

51 killed in Guatemala

GUATEMALA CITY: At least 51 people have died and others have been injured when a bus plunged into a polluted ravine outside Guatemala City, according to Guatemalan officials. Mynor Ruano, a spokesman for the city's fire service, told reporters on Monday that efforts were under way "to save other people who are trapped" in the wreckage. The bodies of 36 men and 15 women have been sent to a provincial morgue. — Aljazeera



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JCP appoints six SC judges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) approved on Monday the appointment of six new judges to the Supreme Court amid a boycott by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) law-makers and two senior SC judges.

According to a press release issued by the JCP on Monday, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi to consider the nominations for appointment of high court judges in the SC and, by a majority of its total membership, nominated six judges.

The chief justices of all high courts, except the Lahore High Court (LHC) were among the six judges nominated. These included Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar, Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui, Justice Salahuddin Panhwar, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Aamer Farooq.

The Commission, also by majority

of its total membership, nominated IHC's Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb for appointment as the Acting Judge of the Supreme Court. The JCP, which approves judicial appointments, was reconstituted to include four parliamentarians under the 26th Constitutional Amendment, bringing numerous changes to the judiciary.

Earlier, four apex court judges, including two commission members, Justices Shah and Justice Akhtar, had requested the postponement of the session. Moreover, in his letter, Zafar had also asked CJP Yahya Afridi to put off the meeting. Earlier this month, the judicial commission sought nominations from all high courts, requesting a list of five senior judges from each.

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) initially forwarded the names of three judges — Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb — because the other two

judges, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri and Justice Babar Sattar, did not meet the minimum requirement of five years of service.

However, Lahore High Court's Justice Saifraz Dogar, along with two judges from the SHC and BHC, was recently transferred to the IHC. Following his transfer, the IHC administration revised its seniority list and designated him as the senior puisne judge. Therefore, his name was also sent to the JCP.

Following this transfer saga, five IHC judges raised the issue of seniority of judges and sent a representation to the IHC chief justice against the new seniority list and also sent a copy to CJP Afridi. The judges argued that any transferred judge must take a fresh oath under Article 194 of the Constitution, which would place them at the bottom of the IHC's seniority list. This would render them ineligible for immediate consideration for the position of IHC chief justice.

Pakistan achieves macroeconomic stability in a year: Prime Minister

DUBAI (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday said Pakistan achieved macroeconomic stability in the last one year with the help of the International Monetary Fund programme.

Speaking to Pakistani business leaders and investors here, he said the macro level foundation of the Pakistani economy had gradually improved in the previous year as the inflation was at 2.4 percent in the month of January and bank's policy rate was at 12 percent.

The exports had improved as compared to last year and the foreign remittances touched the level of three billion dollars which was a record, he explained. He said the country would have to overcome tough economic challenges, adding the government was moving in the right direction with the goal to achieve economic growth.

"Our efforts are focused on some key areas including mining and minerals," he remarked. Pakistan was working together with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to extract its immense mineral resources, he continued. The prime minister said it was unfortunate that not much progress was made in the mining sector to exploit country's minerals worth trillions of dollars.

He said another area of vital importance was information technology and proper training of youth in this field could help the country turn around its economy. Pakistan's 60 percent population was 15-30 years old, he noted. Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan was endowed with immense resources in the agriculture sector but in the last many decades per acre yield remained marginal as modern techniques and technology were not introduced to promote crop production.



"Many countries moved ahead of Pakistan in the production of rice, sugar, cotton and wheat and we lagged behind our neighbouring countries." He informed that the government was funding a programme to send 1000 fresh agri graduates for training to China in various fields related to agriculture.

He expressed hoped that after return from China these students would be well equipped with modern knowledge to assist the country in increasing its agriculture production. He stressed that country needed to convert its agriculture production into value added products to gain better economic growth.

"We needed to focus with complete dedication and commitment so we can move forward with speed to gain results for the economy," he said adding team work was needed to transform society in every walk of life. He assured that the government would include suggestions of the business leaders in its economic programme.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in his

message on International Day of Women and Girls in Science said empowering women and girls in science was a national priority and an all out effort was being made to create an enabling environment and providing equal opportunities, to ensure that women become key drivers of progress and innovation in the 21st century.

