of militant resistance. The Palestinian people, more generally, have suffered too severely and too long to swallow some arrangement devised by others that does away with its long-deferred legal and moral entitlement to self-determination.

Subtly embedded in the Trump proposal are valuable "get out of jail" cards for Israel. It is notable that Israel is not even held accountable for reparations or bearing the burdens of economic and social reconstruction, much less are its leaders made accountable for the commission of genocide and related crimes. Instead, the core perverse idea is that the victims should pay for the crimes of the perpetrators, yet again prolonging the underlying injustice inflicted for more than a century on the Palestinian people.

AA

# What US-Russia talks mean for China and global diplomacy?

Mabel Lu Miao

THE meeting between US and Russian representatives in Saudi Arabia has become a focal point of international attention, bringing new hope for the normalization of Russia-Ukraine relations. Following extensive talks, both sides reached agreements on several issues, sparking international debate.

Among the three main agreements, the establishment of a consultation mechanism and the creation of a high-level team to support Ukraine's peace talks have laid the groundwork for communication in seeking a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Restoring diplomatic efforts signals a thaw in US-Russia relations, paving the way for future cooperation. The agreement to establish closer ties, including economic cooperation after the end of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, demonstrates a positive expectation for future peace and stability.

However, this process is not without challenges. Ukraine sees the US' actions as a betrayal, fearing it will lose international standing and face increased pressure from Russia. European leaders are also concerned that the US is negotiating directly with Russia without their involvement, fearing their interests are being overlooked. After all, Europe has invested heavily in the Russia-Ukraine conflict over the past three years, with deep economic and geopolitical ties. Being excluded from crucial negotiations is naturally difficult for Europe to accept.

From the perspective of international morality and the principles of international law, territorial integrity and sovereignty are fundamental and inviolable principles. Any peace agreement should be reached based on respect for international law and the United Nations Charter. While the US and Russia have reached a consensus, the challenge now

lies in how to implement these agreements, coordinate the interests of all parties, and, in particular, address Ukraine's legitimate demands and convince Europe to accept the outcome.

China has always maintained an objective and neutral stance, actively advocating for peace and promoting dialogue. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson expressed support for the consensus on US-Russia peace talks and hopes that all parties and stakeholders will participate in the dialogue process in due time. This reflects China's responsible role as a major power in international affairs, not siding with any party but striving to promote a comprehensive, fair, and sustainable peace solution. Regarding the normalization of US-Russia relations, China does not share concerns that a closer US-Russia relationship will significantly alter US-China ties. In

fact, the Trump administration has placed less emphasis on China during its second term, and there is no evidence suggesting that a US-Russia rapprochement would lead to a concentrated effort to counter China.

First, US President Donald Trump has always been focused on deal-making, with his primary goal being to boost the US economy and deliver tangible results for domestic voters. In this context, his most important "deal" would be with China, as it is the world's second-largest economy and largest trading partner. In contrast, Russia's economy is much smaller and now ranks outside the global top ten. Consequently, a major economic confrontation with China would not align with the core economic interests of the current US administration.

Second, Trump seeks to engage with Russia and improve relations quickly,

primarily to bring an end to the Russia-Ukraine war. He has consistently argued that the US has invested too much in this conflict, which he sees as not directly concerning US territory. He believes Europe should contribute more to the "protection fee." Trump also aspires to be seen as a "peace president" and win the Nobel Peace Prize, which explains his emphasis on these goals. In this context, normalizing US-Russia relations is a rational move.

Third, the US may seek China's support in rebuilding Ukraine's economy and infrastructure after the war. The close relationship between Russia and China also plays a significant role in the Russia-Ukraine peace talks. As a result, US-Russia discussions will not pose a threat to China's interests.

China-Europe relations are entering a new phase, as Trump's administration places less emphasis on Europe, altering previous strategic alignments. 2025

marks the 50th anniversary of China-Europe diplomatic relations. The prospects for bilateral and multilateral cooperation are vast, and Europe can still play a positive role as part of the China-US-Europe triangular relationship in balancing Sino-US relations, enhancing international multilateral cooperation, and promoting the improvement of global governance.

This US-Russia meeting is only the beginning. Future negotiations, particularly on territory and security guarantees, will likely be complex and prolonged. The international community must work together, actively participate in coordination, and encourage all parties to resolve disputes through peaceful dialogue, so that peace and stability can be restored in the Russia-Ukraine region as soon as possible. This not only serves the interests of both Russia and Ukraine but also meets the needs of global peace and development.



# Why is Ukraine negotiating a minerals deal with US?

Abdujalil Abdurasulov

UKRAINE has agreed to the outline of a major deal that would give the US access to Ukraine's mineral deposits, a senior official in Kyiv has told the BBC. Kyiv has been facing growing pressure from Washington to sign the deal, which was at the centre of a rift between the US and Ukrainian presidents last week. On Tuesday, US President Donald Trump said he was expecting his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky, to travel to Washington in the coming days to sign the deal. Without confirming that an agreement had been reached, Trump said the deal would give Ukraine "the right to fight on".

Zelensky first included the offer of an agreement on minerals in the so-called "victory plan" that he presented to Trump last September. The idea was to offer the then presidential candidate a tangible reason for the US to continue supporting Ukraine. Olga Stefanishyna, Ukraine's deputy prime minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, said on Monday the negotiations had been "very constructive, with nearly all key details finalised". Kyiv estimates that about 5% of the world's "critical raw materials" are in Ukraine. This includes some 19 million tonnes of proven reserves of graphite, which the Ukrainian Geological Survey state agency says makes the nation "one of the top five leading countries" for the supply of the mineral. Graphite is used to make batteries for electric vehicles. Ukraine also has a third of all European lithium deposits, the key component in current batteries. And prior to the Russian invasion, Ukraine's global share of titanium production, a lightweight metal used in the construction of everything from aeroplanes to power stations,

was 7%. Further, Ukraine has significant deposits of rare earth metals. These are a group of 17 elements that are used to produce weapons, wind turbines, electronics and other products vital in the modern world. Some of the mineral deposits, however, have been seized by Russia. According to Yulia Svyrydenko, Ukraine's economy minister, resources worth \$350bn (£277bn) remain in occupied territories today.

In 2022, SecDev, a geopolitical risk consultancy based in Canada, conducted an evaluation, which established that Russia had occupied 63% of Ukrainian coal mines, and half of its manganese, caesium, tantalum and rare earth deposits. Dr Robert Muggah, principal of SecDev, says that such minerals add a "strategic and economic dimension" in Russia's continued aggression. By seizing them, he says, Moscow denies access revenue for Ukraine, expands its own resource base and influences global supply chains. Critical minerals "are the foundation of the 21st Century economy", Dr Muggah explained. They are key to renewable energy, military applications and industrial infrastructure and play "a growing strategic role in geopolitics and geoeconomics", he said. Additionally, the US is keen on a deal for Ukraine's mineral resources because it wants to reduce dependency on China, which controls 75% of rare earth deposits in the world, according to the Geological Investment Group. In December China banned the export of some rare earth minerals to the US, having previously limited mineral exports to the US the previous year. On Monday, ahead of a visit with French President Emmanuel Macron, White House National

Security Advisor Mike Waltz told US news outlet NewsNation that the deal was "about growing the pie economically and binding the US and Ukraine together for the future".

A senior Ukrainian official told the BBC on Tuesday that Kyiv had agreed to the terms of a deal. "We have indeed agreed it with a number of good amendments and see it as a positive outcome," the official said, without providing any further details. And on Monday, Stefanishyna said on X that negotiations were in the "final stages". Before that, there appeared to be several sticking points. Last Wednesday, Zelensky rejected US demands for a reported 50% share of its rare earth minerals - which Trump said would reflect the amount of aid the US had provided to Ukraine during its war with Russia.

"I can't sell our state," he said. The provisions of a second draft of the deal on Sunday appeared to be even tougher than in the first document.

Instead of 50/50 revenue split, the revised draft suggested the US wanted full control, Zelensky told journalists at the press conference on Sunday. Trump said earlier this month that the US military and economic aid to Ukraine amounts to about \$500bn (£396bn), and he wants the US to have access to Ukrainian minerals of that value. However, Zelensky has said that the American assistance so far totals around \$100bn (£79bn). Kyiv has also insisted that the aid they have received until now was a grant and not a credit, and so Ukraine has no obligation to return anything.

Zelensky is also said to want any deal to include security guarantees. Media reports on Tuesday said

Washington had dropped initial demands for a right to \$500bn (£395bn) in potential revenue from utilising Ukraine's minerals, but had not given firm security guarantees. Former UK prime minister Boris Johnson told the BBC in Kyiv that the agreement was "the great prize". He rejected suggestions the deal was a "rip-off" and said "what the Ukrainians get from this is a United States commitment under Donald Trump to a free, sovereign and secure Ukraine".

Some commentators have described the US offer as "colonial" but Kyiv is interested in joint exploration of its resources. Developing these mineral resources is extremely difficult and expensive, according to Iryna Suprun, chief executive of the Geological Investment Group, a mining advisory firm based in Ukraine. She argued that if they can attract American investors to develop their natural resources, it will be highly beneficial for the country's economy. "We will get technologies that our mining industry lacks so much," Ms Suprun explained. "We will get capital. That means more jobs, tax payments. We'll receive revenue from the development of mineral deposits."

On Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was open to offering the US access to Russia's rare minerals, in order to counter a potential deal between the US and Ukraine. In a televised interview on Russian state-owned broadcaster Rossiya 1, he said it would include access to Russia's "new territories" - those it has seized and occupied in Ukraine since their invasion three years ago. "We undoubtedly have, I want to emphasise, significantly more resources of this kind than Ukraine," Putin said, adding Russia was ready to "attract foreign partners".

BBC

# Trump puts himself first, as ever

KEIR Starmer deserves credit for pulling off a chummy summit with Donald Trump that handed the UK lots of "wins". Emmanuel Macron famously touched Trump's knee; Starmer merely massaged his shoulder. But we take from this event that the UK/US relationship, though choppy, remains sentimental.

But then that only surprises you if you thought Trump meant literally everything he's said about Ukraine in the past few days. Much of the West has had a knickers-twisting, pencil-up-the-nose mental breakdown over his outreach to Russia and calling Zelensky a "dictator" - a phrase he probably never meant and now doubts he ever used (is Trump calling Trump a liar?!). But this is how the Prez works: he puts out wild ideas, stirs the pot, while working privately for a deal. Make him a good offer, he'll probably take it.

And the price of continued British influence in Washington? Two nights bed and board at Buckingham Palace. The most unstable man in world affairs turns out to be utterly predictable. There were some surprises that will shake up UK politics. For the Left, it seems that Trump likes Britain even if David Lammy and Peter Mandelson are on record disliking him. The President, pointing out the return of Winston Churchill's bust to the Oval Office, admires our history. Perhaps the Left should stop trying to cancel it.

Also, Brexit might deliver an economic bonus. As we're outside the EU, Trump doesn't class us as part of the European conspiracy against the US car industry, so we'll hopefully escape his tariffs. But the eurosceptic Right shouldn't feel smug, for Trump also appeared cautiously to endorse Starmer's Chagos deal, in a major blow to the Tories and Reform. Their argument had heft so long as they could say "America actually opposes this..." but if Trump is on board, it's hard to see it being stopped. Be this a lesson for any UK player tempted to deploy Trump as an ally in domestic politics: he puts himself first and will drop a cause if it gets in the way of his national priorities. Trump has signalled a

Tim Stanley

shift in the world order, away from an open-ended guarantee of US support for European security while he focuses on new priorities such as border control and Iran. It sounds plausible that America will remain in some capacity in a postwar Ukraine - but only to defend its mineral rights, not as part of an open-ended liberal mission to rescue democracy ("dig we must!" said Trump). The "backstop" is US economic self-interest. Starmer and co see Trump's actions as destabilising but also an opportunity, on two fronts. First, it's a chance to reframe Europe as a political and military power in its own right - a more reliable progressive force in the long-run. Second, the PM wants Britain to act as a bridge between the US and Europe, trying to persuade Trump that his self-interest coincides with European self-defence. His increase in military spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP signals that the UK is willing to invest in the project. "I'm all in," said Starmer. Well done, replied Trump; could go higher.