On the occasion of the International Day for Women and Girls in Science, the government acknowledge the remarkable contributions of women and girls in shaping the world through scientific discovery, innovation, and leadership, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said this year's theme, "Charting Progress to Shape the Future: The Best is Yet to Come", was a reminder of the strides the nation had made and the work that lied ahead in building an inclusive, innovative, and equitable future. Equal participation of men and women in scientific research and technological advancement is essential for economic development and societal well-being, he added.

Lawyers stage sit-in at D-Chowk

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A large number of lawyers, protesting against the passage of the 26th Constitutional Amendment and the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) meeting, have staged a sit-in at D-Chowk in Islamabad as a heavy contingent of the police has made efforts to prevent them from marching on to the Red Zone on Monday.

In order to ensure that the protesters do not enter the Red Zone, the police have closed the routes leading from D-Chowk to the Red Zone with barbed wires while two prison vans have also been parked at the site of the protest. Islamabad High Court Bar Association President Riasat Ali Azad was also at the scene as the lawyers alleged that the police have baton-charged their colleagues at Serena Chowk.

They have further said that some of their colleagues have already reached outside the Supreme Court (SC) while others are protesting outside the Islamabad High Court (IHC). Also on Monday, Barrister Ali Zafar said that the law and the constitution necessitated the postponement of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) meeting until and unless the issue of seniority of the Supreme Court (SC) judges was resolved.

Trump says no right of return for Palestinians

WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump has confirmed that his proposal for mass displacement in Gaza does not include a right of return for Palestinians in the enclave. In an interview with Fox News, partially aired on Monday, Trump also reiterated his push to "own" Gaza.

Asked whether Palestinians would be allowed to return to their territory under his plan, Trump said, "No, they wouldn't." The US president's plan to empty Gaza of its population has been forcefully rejected across the Middle East — including by Egypt and Jordan, the main countries that Trump says he wants to host displaced Palestinians. Rights groups have also condemned the push, saying that it would amount to ethnic cleansing.

Trump's assertion that he is seeking the permanent displacement of people in Gaza appears to contradict recent comments by his aides who said that the enclave's residents would be able to return after the area is rebuilt. Last week, White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said people in Gaza would be "temporarily relocated". Secretary of State Marco Rubio also said that the dis-

placement of Palestinians in Gaza would be in the "interim", and residents would be able to "move back in" after reconstruction.

In His Fox News interview, Trump suggested that the US would leverage its aid to Jordan and Egypt to get the two countries to take in displaced Palestinians. "I think I could make a deal with Jordan. I think I could make a deal with Egypt. You know, we give them billions and billions of dollars a year," the US president said. He added that Palestinians would live in "beautiful communities" away from Gaza. "In the meantime, I would own this. Think of it as a real estate development for the future," he said.

The plan for the US to take over Gaza has raised eyebrows across the world. Washington has no legal claim to the territory, and the United Nations charter prohibits the acquisition of land by force. According to the Health Ministry in Gaza, Israel's US-backed war on the enclave has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians. The Gaza Government Media Office puts the death toll at more than 61,700, including thousands of missing people who are presumed dead.

The Israeli offensive has turned much of Gaza into rubble. But the territory's residents have pledged to remain steadfast in their land. Local authorities have been pleading for tents and mobile homes to shelter people until reconstruction begins, accusing Israel of hindering the aid in violation of the ceasefire agreement.

Last week, Amnesty International warned that systemic efforts to expel Palestinians in Gaza could constitute a crime against humanity. "Amnesty International also warns against the misuse of desperately needed humanitarian aid and reconstruction as a bargaining chip or as a means to coerce Palestinians in Gaza into leaving," the group's chief Agnes Callamard said in a statement.

"No state is entitled to treat a protected population living under occupation as pawns in a geopolitical chess game." In 1994, UN experts defined ethnic cleansing as "a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas". — Aljazeera

The Frontier Post

Five terrorists perished F.P. Report

KARAK: Almost five terrorists killed in a joint operation conducted by Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Kohat along with local police and security forces in Mir Kalam Banda area of Karak district. CTD and security forces exchanged fire with Fitna-ul-Khawarij. Five important Khawarij of the banned organization TTP commander Kaleemullah group who were wanted by CTD Kohat in cases



ISTANBUL: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during his brief stop-over airport.

SC adjourns military trial case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The hearing of the case against the trial of civilians in military courts has been adjourned until today (Tuesday) due to the absence of lawyers.

A seven-member constitutional bench, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the intra-court appeal against the trial of civilians in military courts. Rana Waqas, the associate of Salman Akram Raja, informed the court that he could not reach due to traffic, as Margalla Road was the only open route to the Supreme Court.

Justice Jamal Mandokhail responded by saying that other lawyers, including Khawaja Haris, had arrived, and if Advocate Raja had left half an hour earlier, he would have been present as well. He remarked that it seemed the lawyers wanted people to remain in detention indefinitely, and if the lawyers didn't want to attend, there was little that could be done.

Subsequently, the court issued a brief order, stating that since Advocate Raja was not present in court, the hearing of the case was adjourned until today.

SHC issues notice to federal govt

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) has issued a notice to the federal government regarding a petition filed against the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA).

The court has directed the government to submit a response within two weeks addressing the raised concerns. During the hearing, Chief Justice of the SHC, Justice Shafi Siddiqui, questioned the petitioner's lawyer about the objections to the law, stating, "If someone spreads false news, shouldn't they be punished? Not all decisions are made in courts; some are decided by relevant authorities. You also have the right to appeal against the authorities' decisions."

In response, the petitioner's lawyer argued that matters concerning fundamental rights should be adjudicated by the courts. The bench observed that if the case pertains to fundamental rights, it should be heard by a constitutional bench. The court issued notices and expressed hope that the lawyers would present well-prepared arguments in the next hearing.

Meanwhile, Sindh High Court (SHC) on Monday rejected the bail plea of rights activist Sarim Burney, in a human trafficking and document tampering case, with allegations of illegally aiding the adoption of over 25 children in the US.

Following a complaint from the US government, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in June 2024 arrested Sarim Burney upon his return from the US on human trafficking charges.

Zardari, Erdogan discuss mutual ties

ISTANBUL: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday held a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a brief stopover at Istanbul Airport en route to Portugal.

Foreign Minister of Turkiye Hakan Fidan warmly received the president at the airport. In the meeting, President Zardari and President Erdogan discussed the bilateral ties and the matters of mutual interest besides exchanging courtesies.

After a brief meeting with Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President Asif Ali Zardari reached Portugal. President Zardari will express condolences on the passing of Prince Karim Aga Khan. During the visit, President Asif Ali Zardari met with his Chinese counterpart, President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The president also attended the opening ceremony of the 9th Asian Winter Games in the Chinese city of Harbin. During the visit, memorandums of understanding were signed between Pakistan and China for bilateral cooperation in various fields.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari arrived in Lisbon on Monday and offered condolences to Prince Rahim Al-Hussaini following the death of his father, Prince Karim Aga Khan.

He expressed his heartfelt sympathies on behalf of the people and government of

Pakistan, saying that the nation mourned the loss of a "true friend" and "great philanthropist." The President said that he had deeply been touched by the passing of the late Aga Khan, with whom he had personal relations. He lauded the late Aga Khan's contributions to Pakistan's social and economic development, particularly in health care, education, community development, and poverty alleviation. "His visionary leadership improved the lives of people in Pakistan and other regions of the world," he added.

The President informed that he was on an official visit to China when he learned of the Aga Khan's passing. He said that he was visiting Lisbon to pay tribute to the late Prince Karim Aga Khan lifelong dedication to philanthropy and humanitarian work, adding that his services to humanity would always be remembered.

The President expressed the hope that Prince Rahim Al-Hussaini would continue his father's mission to serve the cause of humanity. The President is on a visit to Lisbon to offer condolences and pay tribute to the life of the Late Prince Karim Aga Khan, who was dedicated to philanthropy and the welfare of the people. His visit also underscores the deep and enduring friendship between Pakistan and the Aga Khan family and the lasting impact of Prince Karim Aga Khan's legacy.

Vessel carrying 65 sinks off Libyan coast

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A boat carrying dozens of passengers, including Pakistanis, capsized in Libya, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed on Monday. The legal status of the passengers aboard the vessel has yet to be confirmed, as the ministry's spokesperson stated that Pakistani officials are working to gather details.

In its statement, the Foreign Office said a vessel carrying approximately 65 passengers capsized near the port of Marsa Dela, northwest of Zawiyah City, Libya. The Pakistan Embassy in Tripoli dispatched a team to Zawiyah Hospital to assist the local authorities in the identification of the deceased, the ministry said.

The Foreign Office added that the embassy was trying to ascertain further details of the Pakistani affectees. The ministry's Crisis Management Unit (CMU) has been activated to monitor the situation

with people advised to contact at 051-9207887 helpline.