Labour is attempting to rescue what Lammy calls "progressive realism", ie the promotion of pet liberal projects, such as development and decolonisation, as adjusted to the realities of a world ringed by authoritarians chipping away at the rules based order. To be nice, one must be prepared to be nasty. Britain needs a serious army and must work with populists like Trump. Washington, meanwhile, is flirting with a "conservative realism", which flips the equation. The new American Right begins by emphasising national self-interest. But this priority needn't/shouldn't be amoral; there remains a role for virtue in world affairs; and even authoritarian states, such as Saudi Arabia, can be encouraged to pursue virtuous ends such as peace in the Middle East. Trump often mentions his hatred of war, on this occasion describing the horror of Ukraine as a "spiral of death". But though he played up his recent phone calls with Putin as "very successful", Trump did not describe peace as "at hand" but "It'll either be fairly soon or it won't be at all." In other words, all this crazy posting and contro-

versy is a theatrical process; what matters is the behind-the-scenes talks, and they've only begun.

Moreover, world order is only possible if the forces of democracy are strong - something Starmer clearly agrees with, hence his reiteration of "peace through strength" - and thus some Americans, such as Marco Rubio, see winding down the war in Ukraine not as a retreat but a strategic reset. The US needs to regroup and refocus, in particular, on the threat of China. What I'm saying is this: contrary to the hair-on-fire panic we've heard from so many commentators since Trump's inauguration, the new administration is quite rational and can be worked with.

At root, its concerns are material. The President has begun this second, final - and thus conducted in a hurry - term by carrying out a massive audit of American trade and spending, not just abroad but at home, where he's attempting to sack thousands of federal employees and find savings in government programmes. Why? Because conservatives are convinced their country is on the verge of fiscal breakdown and see this as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to turn USA Ltd from a failing company to a profit maker. Is this so different from the Starmer/Reeves project? In method, yes. In confronting the reality that the West is dying - suffocated by low growth and declining self-confidence - it swims in the same zeitgeist. So, well done Keir: being calm and analytical has paid off. "You're a very tough negotiator," said the Prez, "I'm not sure I like that." Those words will be repeated by Labour ad infinitum, and weaponised against Reform.

But Britain could probably have sent any prime minister to see Trump and, if they've half a brain, they'd get a similarly warm reception - because the President is not mad and has good reason to treat us seriously. The best comedy, on this occasion, was offered not by Trump but the parallel arrival of Starmer at the White House with the Tate brothers landing in Florida - covered by Sky News as if of equal weight. One British export the Americans are welcome to keep.

## After 3 years of war, Ukraine is in an absurd position

Elena Davlikanova

FOR over a decade, Ukraine has stood as the barrier to Russia's bid to reclaim dominance in Europe. Now, on the third anniversary of the full-scale invasion - despite grand proclamations of Western support and aid carefully measured to fall short of what would allow Ukraine to make gains - it finds itself further from victory than ever. Kyiv has been made an unwilling contestant in the Olympics of absurdity, where yesterday's madness is today's routine.

Interestingly enough, the US is now vying for the top prize, turning the debate into a spectacle where the question is no longer how to stop the aggressor, but who the aggressor even is. For the first time, the US is pushing back the consensus about who is responsible for the war - refusing to label Moscow the aggressor in a G7 statement and declining to co-sponsor a UN resolution condemning Russia.

We are told Ukraine never had a chance to win and should be "realistic" about its future. But today's realities are the direct result of past decisions that were ill-informed, halfhearted, or driven by short-term interests. At the recent Munich Security Conference, Vice President J.D. Vance's speech echoed President Vladimir Putin's 2007 appearance but from the other side of the ocean. The deafening crack this caused in transatlantic cooperation was impossible to ignore.

The illusion that sacrificing Ukraine will somehow decouple Russia and China persists. But make no mistake: Russia's ambitions do not end at Ukraine's border.

ders. Russia remembers when its sphere of influence stretched deep into Europe, up to Berlin. It is already testing its reach - through energy blackmail, disinformation, political subversion and hybrid warfare against the European project.

Today, the disunity of the collective West is eroding all hopes for sustainable peace. As Winston Churchill once warned Neville Chamberlain: "You were given the choice between war and dishonor. You chose dishonor, and you will have war." Yet NATO's clearest message remains to be that it will do everything to avoid direct confrontation with Russia.

Moreover, there are now whippers about another reset with Russia: the lifting of sanctions, the return of Moscow to international institutions and the convenient forgetting of war crimes. Russia and the US are also weighing Arctic energy cooperation as the Trump administration eyes a deal for access to Russian resources. Meanwhile, the US, once the guardian of the rules-based global order, has turned into a merchant trying to take half of the valuable belongings from a wounded soldier. The offered \$500 billion deal on the country's rare earth minerals is an offer to sell Ukraine not secure it.

US officials claim they have sent \$350 billion in aid to Ukraine. But the actual numbers tell a different story. Over three years of war, Ukraine has received only about \$120 billion in military, humanitarian and financial assistance from the US, with Europeans surpassing this number by roughly \$20 billion.

Most importantly, only a small fraction of the total US aid package is provided as cash transfers to Kyiv. Much of it was spent on training troops and delivering military equipment from Washington's stockpiles. A further \$58 billion was spent on the US economy, especially defense manufacturing to replace the equipment sent to Ukraine. At the same time, US arms sales have more than doubled from \$138 billion in 2021 to \$318 billion in 2024, making American defense contractors the main beneficiaries of Washington's aid.

The most tragic development, however, is the outright refusal to offer Ukraine NATO membership or any other real security guarantees beyond vague promises. Even European peacekeepers are off the table for most European states. There is even a proposal that non-NATO troops from China and India might secure the contact line in the event of a ceasefire. Chinese security assurances provided to Ukraine back in 2013 turned out as well as the Budapest Memorandum.

Russian narratives, transmitted through Washington, even extend to Ukraine's democracy, which will fuel disinformation and destabilization operations aimed at undermining Ukraine from within. If there's any hope that the newly elected president will be more inclined to capitulation, it only reveals one thing about decisionmakers: they still fail to see Ukraine for what it truly is.

Ukrainians understand oppression and captivity. They have lived through two genocides in less than a century. That means they know

the cost of freedom. But in societies where freedom has been the default for generations, its true value is often forgotten. If Russia succeeds in dissolving Western values from within, it will win the war against the West not with tanks or missiles, but by corrupting Western parliaments and media. If the price of gas and eggs becomes a more pressing political concern than freedom itself, then the world risks sliding into digital authoritarianism - where surveillance, censorship and repression are the new normal. The discourse has already now shifted from People First to lithium.

The world now stands at a crossroads. My report with Victoria Vdovychenko about Ukraine's 2032 scenarios offers a sweeping view of the potential outcomes of this geopolitical rollercoaster. They do not only impact Ukraine, but also major players such as the US, Europe, China, Russia and the Global South. It is increasingly evident that the window of opportunity for both Ukraine and democracy to survive is alarmingly narrow amid Washington and Moscow's emerging bromance.

The unfolding scenario is disastrous. If the world returns to business as usual and Russia's economy recovers, Moscow will emerge as a geopolitical victor, reinvesting in its military as well as disinformation and subversion strategies. All of this would set the stage for an even bloodier war in which Europe is stuck between ideologically allied superpowers on both sides of the Atlantic. This wake-up call for the West has in fact been blaring for 11 years. Yet the world finds itself in an ever more horrific post-truth, post-liberalism nightmare.

## Transatlantic relations under pressure: Threats and opportunities

Thomas Greminger

ARE US President Donald Trump's actions igniting the end of transatlantic relations? The short answer is no: They have been built up over decades and are too strong to be fundamentally questioned by one US president. However, there is no doubt that these relations are currently undergoing a serious test. There is a particular challenge to European partners who have to step up their contribution to counter military threats on the eastern flank. However, the current US pressure also presents an opportunity to advance greater European security autonomy.

Trump and his close aides have chosen to adopt an approach that is different to the classical methods of international diplomacy. Trump's approach is based on disruption. Demands are not made palatable to partners by arguments but by building up a threat posture. Then the White House would wait for a reaction and decide to either maintain the threatening stance or to negotiate.

The key is to remain calm, avoid overreacting, and carefully evaluate policy responses to the new administration's actions. That said, I would advise European partners to urgently invest in two types of reflections: first, how to strengthen the European contribution to maintaining European security and second, to develop common European positions to ceasefire and settlement negotiations that could be

launched in a not-too-distant future. Work on the former has already advanced more than on the latter.

It is undisputed today that Europeans need to increase their defense efforts. It is likely that the US will gradually shift its hard security posture in Europe to what experts call "offshore balancing." This would imply maintaining the American nuclear umbrella but pulling troops and weaponry out of Europe. It would oblige Europeans to address strategic capability gaps and to massively strengthen defense cooperation. Increasing defense spending to 5% of GDP, as requested by Secretary of Defense Hegseth, would not be necessary. More important is to change the mindset in the development, production and procurement of weapon systems and the structuring of armed forces. The continent needs to move from a still predominantly national to a European logic. Institutionally, this would require building up a strong European pillar of NATO, strengthening defense cooperation with the EU and finding creative ways to integrate non-members into joint defense cooperation endeavors.

We may see different negotiation formats when the different collisions - Russia vs. Ukraine, Russia vs. Europe and Russia vs. the US - are addressed. Europeans obviously belong at the negotiation table

when the future of European security is decided. However, doing this effectively requires developing common positions on issues that go beyond sustaining strong political, military, and financial support to Ukraine. It begins with agreeing that Europe's objectives in the war should focus on defending Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, rather than strategically weakening Russia. It continues with a mutual understanding of how a technically sound ceasefire would look like and who would contribute to monitoring and verifying it.

A fundamental aspect of the sustainability of any agreement is the security guarantees for both warring parties. Since NATO membership for Ukraine does not seem to be in the cards, convincing alternatives need to be found. Further solidifying the more than 20 bilateral security arrangements that have been concluded since the NATO Vilnius Summit in 2023 appears to be a realistic way forward. To address Russia's demand that Ukraine remain outside NATO, a long-term moratorium on Ukraine's membership - conditional on Russia's adherence to peaceful behavior - could be a compromise that alleviates Moscow's concerns without undermining NATO's open-door policy.

The contentious territorial issues could be overcome by agreeing to a temporary cessation of

control without conceding on the principle of territorial integrity. There are further controversial issues that need to be dealt with in a settlement process that could build on an agreed ceasefire. Gradual sanction relief, reparations and war crime accountability are the most prominent among them. The sooner Europeans develop common positions on these matters, the more forcefully they will be able to defend their interests in negotiations.?

Europe will also have to develop common thinking on the future of the European security order. It is fair to assume that the short to medium term will be dominated by deterrence, i.e., by an order that is built to defend Europe against further Russian aggressions. However, from a long-term perspective we have to strive for a European security order that allows to integrate the largest country on the European continent again, should Russia choose to adopt its behavior accordingly. This requires policies that combine deterrence with dialogue and detente as NATO's Harmel Doctrine in 1967 asked for and later allowed the Helsinki Process to start. In a post-war setting, the OSCE, whose secretariat is led by top Turkish diplomat Feridun Sinirlioglu, could offer an ideal platform for an inclusive reflection on how to reconstruct a European security order that would again embrace elements of cooperative security.



# BankIslami delivers record 24% surge in profit

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: BankIslami has posted a record-breaking 24.4% rise in pre-tax profit to Rs. 25.5 billion for the year ending December 31, 2024, reinforcing its stature in Pakistan's Islamic banking sector. Despite economic volatility and shifting regulatory conditions, net profit rose 7.1% to Rs. 11.8 billion.

Upholding its mission of "Saving Humanity from Riba," the Bank announced a total dividend of Rs. 2.75 per share, comprising a final 12.5% cash dividend alongside a previously declared 15% interim payout.

BankIslami's balance sheet expanded steadily, with total deposits rising 7% year-on-year to Rs. 559 billion. A notable 18.9% surge in savings deposits

and a 9.2% uptick in current deposits pushed the CASA ratio to 65.7%, underscoring strong liquidity and depositor confidence. Gross financing jumped 28.8% to Rs. 327.2 billion, while investments grew 9.9% to Rs. 345.1 billion, reflecting a measured growth strategy. Meanwhile, non-fund-based income (NFI) increased by Rs. 1.3 billion, lifting its share of total income from 7.6% to 9%, broadening revenue streams.

The Bank's risk management efforts further strengthened its financial position, with the infection ratio improving from 9% to 7.4%, driven by proactive credit risk management and recoveries.

At the same time, the Bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) stood at

24.11%, well above the 11.50% regulatory requirement, highlighting its financial strength and stability.

Over the past year, BankIslami launched Pakistan's largest Islamic banking marketing campaign, amplifying brand presence and customer engagement. The Bank also spearheaded a major technological overhaul, with the launch of its new Internet and Mobile Banking applications as well as revamping its core banking system to enhance operational efficiency and digital capabilities.

With 540 branches nationwide, BankIslami is expanding accessibility while investing heavily in digital transformation. Looking ahead, BankIslami is poised to deepen its digital footprint, enhance oper-

ational efficiencies, and expand its financing and investment portfolios. With robust risk governance and a customer-centric strategy, the Bank remains well-positioned for sustained growth in an evolving financial landscape.

**About BankIslami**

BankIslami Pakistan Limited, a subsidiary of JS Bank, operates one of the largest Islamic commercial banking networks in Pakistan, with over 540 branches across 210+ cities. As the first Islamic commercial bank to receive a banking license under the Islamic Banking Policy of 2003, BankIslami is a pioneer in Shariah-compliant retail, investment, and trade finance solutions. As part of the JS Group, BankIslami continues to lead innovation and inclusivity in Islamic banking.

## World Expo 2025 Launch ceremony of Pakistan Pavilion held in Lahore F.P. Report

LAHORE: The digital launch ceremony of the Pakistan Pavilion for World Expo 2025 Osaka, Japan held at Lahore on Friday, 28th February, 2025. The Chief Executive TDAP inaugurated the Pavilion's official website and social media platforms, marking a significant step in Pakistan's participation in the World Expo under the theme "Universe in a Grain of Salt". The digital platforms will serve as an interactive portal for global audiences to explore the depth and diversity of Pakistan's culture, innovations, and trade opportunities.

In his remarks, Mr. Faiz Ahmad, the Chief Executive of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) stated, "the theme 'Universe in a Grain of Salt' beautifully depicts our vision of exploring the infinite possibilities within our cultural and economic landscape. Pakistan's participation at World Expo 2025 Osaka reflects a commitment to collaboration and mutual understanding, illustrating how even the simplest resources can build relationships. These digital platforms reinforce our mission to promote Pakistan's image and will enable us to connect with the world in innovative ways."

Pakistan's participation in the World Expo 2025 is led by Honourable Federal Minister for Commerce, Mr. Jam Kamal Khan. In his message, honourable minister emphasized "The Pakistan Pavilion is more than just a physical space; it is a reflection of our nation's resilience, creativity and aspirations, and the Wold Expo 2025 in Japan is a unique opportunity for Pakistan to share its narrative. We aim to demonstrate how Pakistan's rich heritage and innovative spirit can contribute to a sustainable and interconnected world. I invite everyone to join us on this journey and witness the incredible story of Pakistan unfold at Expo 2025 Osaka."

World Expo 2025 Osaka, Japan will take place from 13th April to 13th October 2025, under the theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives".

## Key Highlights of the Digital Launch:

**Official Website:** The Pakistan Pavilion's website (<https://pakistanexpo2025.com/>), available in English and Japanese, serves as a comprehensive platform for visitors to explore the Pavilion's themes, design and exhibits. Soon available on the site are press kits, regularly updated newsletters and the Pavilion's event and programming calendar.

The platform will play an essential role in strengthening dialogue and promoting Pakistan's vision at this international event.

**Social Media:** The Pavilion's social media channels will act as a virtual gateway for global audiences, featuring regular updates about exhibitions, events and trade opportunities at the Pavilion throughout Expo 2025.

## Court Notice

In the court of Sana shah civil judge IV/ Illaqa Qazi district Swat. Case #:172/1. Institution 26/09/2024. Next Hearing date 10/04/2025. Mumtaz ali etc VS Nader shah etc. Notice to.(3)Mst. Razia(8) Mst. Ruqayya.(9) Mst. Zahra daughters zahir shah late.pir Jalat khan late.(11) Nauman.(12) Osama.(14) Aman ullah r/o khawaja khel odigram Swat. Presently Abroad. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 10/04/2025, at 8.00 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

## Public Notice

I, Umar Gul, son of Rosham Khan, bearing CNIC No. 17301-1600840-7, hereby officially declare that I am alive and have been residing in Peshawar city for a long time instead of my ancestral area. It has come to my attention that certain fraudulent individuals are falsely declaring me deceased and engaging in illegal transactions involving my land properties in areas such as Ghari Faizullah and Umar Maira. I strongly caution and warn all concerned authorities, individuals, and organizations that any transactions related to my land without my explicit consent are unlawful and shall be subject to legal action. Important Notice: As per NADRA records, no individual is registered as my legal heir or linked to my name. Therefore, before conducting any land-related transactions in my name, it is mandatory to verify the details through the NADRA kiosk. Failure to do so may result in legal consequences. Issued in the public interest. For further verification, relevant authorities may contact me directly.



**LAHORE:** Silkbank has entered into a strategic partnership with Defence Raya Golf & Country Club, bringing unparalleled benefits to silkbank Visa Signature Credit Card customers. As part of this collaboration, cardholders can enjoy an exclusive 50% discount at all club restaurants and 10 complimentary golf visits per month, enhancing their premium lifestyle with luxury dining and leisure experiences. This initiative underscores Silkbank's commitment to delivering exceptional privileges and value-added services to its esteemed clientele. The signing ceremony was held on February 19, 2025, at Defence Raya Golf & Country Club, Lahore, and was attended by Mr. Naveed Mushuq, Head of Consumer Banking, Marketing & Phone Banking, Mr. Nouman Butt, Head of Business Development, Alliances & Loyalty Initiatives from Silkbank and Mr. Brig. Ayaz Masood Khan SI (M), Secretary - DRGCC, Mr. David William Nimmo, General Manager - DRGCC, were present to commemorate the beginning of this prestigious partnership.

## Crackdown on online gambling IHC issues notices to FIA, SBP, PTA, PEMRA

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued notices to FIA, SBP, PTA, and PEMRA after Barrister Imran Rashid exposed the growing threat of illegal online gambling in Pakistan.

He revealed how gambling apps use digital wallets to bypass banking laws, enabling money laundering and financial fraud. Citing constitutional, legal, and Islamic prohibitions, Barrister Imran Rashid urged the court to ban these apps, block their advertisements on social media, and

enforce strict financial controls. He argued that "the law is clear, the violations are undeniable, and the consequences are devastating."

This landmark case could reshape Pakistan's digital landscape and put an end to the unchecked rise of online gambling.

## SNGPL to ensure adequate gas supply in Ramazan



## F.P. Report

LAHORE: Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has taken proactive measures to ensure uninterrupted and adequate gas supply to consumers

during meal preparation times, particularly during Sehri, Iftar and mid-day meal hours.

The company is committed to maintain a stable gas supply across its network, ensuring that con-

sumers receive adequate pressure without disruptions.

Consumers are encouraged to report any gas supply or pressure-related concerns through SNGPL's helpline 1199.

## PSX holds Gong Ceremony on listing of Zarea Limited

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) held a gong ceremony to celebrate the successful listing of Zarea Limited, a leading B2B e-commerce platform revolutionizing commodity trading and distribution in Pakistan. Established in September 2020, Zarea Limited has emerged as a pioneer in the digital B2B marketplace, connecting buyers and sellers of cement, steel, agricultural biomass, and construction materials.

The ceremony was graced by Mr. Sharjeel Inam Memon, Senior Minister for Information Transport & Mass Transit, Govt. of Sindh, and Mr. Rehmat Ali Hasnie, President & CEO of National Bank of Pakistan, as chief guests. Also in attendance were Mr. Farrukh H. Sabzwari, MD & CEO of PSX, Board Members and Management of PSX, Mr. Ali Alam Qamar, CEO of Zarea Limited, Board members of Zarea Limited, Mr. Mohammed Sohail, CEO of Topline Securities and Mr. Muhammad Shahid, CEO of Growth Securities.

Zarea Limited's listing marks the first Initial Public Offering (IPO) of 2025 on the main board of the Pakistan Stock Exchange. The IPO concluded with an oversubscription of 1.9 times, raising a total of PKR 1.03 billion through the book-building process.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Farrukh H. Sabzwari, MD & CEO of PSX, said, "The successful IPO of Zarea Limited marks a significant milestone for Pakistan's capital market, reflecting growing investor confidence in technology-driven enterprises.

This achievement underscores the strength and vibrancy of PSX as a platform for fostering innovation and entrepreneurial growth.

We congratulate Zarea Limited on this remarkable journey and look forward to supporting more



companies in unlocking their potential through our capital market."

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Ali Alam Qamar, CEO Zarea Limited, said, "Today marks a defining moment for Zarea Limited as we proudly list on the Pakistan Stock Exchange. As Pakistan's leading B2B commodities marketplace, we are on a mission to transform the industry through technology, efficiency, transparency, and innovation. With Pakistan's commodities market valued at over \$20 billion, Zarea aims to capture at least 1-2% of this market in the next 7-10 years InshaAllah.

This listing is just the beginning. With a clear vision, strong fundamentals, and a rapidly growing digital economy, we are poised to redefine how commodities trade in Pakistan.

To our investors-this is your opportunity to be part of the future of B2B commerce. Together, we will build something extraordinary."

Mr. Mohammed Sohail, CEO, Topline Securities Limited, said, "Over the years, Topline Securities has been actively working towards the development of Pakistan's capital markets in various ways. One of the key areas we've focused on is the introduction of new companies through IPOs, and this is something we have been pursuing aggressively.


In recent years, we've had the privilege of bringing many unique

and diverse companies to the market, and their performance has been exceptional, delivering outstanding returns to their shareholders.


And today, Alhamdulillah, Topline and Growth are here for the listing of Zarea, a leading digital technology company that is revolutionizing Pakistan's commodity trading market with its comprehensive B2B e-commerce platform. I am confident that this new listing will add much-needed depth and breadth to the market, just like the previous IPOs we have brought to the PSX. As an advisor, we have emphasized the importance of corporate governance with the Zarea team to ensure maximum value creation for its shareholders."

Giving his remarks Mr. Muhammad Shahid CEO of Growth Securities, said "On behalf of Growth Securities Limited, I want to congratulate the leadership and the entire management team of Zarea Limited on its successful listing on the Stock Exchange.

This achievement is a testament to the company's vision, leadership, and commitment to excellence. It also marks a significant milestone for Growth Securities as it is our first listing in the capacity of Joint CTI and Book Runner. I'm confident that this new chapter will bring even more growth and opportunities for the company, and we wish them continued success post listing."