Meanwhile, the relevant officials in Tripoli can be contacted on 03052185882 (WhatsApp), +218913870577 (cell-phone) and +218 91-6425435(WhatsApp). The latest incident adds to the list of migrant boat tragedies resulting in loss of precious lives with dozens of Pakistanis drowning in multiple incidents in recent months.

In January, more than 40 Pakistanis were killed after a boat carrying irregular migrants from the African nation of Mauritania to Spain capsized. The ill-fated boat departed from Mauritania on January 2 with 86 migrants on board. Moroccan authorities reported that 66 of the passengers were Pakistani nationals and noted that it had rescued 36 people after the accident.

Before that, more than 80 Pakistanis drowned after boats carrying them capsized near Greece on the

night between December 13 and 14, 2024. Driven by socio-economic disparity and the allure of a better lifestyle abroad, illegal migration, despite its risks, continues to draw people to spend a fortune in paying human traffickers to reach Europe.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government has ordered strict action against smugglers as well as officials involved facilitating them in this cruel practice. Since then, as many as 35 Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) officials have been dismissed along with a change in the top post after now-former director general Ahmad Ishaq Jahangir was removed from his office over the reportedly slow pace of investigations in the boat capsizing incidents and large scale illegal migration. Apart from the government measures, Lahore's Jamia Naeemia has also issued a religious edict against the use of illegal means to travel abroad from Pakistan.

Saif backs struggle of lawyers, journalists against black laws

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information & Public Relations, has stated that the intention behind creating controversy over the seniority of Judges is to undermine the independence of the judiciary adding that the fake government in the federal has paved the way for interference in judicial matters through the 26th Constitutional Amendment.

Dr. Saif said that the purpose of the 26th

Constitutional Amendment and the amendment to PECA act was to provide protection to the fake government. He said that If these black laws were not abolished, the country would be plunged into devastation.

He expressed solidarity with the ongoing struggle of lawyers and journalists against these black laws, vowing to resist any attempts to undermine the freedom of the judiciary and press. Dr. Saif said that the fake government was playing with the country's constitution and laws to maintain its power adding

that damaging the judiciary and press is equivalent to harming the entire country.

He said that the fake government was doing all this to protect its stolen mandate. He said the fake government had broken records of fascism in the country, promoting lawlessness, which would have severe consequences for the entire nation. Dr. Saif said that it was the fake government's misconception that these black laws and dirty tactics would save their power. He said despite all their efforts, the demise of the fake government was inevitable.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah meets with French Ambassador Nicolas Galey at CM House. —APP Photo

Zartaj Gul criticizes govt constitutional violations and political suppression

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former federal minister Zartaj Gul stated on Monday that constitutional violations were being made to extend the tenure of a government with only 17 seats.

Speaking to the media in Islamabad, PTI leader Zartaj Gul said that the government had not spared the judiciary or journalists, and they have already portrayed political workers as terrorists. She added that under the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, the constitution, provinces, and political parties were

not safe, and in the end, only the judiciary remained untouched.

She expressed regret that after the 26th constitutional amendment, the Supreme Court, judges, and all benches have been made controversial. She questioned the state of the country under PML-N's rule, saying that even lawyers were facing lawsuits for defending innocent people.

The PTI leader emphasised that political ideologies can vary, and politicians may cooperate with anyone. She clarified that if Maulana Fazlur Rehman or any other political party joins them, it does not mean their ideology aligns with

PTI's. Political parties have different ideologies.

Zartaj Gul stated that regarding a grand alliance, the entire nation must unite to support PTI. Everyone must stand with Imran Khan, as PTI is the only party firmly standing at the moment, and all political parties should support the founder of PTI. The former federal minister said that the constitution, Supreme Court, and judges were being undermined, and everything was being compromised to prolong the government of a party with only 17 seats. She claimed that on February 8th, their mandate was stolen.

NA Special Committee on Gender Mainstreaming meets

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Special Committee on Gender Mainstreaming met here on Monday. Honorable Chairperson, Dr. Nafisa Shah, welcomed the Committee members and participants. She drew the Committee's attention to a recent newspaper article highlighting women's participation in Pakistan's Civil Services.

The Committee urged the Federal Government to appoint the Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women without further delay. Additionally, the Committee directed the Ministry of Human Rights to liaise with Provincial Governments to ensure the establishment of Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women as soon as possible.