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کرچی کے مسند علاقوں میں اپنے 4 میموریل ہسپتال کھولنے کے ذریعے پناہ دینے کا تقریباً نصف ملاق کر رہا ہے، ان کا دکھنا تھا کہ۔

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## In brief

## Women's handball c'ship concluded

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) Women's Handball Intervarsity Championship' concluded here yesterday, while the 'Chairman HEC Women's National Handball Championship' commenced at GCWUS. According to the HEC, at the Handball Championship, the University of the Punjab, Lahore, secured first position, while LCWU Lahore and GCWUS were first and second runner-up respectively. During the closing ceremony of the Intervarsity Championship, Director Sports, HEC, Javed Memon, distributed sports scholarships and prize money cheques to the student athletes, recognising their achievements. The closing ceremony also marked the inauguration of the Chairman HEC National Handball Championship; with participation from ten teams, including HEC, Punjab, KP, AJK, WAPDA, and Army.

## Hockey Nations Cup in June

ISLAMABAD (APP): The third edition of the International Hockey Federation (FIH) Hockey Nations Cup (men) will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from June 15 to 21. The tournament will involve eight participating teams, with the winners qualifying for the 2025-26 FIH Hockey Pro League. The teams include Pakistan, France, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa and Wales, said a press release. Commenting on the announcement the Malaysian Hockey Confederation President, Subahan bin Kamal said, "The Malaysian Hockey Confederation is delighted and privileged to host the FIH Hockey Nations Cup 2024-25 in Kuala Lumpur." FIH President Tayyab Ikram said, "On behalf of FIH, I'd like to extend our sincerest gratitude to our Malaysian friends. I already wish everyone, and first and foremost the athletes, to make the most of this experience to grow, and reach the next level". The FIH Hockey Nations Cup was launched in 2021 with the aim of offering a top-level competition to the best-ranked teams not participating in the FIH Hockey Pro League and giving the winning team the option to be promoted to the FIH Hockey Pro League the next season, precisely. The first two editions were played in Potchefstroom, South Africa (2022) and Gniezno, Poland (2024). The inaugural Nations Cup (men) was won by South Africa, the following one by New Zealand.

## GIKI holds Squash C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology (GIKI) organized a Squash Championship at its state-of-the-art sports complex of the Institute. The sport event was graced by Adil Khattak, Member of the Board of Governors, GIKI Institute, as the Chief Guest, said a press release. The squash championship of GIKI witnessed a thrilling final match between teams comprising faculty members and students, delivering an intense showdown. The audience, including students, faculty, and staff, enthusiastically cheered up the teams who displayed remarkable dexterity skill, resilience, and sportsmanship throughout the contest. After the exciting finale, Khattak distributed cash prizes and trophies to the winning team, acknowledging their dedication and excellence in the sport.

# Buttler steps down as England's white-ball captain

KARACHI (Agencies): Jos Buttler has resigned as England's white-ball captain following his side's Champions Trophy exit.

The 34-year-old will lead England for the final time in their last group match in the tournament against South Africa on Saturday.

Defeat by Afghanistan on Wednesday knocked England out of the Champions Trophy - their third disappointing white-ball event in a row under Buttler following their disappointing defences of the 50-over World Cup in 2023 and the T20 version last year.

"It's the right decision for me and it's the right decision for the team," said Buttler at an unplanned media conference in Lahore. "I've just reached the end of the road." He added that he felt England had gone out of the Champions Trophy "with a bit of a hangover from the tournaments before".

Buttler, one of England's 2019 World Cup winners, was appointed captain in 2022 after the international retirement of Eoin Morgan.

He won the T20 World Cup that autumn in Australia but England have endured a significant downturn in form since the start of the 2023 World Cup in India. They won only three of their nine matches there

and have lost 12 of their 16 ODIs since then, including a current losing run that stands at six matches.

They reached the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup last year but were well beaten by India and limped through the earlier rounds.

"My over-riding emotions are sadness and disappointment, but I'm sure in time that will pass and I'll get back to really enjoying my cricket," Buttler said.

"Also, I'll be able to reflect on what an immense honour it is to captain your country and all the special things that come with it."

**We will 'take time' over successor - McCullum**

The Champions Trophy has been England's first tournament since Brendon McCullum combined the white-ball job with his role as Test coach. The New Zealander, who backed Buttler to remain as captain when being appointed, said he thought his skipper was considering quitting in the immediate aftermath of the Afghanistan defeat and Buttler confirmed his decision at the team hotel on Thursday.

"He sent me a message saying he needed a chat, and I knew then that things were coming to an end," McCullum told BBC Test Match Special. "When he told me he wanted to step down, I was initially think-

ing, 'Don't worry about it, we'll carry on' but no, he's made the right decision."

Buttler's recent record has been poor but he has also had to deal with his best players often being absent from squads as Ben Stokes' Test team was prioritised.

"He has worn the captaincy quite heavily because he cares so much about playing for the shirt, the guys in the dressing room and all the supporters of the team," added McCullum. McCullum said he will begin discussions with managing director of men's cricket Rob Key over a successor in the coming weeks.

Batter Harry Brook, all-rounder Liam Livingstone and opener Phil Salt have all captained the white-ball team in the past six months.

Brook, who was made Buttler's vice-captain in January and led in five ODIs against Australia last year, appears the favourite.

"This news is still pretty fresh," said McCullum.

"We have got time after this tournament as we go into the English summer so we can work out who the right person is." Buttler has captained England in 44 ODIs overall, with a record of 18 wins, 25 defeats and one no result. He holds a better record as captain in T20s, with 26 wins, 22 defeats and three no results in his 51 matches in charge.

## Karachi celebrates success of STEVTA Sports Festival 2025



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The two-day STEVTA Sports Festival 2025 successfully concluded in Karachi, featuring thrilling competitions in cricket, table tennis, badminton, and the 100-meter race. Teams from various divisions participated, showcasing their exceptional skills.

In the exhibition cricket match, Chairman XI defeated MD XI, with a stellar performance by Junaid Buland, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Sindh and Chairman STEVTA, playing a key role in the victory. During the 100-meter race, Chairman Junaid Buland added a fun twist by encouraging the MD STEVTA Munawar Ali Mithani, Regional Directors, Directors, and staff to participate — ultimately claiming victory himself after making the

staff run around the track. The Chairman also took part in arm wrestling with the MD and played badminton, cricket, and table tennis with students.

In the cricket final, Larkana Region emerged victorious against Mirpurkhas Region in a nail-biting match, with Larkana delivering an aggressive batting display, hitting multiple boundaries. Meanwhile, in table tennis and badminton, Karachi Region players displayed their dominance by securing the first position. The 100-meter race was won by athletes from Hyderabad Region.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Chairman Junaid Buland emphasized that the purpose of the STEVTA Sports Festival is to engage youth in positive activities, revive the sports culture, and provide opportunities for both education and

sports. He highlighted that the improvement of mental and physical capabilities is essential for the country's development. He added that the event aligns with the vision of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who aims to promote sports, education, and training for youth across the province.

MD STEVTA Munawar Ali Mithani said that involving youth in mental and physical activities is essential to eliminate social evils. He reiterated that STEVTA not only provides vocational and technical education but also plays a key role in promoting sports and talent across Sindh.

Chairman Junaid Buland distributed medals and shields among the winners, congratulating all participants. The festival concluded with a spectacular fireworks display, marking the event's success.



LAHORE: Jos Buttler announced his resignation alongside Brendon McCullum.

## Guardiola rules out mass Man City clearout

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola says his veteran Manchester City stars have a key role to play in the club's rebuild as he tries to recapture former glories after a chastening season.

City have just the FA Cup still to play for in terms of silverware after the collapse of their Premier League title defence and their Champions League defeat by Real Madrid. Guardiola's team host second-tier Plymouth in the fifth round on Saturday.

The club have been criticised for not being quicker to renew an ageing squad that has delivered six out of the past seven Premier League titles. City made four signings in the January transfer window -- Omar Marmoush, Abdulkodir Khusanov, Nico Gonzalez and Vitor Reis -- illustrating the scale of the rebuild required following injuries and a loss of form for key players. But Guardiola told his pre-match press conference on Friday that his experienced players would have an important role next season.

"There are players here that are over 30 and they will be part of the future of this club," he said on Friday. "Except Kevin -- Kevin and the club will decide in the future -- the others have contracts and next season I expect them to be here. They are going to help us." He added: "We cannot do it just with the new ones or the old ones. We have to be all together... It's really, really important at the end of the season, the next season."

"I count with Gundog (Gundogan, 34), I count with Berni (Bernardo Silva, 30), I count with all the players that have a contract. They are there. I have no doubt about that."

Guardiola, whose team are trying to reach the FA Cup final for a third straight season, is refusing to take Plymouth lightly.

The southcoast team, in the Championship relegation zone, shocked run-away Premier League leaders Liverpool in the fourth round. "We played many times in the Carabao (League) Cup and the FA Cup against lower league teams and always they are tricky," he said.

## Australia in Champions Trophy semis as rain hits Afghanistan's chances

LAHORE (AFP): Australia qualified for the Champions Trophy semi-finals on Friday after their Group B match against Afghanistan ended without a result in persistent rain in Lahore on Friday.

Chasing 274 for victory at Gaddafi Stadium, Australia were 109-1 in 12.5 overs when rain stopped play, giving them four points in their three games.

Afghanistan, who have three points from two games, need England to beat South Africa by a big margin in Karachi on Saturday to sneak into the last four on net run-rate. Afghanistan's -0.99 net run-rate is inferior to South Africa's 2.14 despite beating former world champions England by eight runs in Lahore on Wednesday.

Australia were well placed to chase down the target with opener Travis Head 59 not out. Steve Smith was unbeaten on 19 after Matthew Short was dismissed for 20. Heavy rain stopped play and as water pooled in the outfield, the umpires ended the match at 20:55 local time (1555 GMT).

Afghanistan had made 273 all out in 50 overs after winning the toss and bat-

ting first. Sediqullah Atal hit 85 and all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai 67 as they sought a win to seal a semi-final berth themselves. "It's a good result, and, that's what we were after at the start of the tournament," said Australia captain Smith.

"To finish in the top two and heading to the semis. It's satisfying so far." Smith said opener Matthew Short was an injury doubt for next week's semi-final.

"I think he (Short) was struggling, wasn't moving well. I think he'll be struggling with the short gap between games," said Smith of Short who suffered a thigh injury and will be assessed. India meet New Zealand in Dubai on Sunday which will decide the semi-final line-up, with the top team in Group A playing the second-placed team in Group B.

However, wherever India finish they will play the first semi-final in Dubai on March 4. The second semi-final will be in Lahore a day later. Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi said he still hoped England could do his team a favour by thrashing South Africa.

"You never know. We

still have hopes and we are waiting for that next game, hopefully England win big! Anything can happen in cricket," said Shahidi. In overcast conditions, Afghanistan lost opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz for nought in the first over to Spencer Johnson.

Ibrahim Zadran, hero of Afghanistan's win over England in the first match with the highest-ever Champions trophy score of 177, added 67 for the second wicket with Atal before he fell for 22 to spinner Adam Zampa. Atal and Shahidi (20) put on 68 for the fourth wicket before Australia fought back with four wickets for just 40 runs.

Atal's 95-ball innings included six fours and three sixes. At 199-7 Afghanistan were in danger of being dismissed for a below-par total, but Omarzai held the innings together, smashing five sixes in a 63-ball knock and adding an invaluable 74 runs with the last three wickets.

Rashid Khan chipped in with a 17-ball 19 with two boundaries. Ben Dwarshuis was the best Australian bowler with 3-47. Zampa took 2-48 and Johnson finished with 2-49.



LAHORE: The covers protect the pitch as rain delays play during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 group match between Afghanistan and Australia.

# HBL PSL X to commence from 11 April ; Cricket to return to Peshawar

LAHORE (APP): The HBL PSL X will return to entertain cricket crazy nation with a match defending champions Islamabad United (IU) and two times champions Lahore Qalandars (LQ) at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on April 11 (Friday).

34 matches will be played in the six team tournament between April 11 and May 18, with Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium set to host 13 matches, including two Eliminator and the final. Cricket will also return to Peshawar during the upcoming edition of the PSL X and an exhibition match will be played on April 8 in Peshawar. The teams of the match will be confirmed in due course.

For HBL PSL X, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium will host 11 matches, including Qualifier 1 on May 13. Karachi's National Bank Stadium and Multan Cricket Stadium will host five matches each. The marquee event will also feature three double-headers, with two matches on weekends (Saturday) and one on a national holiday (Labour Day).

Karachi Kings -- winners of the league's fifth edition, will begin their campaign on April 12 in their own backyard against runners up of the last edition, Multan Sultans. Multan Sultans -- the winners of the sixth edition, will face Lahore Qalandars on April 22 -- the first HBL PSL X match hosted by Multan Cricket Stadium.

The newly constructed Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium will welcome the tenth edition of the HBL PSL on April 24 with home side Qalandars,

winners of the seventh and eighth editions taking on Peshawar Zalmi. Peshawar Zalmi, champions of the HBL PSL 2017 will play their five matches at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, while the winners of the fourth edition, Quetta Gladiators will play five matches at the Gaddafi Stadium.

HBL PSL Chief Executive Officer Salman Naseer:

"We are thrilled to officially announce the schedule for the historic 10th edition of the HBL Pakistan Super League. Over the past decade, the HBL PSL has grown into a globally recognized tournament, showcasing the best of Pakistan's cricketing talent. "The fans in this year's tournament will not only see high-profile international cricketers but will also witness 34 high-octane matches across four major cities--Karachi, Lahore, Multan, and Rawalpindi.

"As part of our commitment to expanding the reach of the HBL PSL, we are delighted to host an exhibition match in Peshawar before the start of the tournament, which is a significant step in bringing top-tier cricket to Peshawar, a city with a deep-rooted love for the game. "We remain dedicated to enhancing the experience for players, fans, and stakeholders, who have witnessed some breathtaking contests in the league over the years."

HBL PSL X schedule

11 April -- Islamabad United v Lahore

Qalandars, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

12 April -- Peshawar Zalmi v Quetta Gladiators, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium; Karachi Kings v Multan Sultans, National Bank Stadium, Karachi

13 April -- Quetta Gladiators v Lahore Qalandars, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

14 April -- Islamabad United v Peshawar Zalmi, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

15 April -- Karachi Kings v Lahore Qalandars, National Bank Stadium, Karachi

16 April -- Islamabad United v Multan Sultans, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

18 April -- Karachi Kings v Quetta Gladiators, National Bank Stadium, Karachi

19 April -- Peshawar Zalmi v Multan Sultans, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

20 April -- Karachi Kings v Islamabad United, National Bank Stadium, Karachi

21 April -- Karachi Kings v Peshawar Zalmi, National Bank Stadium, Karachi

22 April -- Multan Sultans v Lahore Qalandars, Multan Cricket Stadium

23 April -- Multan Sultans v Islamabad United, Multan Cricket Stadium

24 April -- Lahore Qalandars v Peshawar Zalmi, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

25 April -- Quetta Gladiators v Karachi Kings, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

26 April -- Lahore Qalandars v Multan Sultans, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

27 April -- Quetta Gladiators v Peshawar Zalmi, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

29 April -- Quetta Gladiators v Multan Sultans, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

30 April -- Lahore Qalandars v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

1 May -- Multan Sultans v Karachi Kings, Multan Cricket Stadium; Lahore Qalandars v Quetta Gladiators, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

2 May -- Peshawar Zalmi v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

3 May -- Quetta Gladiators v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

4 May -- Lahore Qalandars v Karachi Kings, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

5 May -- Multan Sultans v Peshawar Zalmi, Multan Cricket Stadium

7 May -- Islamabad United v Quetta Gladiators, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

8 May -- Peshawar Zalmi v Karachi Kings, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

9 May -- Peshawar Zalmi v Lahore Qalandars, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

10 May -- Multan Sultans v Quetta Gladiators, Multan Cricket Stadium; Islamabad United v Karachi Kings, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

13 May -- Qualifier 1, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

14 May -- Eliminator 1, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

16 May -- Eliminator 2, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

18 May -- Final, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore.





## In brief

### Police arrest 10 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Friday continued operations against criminals and arrested 10 accused, including four liquor suppliers, two drug dealers, and four illegal arm owners from across the district Rawalpindi. According to the police spokesman, the Chauntra Police recovered 10 litres of liquor from accused Zeeshan, and held accused Afzal and Aamir on the recovery of five litres of liquor each from them. Similarly, the Dhamial Police nabbed accused Shan Ali with 10 litres of liquor and Osama with 600 grams charas, while the Airport Police captured accused Mansoor with 540 grams charas. Likewise, four accused were taken into custody for possessing illegal arms and ammunition. The Wah Cantt Police recovered a 30-bore pistol from accused Siddiq and eight 30-bore pistol cartridges from accused Suleman. The Pirwadhai and Ganjmandi Police nabbed accused Nadeem and Ali Shan with a 32-bore pistol and a knife respectively.

### SSP holds Khuli Katchery

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police-Operations Rawalpindi Kashif Zulfikar on Friday held a Khuli Katchery at the Police Lines Headquarters. According to the police spokesman, the SSP listened to the problems of the citizens and issued orders to the relevant officers to resolve them within the given time frame. On the occasion, he asked the policemen to treat the citizens coming to the police stations with courtesy and resolve their issues on priority. Meanwhile, SP Pothohar Talha Wali made a surprise visit to Wah Cantt and Sadar Wah police stations, and conducted a detailed review of their front desks, records and other matters. He also reviewed the progress of the cases under investigation and directed investigating officers to complete the challans on time.

### Secretary examines facilities at PIMS

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary, Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Nadeem Mahbub on Friday carried out a surprise visit to the Outpatient Department (OPD) of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) to review healthcare services and administrative arrangements. During his visit, the secretary inspected the attendance of doctors and medical staff. He emphasized that hospital administration must ensure the availability of doctors and paramedical staff at all times, stating that negligence and inefficiency would not be tolerated and reaffirmed zero tolerance policy over absenteeism matters. Nadeem Mahbub urged the medical professionals to provide the best possible healthcare services to patients, acknowledging that PIMS hospital faces a significant patient load. He highlighted that as per the Prime Minister's directives, full support is being given to the PIMS. The Federal Health Secretary also inspected the newly established patient assistance booths and visited the hospital rooftop to assess ongoing repair work. He directed the Executive Director of PIMS to ensure the swift completion of these repairs and renovation of washrooms. He expressed satisfaction with the hospital's cleanliness and maintenance. Reaffirming the commitment of the government, Nadeem Mahbub said that providing quality healthcare services to every citizen remains a top priority.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation, Ms. Mushaal Hussein Mullick and Ambassador of Palestine in Pakistan, H.E. Dr. Zuhair Zaidi viewing the photo exhibition titled "Palestine was, and will remain" at PNCA. —APP Photo

## IHC issues courts' timings for month of Ramzan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday issued the court timings of the high court and sessions courts for the month of Ramadan. With the approval of the Acting Chief Justice of Islamabad, Deputy Registrar Owais-ul-Hasan issued a notification. According to the notification, the courts in the single bench will work from 9:30 am to 11:30 am during the month of Ramadan from Monday to Thursday.

There will be a half-hour

break after the hearings in the single bench. The courts in the division bench will work from 12:00 pm to 1:30 pm from Monday to Thursday, while the hearing of cases on Friday will be from 9:30 am to 11:30 am.

According to the notification, there will be no hearing on Saturday. The judges will write their written orders.

The timings of the Islamabad High Court offices for the month of Ramadan have also been issued, according to which

the offices of the High Court will be open from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm from Monday to Saturday. On Friday, the offices of the High Court will be open from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm.

According to the court working hours of the District and Sessions Courts, the courts in the Sessions Court will work from 9 am to 2:30 pm from Monday to Saturday during the holy month of Ramadan. On Friday, the Sessions Courts will work from 9 am to 12:30 pm.

## ANF recovers over 52 kg drugs in 7 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 7 operations across the country managed to recover over 52 kg drugs worth over Rs 19.7 million and arrested 5 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that in an operation, 200 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a suspect arrested near a university in Rawalpindi.

In another operation, 1.4 kg ice drug was recovered from a motorcyclist checked near Kharadar area in Karachi.

The arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions.

179 grams hashish hidden in the undergarments of a passenger going to Dubai at Multan International Airport was recovered.

980 grams ice was recovered from the trolley bag of a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar International Airport.

226 grams heroin hidden in ladies' purse was recovered from a parcel sent to the UK through a courier office in Lahore.

24 kg opium and 6 kg heroin were recovered from Windar area of Hub in Balochistan.

19.2 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested near M-1 Motorway, Islamabad.

Separate cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

## PO involved in killing citizen arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Sadiqabad Police on Friday claimed to have arrested a proclaimed offender who had killed a citizen over a minor dispute last year.

The Rawalpindi Police spokesman, in a statement, said the accused Tahir Mehmood along with his accomplices killed Nasrullah with a shovel and injured Sajjad, and had been in hiding since then.

A case of the incident was registered by the Sadiqabad Police last year. The police traced and arrested the accused using all means including human intelligence.

## Gilani advocates for boosting Pakistan-Ireland ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Friday said that Pakistan seeks to further strengthen bilateral relations with Ireland and explore new avenues for trade, investment, and cooperation in key sectors such as technology, agriculture, renewable energy, and pharmaceuticals.

During a meeting with Mary O'Neill, Ambassador of Ireland, the Chairman Senate highlighted the crucial role of the business community in fostering partnerships and enhancing investment opportunities.

He underscored the importance of frequent high-level parliamentary exchanges to further deepen bilateral ties. He proposed greater parliamentary collaboration between the Senate of Pakistan and the Oireachtas, focusing on joint legislative exchanges, capacity-building initiatives, and technical cooperation on budgetary governance.

Gilani advocated for the establishment of parliamentary friendship groups in both parliaments to strengthen people-to-people linkages and expand cooperation in legislative affairs. Recalling his recent visit to Ireland, the Chairman expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage with the Irish Parliament and gain insights from its Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO).

He noted with satisfaction that the meetings held during the visit were pro-

ductive and laid the foundation for future collaboration. To build upon this momentum, he extended an invitation to the Irish Parliamentary Delegation to visit Pakistan, reinforcing a shared commitment to democratic reforms and parliamentary diplomacy.

Chairman Senate highlighted Ireland's world-class education system and explored potential collaborations in higher education, including student exchanges, scholarships, and joint research initiatives.

He also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to climate action, proposing enhanced bilateral cooperation in green energy, climate adaptation strategies, and sustainable development projects. He called for expanding development cooperation in skills training, digital transformation, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Commending Ireland's principled stance on international justice, Chairman Senate praised Ireland's unwavering support for the people of Palestine.

He also raised the Kashmir issue, urging Ireland to support the Kashmiri people in their quest for self-determination in line with United Nations resolutions. Noting the shared commitment of Pakistan and Ireland to global peace and security, he emphasized that both countries are among the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping missions.

The Chairman Senate also acknowledged the contributions of the Pakistani

diaspora in Ireland, recognizing their role in strengthening cultural and economic ties between the two nations. He informed the Ambassador about the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and invited Irish businesses and investors to explore opportunities in Pakistan's diverse economic sectors.

Stressing the importance of cultural and tourism exchanges, he proposed the establishment of a structured bilateral consultation mechanism to facilitate regular diplomatic, economic, and parliamentary engagement, with a strong focus on legislative and institutional cooperation.

The Ambassador of Ireland thanked Chairman Senate for his warm remarks and expressed her desire to deepen bilateral cooperation across diverse sectors. She highlighted the significance of people-to-people contacts in strengthening relations and welcomed further interactions in the future.

The Ambassador also informed that Ireland's diplomatic mission has recently begun operations in Pakistan, a milestone that Chairman Senate welcomed as a significant step toward bolstering bilateral ties. The Chairman expressed his appreciation and extended his best wishes to the Ambassador for her tenure in Pakistan, hoping for a new era of strengthened diplomatic, economic, and parliamentary collaboration between the two nations.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani exchanging views with H.E. Mary O'Neill, Ambassador of Ireland at Parliament House.

## SK Hydro enhances Kunhar Riverbank with 3,000 newly planted trees

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a recent collaboration between SK Hydro (Pvt) Ltd., Forest Division from the Kaghan region, and key construction partners, a tree planting initiative was held at the SK Hydropower Station project site under the theme "Greening the Kunhar River Banks with a Green Power Station."

This initiative underscores SK Project Company's long-standing dedication to ecological preservation and represents a tangible example of the high-quality, joint China-Pakistan efforts towards green development along the Belt and Road Initiative corridors, said a press release issued here on Friday.

Since its launch, more than 3,000 saplings have

been planted around the hydropower station. This initiative is part of SK Project Company's ongoing involvement in Pakistan's "Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme" (TBTTP), which started in 2019. In total, the company has planted over 150,000 trees in the region to fight soil erosion and improve the area's overall environment. This green effort also highlights the successful collaboration between China and Pakistan on sustainable development, part of the broader Belt and Road Initiative.

SK Hydro's contributions go beyond tree planting. The station, known as the "green pearl" of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), became operational in September 2024. It has the capacity to

generate 3.212 billion kWh of electricity annually, the station will save 1.28 million tons of standard coal, cut carbon dioxide emissions by 3.2 million tons, and benefit over 1 million households.

Further extending its commitment to local development, the Project Company has undertaken several community-driven initiatives, including the construction of the N15 highway, support for the development of a trout hatchery, disaster area emergency repairs, and educational aid for local students. These efforts aim to ensure that the tangible benefits of development reach the local communities while strengthening the longstanding and traditional friendship between China and Pakistan.

## Syedaal visits Pakistan High Commission in Singapore

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman of the Senate Syedaal Khan visited the Pakistan High Commission in Singapore on Friday. During the visit, Pakistan's High Commissioner to Singapore, Rabia Shafiq, briefed him on the diplomatic and trade relations between Pakistan and Singapore said a news release received here.

She also provided an update on ongoing efforts to

obtain halal meat certification from Singapore, which would facilitate Pakistan's meat exports to the country. Deputy Chairman underscored the immense potential for investment in Pakistan, particularly in the mining and minerals sector of Balochistan.

He emphasized the need to promote Pakistan's natural resources, stating that Balochistan is rich in minerals, which can attract foreign direct investment.

Additionally, he highlighted the importance of showcasing Pakistan's high-quality fruits, dry fruits, and agricultural produce in international markets.

During his visit, the Deputy Chairman toured various offices of the High Commission, where he inspected consular services and other facilities provided to the Pakistani community in Singapore. He, later recorded his remarks in the official remarks book.

## IFA seizes 165kg of unfit meat, fines supplier Rs 50,000

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) on Friday conducted an operation that led to the seizure and destruction of 165 kilograms of meat deemed unfit for human consumption. The supplier was fined of Rs 50,000, and a case has been registered against them. Talking to APP, Deputy Director of Operations at IFA, Dr. Tahira Siddique, stated that the operation was carried out ahead of the holy month of Ramadan. During the operation, food safety teams (FSTs) intercepted a vehicle carrying substandard meat in the Thana Nune area. She explained that the meat, stored in violation of food safety regulations, was found to be unfit for consumption

upon detailed inspection by veterinary specialists.

Dr. Tahira Siddique confirmed that the meat lacked necessary documentation, including traceability records and seals. It was also discovered that the meat was concealed using non-food-grade sheets, further violating safety protocols. The meat, which emitted a foul odor, was intended for supply to various hotels across Islamabad.

The Deputy Director of IFA emphasized that the use of substandard meat in food can severely impact health, particularly affecting the stomach, liver, and intestines. She reiterated the authority's zero-tolerance policy toward food adulteration and warned that those

compromising public health for profit would face strict legal action.

Dr. Tahira Siddique added that the IFA is determined to eliminate such practices and ensure that food safety standards are upheld. Meanwhile, she urged citizens to exercise caution when purchasing meat, advising them to verify its quality and avoid pre-packaged or pre-cut meat products. The IFA's swift action underscores its commitment to protecting consumers from health hazards posed by unscrupulous food suppliers. As Ramadan approaches, the authority has intensified its efforts to monitor food quality and ensure that only safe and hygienic products reach the public.

## BISP, ADB discuss non-formal education for beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, held a meeting with Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Principal Social Protection Specialist, Ms Xin Long, at BISP Headquarters on Wednesday to explore avenues for providing employment opportunities through skill training and non-formal education to BISP beneficiaries.

The meeting aimed to strengthen cooperation in empowering deserving households through skill-based initiatives, particularly under the Benazir Hunarmand Programme.

Both sides discussed the importance of enhancing maternal and child health, nutrition measures, and educational stipends for children of

registered families.

Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized that economic uplift of vulnerable communities requires equipping individuals with market-relevant skills and non-formal education aligned with international standards.

She highlighted the need for internationally certified training to ensure that beneficiaries not only secure jobs in the local market but also gain access to employment opportunities abroad.

"There is a high global demand for skilled labor, and by providing quality certifications along with skill training, we can empower deserving individuals to stand on their own feet, break free from poverty, and contribute positively to

the national economy," said Senator Rubina Khalid.

Ms Xin Long praised BISP's efforts in launching skills development initiatives under the Benazir Hunarmand Programme and acknowledged the pivotal role of social protection in transforming lives.

She assured that the ADB would continue supporting BISP in expanding skill training programmes, improving maternal and child health outcomes, and strengthening social safety nets for marginalized communities. The meeting reaffirmed both sides' commitment to inclusive economic empowerment and poverty alleviation through sustainable social protection initiatives.



### Landslide in Uruzgan claims six lives

URUZGAN (Ariana News): Six people died in a landslide in Afghanistan's southern Uruzgan province late last night, local officials said on Friday. Bilal Uruzgani, spokesman for the Uruzgan police, told Ariana News that the incident occurred in the village of Samuri in the Gizab district of the province. Women and children are also among the dead in the landslide which buried a house, he said.

### 13 convicts punished publicly in Jawzjan

SHEBERGHAN (Pajhwok): Thirteen individuals, including six women, have been punished publicly for various crimes at the sports stadium in northern Jawzjan province, the Appellate Court said on Friday. Officials said the punishments were carried out based on a ruling from the Supreme Court. Maulvi Saifuddin Mutasim, the Director of Information and Culture, said that the punishments were imposed on the 13 individuals for crimes such as adultery, elopement.

## Saving our youth from unemployment is priority

KABUL (TOLONews): Mohammad Younus Rashid, the deputy minister of youth affairs of the Ministry of Information and Culture, stated at the closing ceremony of a seminar in Kabul that over 20,000 students graduate from universities across the country every year, but job opportunities are not available for them.

Speaking at the event, which marked the conclusion of a three-day seminar on online business aimed at enhancing youth capacity, Rashid emphasized efforts to reduce unemployment among young people.

According to Rashid, the deputy ministry has been implementing an online business training program for the past three years to create job opportunities.

"Three years ago, we started thinking about how to save the youth of our country from unemployment. Unemployment forces our young people to seek refuge in neighboring and non-Muslim countries, where they are influenced by foreign cultures—something that is a national disgrace for us,"



the deputy minister of youth affairs added.

"With a phone or computer connected to the internet, one can work from home. The whole world today is transitioning to a digital lifestyle—digital currencies, digital marketing, and digital work," said Naeem-ul-Haq Haqqani, head of the Government Media and Information Center.

Some young participants who traveled from different provinces to attend the seminar in Kabul highlighted the importance of expanding online business opportunities and called for

greater support for youth employment.

"This program should be expanded to all provinces and districts so that our youth can find work. My suggestion is that if this program becomes part of the university curriculum in Afghanistan, it would be highly beneficial," said Hussainullah Niazi, a resident of Kunduz.

Officials from youth affairs at the Ministry of Information and Culture announced that this seminar was held in Kabul to enhance the capacity of more than 120 young participants from 18 provinces.

## Minister discusses economic cooperation with European Agency

KABUL (BNA): Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, the Acting Minister of Economy, met with Peteris Ustubs, Director of the European International Partnership Agency.

The discussions focused on coordinating programs and continuing humanitarian and development assistance for Afghanistan.

During the meeting, Hanif expressed gratitude for the ongoing humanitarian aid provided by the European Partnership Agency and underscored the importance of aligning their programs with the economic needs and priorities of the Afghan people.

He highlighted the country's current economic situation, key achievements, and outlined priorities aimed at creating job opportunities, reducing poverty, and fostering sustainable economic growth.

In response, Mr. Ustubs reaffirmed the Agency's commitment to continue humanitarian assistance, particularly for vulnerable populations affected by climate change. He outlined plans for collaboration in various sectors, including health services, drug treatment, private sector development, agriculture, counter-narcotics, and support for small enterprises.

Both officials agreed on the importance of presenting the Ministry of Economy's views and proposals at the upcoming June meeting with EU member states and international organizations, aimed at securing continued humanitarian and economic assistance for Afghanistan.

## National consultative workshop on climate change held

KABUL (BNA): A national consultative workshop aimed at reviewing Afghanistan's climate change strategy was successfully conducted in Kabul, organized by the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) in partnership with the "Raha" Foundation.

Dr. Zain-ul Abedin Abed, Deputy Director for Policy and Professional Affairs of NEPA, highlighted the severe impacts of climate change on Afghanistan, emphasizing that while the country contributes minimally to global emissions, it ranks as one of the most vulnerable nations, currently placed at the sixth level of vulnerability.

During his address, Dr. Abed underscored that climate change poses a significant challenge that necessitates collaborative efforts and cooperation among various stakeholders. He reiterated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's commitment to addressing climate change, working alongside both national and international organizations.

Dr. Abid also urged the international community to extend support and collaboration to Afghanistan in its fight against climate change. He pointed out that developing a robust climate change strategy would enable Afghanistan to access vital international financial resources dedicated to combating climate-related issues.

## Afghanistan, Turkmenistan sign \$7m railway deal to boost connectivity



HERAT (TOLONews): Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, deputy of railways at the Ministry of Public Works, signed a contract worth \$7 million during his visit to Turkmenistan for the development of the Torghundi-Herat railway.

Additionally, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan signed agreements for completing the remaining 10 kilometers of the Aqina-Andkhoy railway and conducting a detailed survey and design for 55 kilometers of the Andkhoy-Sheberghan railway.

During his meeting with the head of Turkmenistan's railway authority, Sahibzada emphasized that the construction, connection, and standardization of Afghanistan's railway network is a key priority for the Islamic Emirate.

Three agreements were signed during this visit: the first for the expansion of the Torghundi-Herat station worth \$7 million, the second for completing the remaining 10 km of the Aqina-Andkhoy railway, and the third for the survey and detailed design of the 55 km Andkhoy-Sheberghan railway," stated Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas, the spokesperson for the Ministry of

Public Works. Sahibzada traveled to Turkmenistan to strengthen railway cooperation.

Meanwhile, economic experts view the expansion of Afghanistan's railway network as a key factor in connecting the country to the region and stress the need for greater private sector involvement in this sector.

Abdul Zuhoor Mudaber, an economic analyst, highlighted the significance of railways: "The railway's critical role in economic development, particularly in Afghanistan, can turn the country into a regional and even Asian trade hub."

"If we connect to the railway network, our dependence on Pakistan will decrease, and we will be able to export and import goods to Afghanistan's provinces much faster," stated, Abdul Naseer Rashtia Another economic expert.

The Deputy Minister of Railways previously traveled to Iran, Uzbekistan, and Turkey to enhance bilateral relations and railway cooperation with neighboring and regional countries.

## 10 Healthcare Centers completed in Nangarhar

NANGARHAR (TOLONews): Ten healthcare centers in Nangarhar province have been completed and are now operational.

Built at a cost of \$460,000, these centers provide maternal, child, and nutrition services to 21,000 families. "These ten family health centers have been established in six districts and will provide primary healthcare services for mothers and children. Currently, five people are working with us in these centers," stated Aminullah Sharif, head of Nangarhar Public Health.

Abdul Wali Haqqani, deputy minister for health services, emphasized: "These centers prioritize maternal and child health and ensure the necessary healthcare services for them." Residents have urged the interim government to address additional challenges in these healthcare centers. "Maternal and child mortality rates have decreased, but these centers lack laboratory services. This section needs to be activated, and the number of female doctors should be increased," said Khawar, a resident of Kuz Kunar district.

"This health center is not enough for us, as people here are very poor and cannot afford to take patients to other districts or the city. We need continued support," Nizam Gul, another resident of Kuz Kunar, added. According to Nangarhar's Public Health Department, these healthcare centers have been established in Dur Baba, Nazian, Achin, Haska Mina, Kuz Kunar, and Khogyani districts. Plans are also in place to build healthcare centers in five more districts soon.

## 650 Girls Graduate from Madrasa, call for access to education



KABUL (TOLONews): At least 650 girls who have been trained in Quran memorization and Tajweed have graduated from a religious school in Kabul.

Expressing their happiness over their achievement in religious studies, these girls have urged the Islamic Emirate to also provide them with educational opportunities in modern sciences.

"If the schools had not been closed for the past three years, I could have completed my education and even enrolled in a university," Amina, a graduate of the school, told TOLONews.

"Graduating in religious studies is a great joy in itself; however, it is deeply concerning that we have fallen behind in our education, stayed away from school, and that the doors of education remain closed for all girls," said Suma, another graduate.

"Our request to the Islamic Emirate is to

reopen the schools for us. We should not only receive religious education but also learn modern sciences," stated Tuba, another graduate.

The head of the religious school stated that these girls had received training in Quran memorization and Tajweed.

"Today, 650 of our students are graduating. Among them, 54 have completed Quran memorization, 86 have graduated from the higher Islamic studies section, where they studied books on translation and Tafsir, while the rest have completed their studies in Nazirah (basic Quran reading) and recitation," Abdul Dayan Zahid Qorban, the head of the religious school, told TOLONews.

This is the fourth graduation ceremony of Quran memorizers from this school, and so far, 1,200 girls have graduated from this institution.

## Over 500,000 Afghans displaced due to climate disasters: IOM

KABUL (Ariana News): More than half a million people in Afghanistan were displaced due to climate disasters in 2024, the International Organization for Migration said in a country report published on Tuesday.

"Nearly 9 million individuals were impacted by climate hazards in the last 12 months, with over 500,000 displaced by floods, drought, and other disasters," IOM said, AFP reported.

"Roughly three in five of those displaced relocated elsewhere within their province of origin", with the western Herat and Farah provinces among

the hardest hit, it said.

This week, 39 people were killed due to floods, hail and storms in southwestern Afghanistan, mainly in Farah, according to local authorities.

Afghanistan is among the poorest countries in the world after decades of war and is ranked the sixth most vulnerable to climate change, which is spurring extreme weather. Drought, floods, land degradation and declining agricultural productivity are key threats, according to the United Nations.

Flash floods last May killed hundreds and swamped swaths of agricultural land in

Afghanistan, where 80 percent of people depend on farming to survive.

"Over 11 million people in Afghanistan are at high risk of severe impacts from climate-induced disasters in the future," the IOM said.

The UN agency estimates that "climate-sensitive livelihoods, like subsistence farming, make up 73 percent of jobs in Afghanistan".

It added that "92 percent of villages have limited access to emergency services" and "96 percent lack resources for crucial measures like early warning systems and search and rescue."

## 119 Measles cases reported in Paktia



PAKTIA (TOLONews): The Paktia Provincial Health Directorate said that in the first two months of this year, 119 children in the province have been infected with measles.

According to officials, a special team has been assigned to carry out measles vaccinations to prevent the further spread of the disease.

Miraj Gul Adel, head of the Paktia Provincial Health Directorate, stated: "In the first two months of 2025, the num-

ber of confirmed measles cases has reached 119, reflecting a 67% increase compared to the past. We are working to control this disease."

Doctors emphasize the importance of measles vaccination and recommend that infected children be kept in a moderate environment.

"Children affected by this disease should consume soft foods because parts of their mouths may be damaged. Additionally, their body temperature must be kept at a normal

level," stated Adam Khan Ibrahim, a doctor.

Meanwhile, some patient attendants have criticized the lack of facilities and hospital beds in Paktia Provincial Hospital, calling for an increase in healthcare capacity.

"This hospital not only lacks sufficient equipment but also does not have enough beds. We urge the Ministry of Public Health and the Islamic Emirate officials to increase the number of beds," said Mohammad Bashir, one of the patient attendants.

"Patients should receive proper treatment, and their hospital facilities should be improved," said another patient attendant, Naem.

Measles is a contagious viral disease that primarily affects children under the age of 14. Doctors stress the importance of timely vaccination and necessary precautions to prevent its spread.

## Afghan, Turkish foreign ministries discuss bilateral ties



KABUL (BNA): Zakir Jalali, the Second Political Chief at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, met with Cihad Erginay, the head of the South Asian division of the Turkish Foreign Ministry and former ambassador to Kabul.

During the discussions, both sides reviewed recent developments in bilateral

relations, exploring future steps to enhance cooperation. Key topics included trade and transit opportunities, as well as other mutual interests.

Zakir Jalali also delivered a written message from Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, to the Turkish foreign minister,

underscoring the Afghanistan government's commitment to fostering strong diplomatic relations.

Additionally, the meeting touched upon the establishment of a joint commission to monitor and advance bilateral affairs, reflecting a proactive approach to collaboration between Afghanistan and Turkey.

## Rising cost of firewood strains Helmand residents

LASHKAR GAH (Amu tv): Residents of Helmand province are grappling with a sharp rise in the cost of heating materials, with many saying they can no longer afford firewood as winter sets in.

Some residents report paying as much as 80 Afghanis (\$1.20) for just seven kilograms of firewood, a price they say is unsustainable given the region's dire economic conditions.

"Our economic situation is very bad. On one hand, foreign aid has been cut off, and on the other hand, there is no farming," said Abdul Ghafar, a resident of Helmand.

Others say they have resorted to burning wild bushes for warmth—an alternative that produces thick smoke and poses health risks.

"We are forced to buy one man (about four kilograms) of firewood for 80 Afghanis. We are poor and don't even have a kilo of flour at home," said Tajullah, another resident.

The economic downturn has hit not just farmers but also women who depend on traditional crafts for income. Some who spin wool for a living say demand for handmade yarn has plummeted, leaving them without work.

Munawara, a Helmand resident, said she has had to take on debt to afford basic necessities.

"I buy a small amount of flour and make it last as long as I can. There is no work available. I go to the market every day looking for labor, but I can't find any. I have no choice but to take loans from shopkeepers," she said.

The crisis has been compounded by limited access to electricity and the soaring cost of oil and gas, leaving most Helmand residents reliant on firewood for heating. As prices climb, many fear they will struggle to stay warm through the winter.

Should Afghanistan get past Australia, it will pave the way for their second successive entry into the semifinals of an ICC event in less than a year, following their inspiring run in the T20 World Cup in the Americas in 2024.

Shahidi, however, is not reading much into the prospects of semifinal appearance. "I think it will be a good game for cricket, and our focus will be to keep things simple and don't worry much about playing semifinal.





QUETTA: An official inspecting the spot after blast near Jan Muhamamd Road.

# KP CS chairs secretaries’ meeting, presents reform agenda

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shehab Ali Shah, chaired the first meeting of the Secretaries’ Committee, where he presented the Chief Secretary’s Reform Agenda aimed at enhancing the performance and efficiency of provincial departments. The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretaries, the Advocate General, and secretaries from all administrative departments.

During the session, Chief Secretary Shehab Ali Shah directed all departments to formulate comprehensive strategic plans, outlining specific activities, sub-activities, responsibilities, and deadlines. To ensure an effective reform strategy, a Reform Working Group comprising experts will be established, and its draft report is expected by April 15.

Emphasizing the need for digitization and automation, the Chief Secretary instructed that a detailed report on these initiatives be submitted by March 30. He also stressed the importance of a citizen feedback and complaint system, with compliance reports due to the Performance Management & Reforms Unit (PMRU) by March 15.

To improve transparency, each department will designate a focal person for the Right to Information (RTI) Act, and a defined timeline protocol for official matters will be introduced. Additionally, in line with the

Rotation Policy, officials serving in the same position for an extended period will be transferred by March 7, particularly those who have completed two years in a single role.

According to PMRU data, 2,116 officers from various departments and district administrations have already been transferred as part of Ramazan monitoring efforts to ensure transparency. The Chief Secretary further instructed that departmental posting committees finalize all transfers and postings by March 7. The Human Resource Management System (HRMS) under Integrated Performance Management System (IPMS) will be operational by April 30, ensuring merit-based appointments linked to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Regarding additional charge assignments, officials whose tenure has expired will have their additional charges revoked, and permanent appointments will be made. Furthermore, the File Tracking System will be activated, with progress reports due by March 7.

Departments were also directed to respond promptly to requests from Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners, with outcomes to be reviewed in the next meeting. The Inquiry Management System under IPMS will be launched by March 30, ensuring swift completion of all pending inquiries.

To improve financial discipline, the Chief Secretary emphasized prop-

er budget planning instead of relying on supplementary grants. Additionally, a Litigation Management System will be launched by March 20 to efficiently handle legal cases and court matters.

For development projects, a Development Tracking Portal has been introduced to monitor progress. Secretaries will review project advancements in the first and last week of every month. The implementation of rules under laws passed by the Provincial Assembly will also be expedited.

Projects that have achieved 75% completion will be prioritized for necessary SNEs (Sanctioned New Expenditures). The government aims to enhance service delivery, timely fund releases, and effective postings and transfers, ensuring a positive public perception.

To further strengthen transparency in procurement, an E-Procurement and Automated Decision System (E-PADS) will be introduced in March. This system will digitize procurement processes in major departments, including Communication & Works, Irrigation, Local Government, and Public Health Engineering. The Chief Secretary urged all secretaries to conduct internal departmental reviews and focus on research and development. He reiterated that public service must remain the top priority, ensuring that reforms lead to long-term positive impacts.

# Notice to KP CM: PHC seeks response

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal has sought a detailed response from the Election Commission of Pakistan regarding the notice issued to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. The court has adjourned the hearing of the case until 16th April, on Friday.

The petition filed by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur against the notice issued by the Election Commission. Justice Syed Arshad Ali remarked that the court will not adjourn the hearing again and that the parties should come prepared.

The counsel for the petitioner argued that due to his engagements in the Supreme Court, he could not prepare for this case, but he assured the court that he will present his arguments and that the case will

take time.

The counsel for the Election Commission argued that there are other similar cases pending before the court and that they should be clubbed together. The court accepted this request and adjourned the hearing until April 16, clubbing together other similar cases.

**PHC approaches against deteriorating law & order situation:** A writ petition has been filed in the Peshawar High Court (PHC) regarding the deteriorating law and order situation in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The petition has made the federal and provincial governments made as respondents.

The petition, filed by Sajjad Mahsud advocate, has taken the stance that the High Court should take notice of the worsening law and order situation in the southern districts. The petition argues that the government has failed to provide security to the people, and

that some police stations are closed in the evening.

The petitioner contended that the government has abandoned the southern districts to the mercy of extremists, and that incidents of kidnapping of judiciary officials, lawyers, and customs officials have occurred there. The petition argues that the government has failed to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities.

The petition has made Federal and provincial governments, Secretary Interior, Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Commissioner Kohat, Commissioner Bannu, Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan and District Police Officers (DPOs) of the relevant districts as respondents.

The petition requests the court to take notice of the deteriorating law and order situation in the southern districts and to direct the government to take effective measures to restore peace and security in the region.

# Trump and Zelensky clash in Oval Office shouting match

WASHINGTON (AFP): US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky clashed in an extraordinary shouting match in the Oval Office Friday, leaving efforts to end the war with Russia hanging in the balance.

"You are either going to make a deal or we are out," a furious Trump told Zelensky, as a meeting that was meant to ease tensions over the sudden US outreach to Russia ended up inflaming them.

"You're gambling with the lives of millions of people. You're gambling with World War Three, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to this country," Trump added.

Zelensky was at the White House to sign a deal on sharing Ukraine's mineral riches and discuss a peace deal with Russia, despite the US president recently branding his Ukrainian counterpart a dictator. The meeting came after a week-long diplomatic dance that has also seen the leaders of France and Britain come to the White House to persuade Trump not to abandon Kyiv. But tempers frayed after Vice President JD Vance said that "diplomacy" was needed to end the

war. Zelensky asked "what kind of diplomacy" and Vance then accused him of being "disrespectful" in the president's office.

Trump then backed up his vice president as the leaders argued about whether the US had failed to stop Putin after the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the situation became increasingly tense. "You're not acting at all thankful," said Trump. "It's going to be a very hard thing to do business like this," said Trump. "It's going to be a tough deal to make because the attitudes have to change."

Zelensky fought his corner with Trump in a calmer voice, accusing them of "speaking loudly." Trump had alarmed US allies and upended Washington's long-standing Ukraine policy two weeks ago when he spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin and started talks on ending the three-year-old war —without Kyiv's involvement. Trump told reporters on Friday he had since spoken on "numerous occasions" to Putin.

The US leader has demanded a deal granting Washington preferential

access to Ukraine's rare-earth and other natural resources as the price for any continued backing — even though he has refused to commit to giving Kyiv security guarantees as part of a truce with Russia. "We'll be dig, dig, digging" for Ukraine's resources, Trump said on Thursday ahead of the meeting — echoing his presidential election campaign slogan about how the United States would "drill, baby, drill" for oil.

The clash came despite Trump recently softening his tone on Zelensky in recent days, after berating him last week as a "dictator without elections", blaming Ukraine for Russia's February 2022 invasion and echoing a series of Kremlin talking points about the war.

"I have a lot of respect for him," Trump said of Zelensky on Thursday at a joint press conference with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. "We're going to get along really well." Trump, a billionaire real estate tycoon, insists the minerals deal is necessary for Washington to recoup the billions of dollars it has given Ukraine in military and other aid.

## Tarar terms SUPARCO agreement

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Friday that the agreement between the Chinese Space Agency and Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) regarding Pakistan's first manned space mission was an important milestone.

Delivering his speech at the ceremony of exchanging documents of the agreement on cooperation in space research between Pakistan and China, he said he was grateful for the cooperation of the Chinese government.

"In the light of the Prime Minister's vision, SUPARCO's steps are commendable. The cooperation between Pakistan and China in the space sector is a matter of pride," he maintained. He said that Chinese astronauts will provide training to Pakistani astronauts, will be able to travel to the Chinese Space Station within a year.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the government is focusing on the development of the space research sector," he remarked. Tarar said with the grace of Allah Almighty, the green crescent flag of Pakistan will also go to space and this would be a great achievement with the help of China.

## Action against profiteers initiated: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that a crack-down has been initiated against profiteers and hoarders during the holy month of Ramazan. On the directives of the Chief Minister, special committees have been formed in all districts to monitor the prices and quality of essential commodities. These committees will conduct daily market visits to ensure compliance with official rates and quality standards and will submit daily reports to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Barrister Dr. Saif further mentioned that a special complaints cell has been established in the Food Department. Citizens can lodge complaints regarding essential commodities via the toll-free number 080037432 or through WhatsApp at 03451009348.

He added that the Food Department, Food Authority, and district administration will remain active across the province against profiteers, and strict action will be taken against violators. He assured that the public will not be left at the mercy of profiteering mafias, and the government is taking serious steps to provide relief to the people. Additionally, the Chief Minister has directed that the Ramazan and Eid package be delivered to all deserving individuals before the 15th of Ramazan.

## Fawad declared guilty in five May 9 cases

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Police on Friday declared former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry guilty in five cases related to May 9. The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore Judge Manzoor Ali Gill, heard the interim bail petitions of Chaudhry. During the hearing, the police submitted their investigative report to the court, in which they declared former minister guilty in five cases related to May 9.

At this point, Chaudhry requested the court to adjourn the hearing due to the absence of his senior lawyer. The court accepted Chaudhry's request and summoned the lawyers for arguments at the next hearing.

It is noteworthy that Fawad Chaudhry has secured interim bail in cases related to the arson at Rahat Bakery, the burning of Sher Pilau, and other incidents. Speaking to the media outside the ATC, Chaudhry said that instead of bringing ease in Ramazan, fifty ministers have been appointed.

# Maritime security exercise Sea Guard-25 culminates



F.P. Report



KARACHI: Maritime Security Exercise SEA GUARD-25 concluded with a debrief session held in Karachi. Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff (Operations), Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The exercise aimed to rehearse and validate maritime information sharing and response mechanisms among various national organizations.

While addressing the session, the Chief Guest commended the role of the Joint Maritime Information and Coordination Centre (JMICC) as a vital platform for fostering collaboration among national maritime stakeholders. He also lauded Pakistan Navy's continued commitment to ensuring a secure maritime environment through coordinated efforts with national partners.

During the debrief session, recommendations based on a review of various scenarios and tabletop discussions were presented for implementation. As the second in its series, Exercise SEA GUARD-25 brought together representatives from Pakistan's diverse maritime sector. Senior officials from the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, Pakistan Coast Guards, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation, Anti Narcotics Force, Federal Investigation Agency, Karachi Port Trust, and Port Qasim Authority, along with prominent figures from private sector and fishing community, attended the closing session.

**PNS YARMOOK showcases Pakistan's strength at exhibitions:** PNS YARMOOK, along with its embarked helicopter, visited Abu Dhabi to participate in the International Defence Exhibition

(IDEX) and Naval Defence Exhibition (NAVDEX) 2025. The event saw participation from 65 countries, including naval vessels from eight nations.

Upon arrival, the ship was warmly received by the Ambassador of Pakistan to the UAE and the Head of the IDEX/NAVDEX Committee, UAE, amidst the melodious tunes of the UAE Navy Band. During the port visit, the Commanding Officer called on various dignitaries and discussed matters of mutual interest.

During its stay, PNS YARMOOK remained open to visitors and welcomed numerous officials from the armed forces, business, and corporate sectors. Distinguished visitors included the UAE's Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, Romania's Minister of National Defence, Yemen's Defence Minister, the Chief of the Romanian Naval Forces, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Naval Forces, the Commander of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces, the Commander of the Royal Bahrain Navy, and the CEO of DAMEN Shipyard. Additionally, the ship hosted Pakistan's Secretary of Defence Production, the Ambassador of Pakistan to the UAE, the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Operations), representatives of the UAE Armed Forces, and other notable figures from the international and Pakistani communities.

Pakistan's participation in NAVDEX 2025 highlights its strong defence ties with the UAE and its active role in global maritime security initiatives. Upon departure, PNS YARMOOK also conducted a passage exercise with the UAE Navy Ship AL EMARAT.

# Five judges added to SC’s constitutional bench

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan approved the inclusion of five more judges in the Supreme Court's constitutional bench.

According to sources, the newly appointed judges—Justices Hashim Kakar, Aamer Farooq, Shakeel Ahmed, Ishtiaq Ibrahim, and Salahuddin Panhwar—became part of the constitutional bench, bringing the total number of judges in the bench to 13.

The decision to expand the bench was approved by a majority vote. However, Justices Muneeb Akhtar and Mansoor Ali Shah opposed the move.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members Ali Zafar and Barrister Gohar also expressed their dissent, arguing that all Supreme Court judges should be included in the constitutional bench instead of selectively adding more names.

The recommendation to

## JCP okays appointment of 4 new additional judges to LHC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A session of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) headed by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi concluded with key decision to elevate four district and sessions judges to the Lahore High Court as additional judges.

In the session, LHC Registrar Abhar Gul Khan was elevated to the court as judge while Tariq Bajwa, Raja Ghazanfar and Tanveer Sheikh would be appointed as additional judges in the LHC.

Meanwhile, the names of eight sessions court judges came under discussion including Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Qaiser Nazeer Butt and Muhammad Akmal Khan. LHC CJ Aalia Neelum participated in the meeting along with the commission's member Ahsan Bhoon. Earlier, it was reported by media that the JCP session would be held on Friday at the Supreme Court which would be presided over by the Chief Justice. According to reports, the meeting would consider the names of eight session judges for the appointment of additional judges to the LHC.

induct five additional judges was made by Justice Ameenuddin, the head of the constitutional bench. Meanwhile, sources indicate that three more judges have been nominated for the constitutional bench of

the Sindh High Court. Justice Riazat Sahar, Justice Nisar Ahmed Bhambhro, and Justice Abdul Hameed will now be part of the Sindh High Court's constitutional bench.

# Pakistan to send

(Continued from Page 1)

He said major portion of work was completed for digitalization of Federal Board of Revenue, adding Faceless Custom Assessment System had promoted transparency. The prime minister said the government was trying to meet targets of sustainable progress. Rapid progress had been made in the last one year regarding foreign direct investment in the country, he added.

The prime minister said the government was focusing to seek foreign direct investment in those areas which could help enhance exports. He told that during the visits of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan numerous agreements were signed for investment in Pakistan which was reflective of the confidence of foreign investors in the national economy.

He said the best way to increase economic growth was by enhancing the country's exports. He sought suggestions from the businessmen and industrialists for sustainable economic growth in the country. The prime minister directed formation of a committee comprising businessmen, industrialists and government ministers for suggesting a path for sustainable economic growth. The committee would give suggestions to the government within two weeks.

The delegation appreciated the government for its economic policies and for

bringing improvement in the economic indicators. They lauded Federal Board of Revenue and other government departments for taking effective steps to curb smuggling. They also commended the government for introducing Custom Assessment System and for its policies of privatization and deregulation.

Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanvir Hussain, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, Coordinator of Prime Minister Rana Ihsan Afzal and high level officials attended the meeting.

**PM, Russian Minister discuss bilateral ties:** Russian First Deputy Minister For Energy Pavel Sorokin called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and discussed matters of mutual interest.

The prime minister said Pakistan was desirous of further strengthening relations with Russia. "We want to further promote diplomatic, trade and investment ties," he said adding his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit was very productive.

He reiterated invitation to the President of Russia

for a visit to Pakistan. He said Pakistan and Russia had great capacity to further cooperation in energy and other sectors. The Russian Minister for Energy said Russia was desirous of improving relations with Pakistan in the field of energy. He thanked the government of Pakistan for its hospitality.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Petroleum Musadiq Malik, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Power Awais Ahmed Leghari, Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, Special Assistant to Prime Minister Tariq Fatimi, Governor State Bank of Pakistan Jamil Ahmed and high-level officials attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressing satisfaction over substantial reduction in inflation, a rise in foreign exchange reserves, and an increase in foreign remittances, pledged to continue efforts to further improve the macro economic indicator in the years to come.

In a breakfast session with the newly inducted members of the Federal Cabinet, the prime minister highlighted that the selection of all new cabinet members was based on their abilities and potential.