The Committee directed the Ministry of Human Rights and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics to provide detailed information on gender disparity indicators and sub-indicators at the earliest. The Committee expressed serious concerns about the statistics provided by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, specifically regarding the male-to-female sex ratio in Pakistan.

They also raised concerns about the data on employment for individuals aged 10 and above, broken down by gender, and rural and urban percentages, as reported in the Census 2023. The Committee has directed the Bureau of Statistics to provide a comprehensive briefing on these issues in the upcoming meeting.

The Secretary Ministry of Human Rights briefed the Committee on the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry in collaboration with the National Commission on the Status of Women to analyze the gender gap, particularly in relation to the global gender gap report published by the World Economic Forum, in which Pakistan ranks 145th out of 146 countries.

The Secretary further shared key indicators of gender gaps in various sectors, including health, education, access to justice, financial resources, and women's representation on the Boards of Governors in listed companies.

The Secretary Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs informed the Committee that all Provincial Assemblies, including those of GB and AJ&K, except KPK, had already established Parliamentary Committees on Gender Mainstreaming. In response, the Committee directed the Secretary of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs to coordinate with the KPK Assembly and urge them to expedite the formation of their Parliamentary Committee on Gender Mainstreaming.

The meeting was attended by MNAs Ms. Shaista Pervaiz, Ms. Shahida Begum, Syed Hussain Tariq, Sher Ali Arbab, Khawaja Izhur ul Hassan and Senator Rubina Qaim Khani besides senior officers from the Ministries of Parliamentary Affairs, Human Rights, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and National Commission on the Status of Women.

Govt collecting Rs60 levy on one liter of petrol

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Ministry of Finance has generated additional Rs76 billion revenue under the head of petroleum development levy (PDL) during the first half of current fiscal year 2024-25 which is 16 percent more as compared to the amount collected during the same period of previous fiscal year.

A report issued by Ministry of Finance showed that the incumbent government is collecting R60 as petroleum development levy on one liter of petrol or diesel. The government collected Rs549 billion under the head of petroleum development levy during the current fiscal year while Rs473 billion were collected during the same period of previous fiscal year. Experts said that the government enhanced the petroleum development levy from Rs10 to Rs79 in the budget. They further revealed that the government has still not imposed Rs10 petroleum development levy on consumers.

Law minister Azam Tarar hints at possible changes in PECA

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar said on Monday that no law was permanent and that the concerned ministries were holding consultations with

the stakeholders on the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA).

Speaking to the media at the Parliament House, the minister, however, said that it was the parlia-

ment, which had the final authority in making amendments to the constitution. He said that if all stakeholders agreed, PECA could further be amended.

Farah highlights positive changes in Balochistan

LAHORE (APP): Security problems in Balochistan are not widespread but confined to certain areas, where the primary cause is terrorism. Terrorists have no religion or affiliation with Pakistan and will be dealt with firmly.

It was stated by Farah Azeem Shah, the former spokesperson for the Balochistan government, Member Provincial Assembly Balochistan and Member PEMRA Board while addressing a press as the special guest at the Lahore Press Club's "Meet the Press" event on Monday.

She expressed confidence in Balochistan's potential, asserting that the region will be developed into a skilled workforce and would not remain dependent. Farah Azeem Shah highlighted that, contrary to negative portrayals, there are many positive developments happening in Balochistan that need more attention. She mentioned that several parliamentarians, during discussions on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, expressed a strong desire to visit Pakistan.

Shah acknowledged that issues often arise in regions due to disputes over resources or the rights of the people, a problem seen worldwide. She also mentioned significant initiatives being taken for the welfare and development of the pub-

lic, including the launch of the "Imaan Pakistan" movement, which has helped reduce societal divisions.

Shah added that the movement aimed to rekindle the spirit of 1947, which had led to the creation of Pakistan. She pointed out the growing number of talented people in Pakistan today and stressed that the province is focused on establishing vocational training centers. In fact, within just one month, three vocational training centers for girls were established in certain areas of Balochistan.

Further plans include agreements with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, under which skilled individuals from Balochistan will be sent to Turkey for work and educational opportunities. Scholarships will be provided for the youth, and businesswomen from the province will be given access to global markets. Shah emphasized that the focus is on empowering the people of Balochistan rather than seeking support from others.

Regarding the media's role, Shah stated that media workers are ambassadors of Pakistan and crucial to the success of the "Imaan Pakistan" movement. She urged the media to highlight positive aspects of the country, emphasizing that issues of national importance can be

addressed through ethics and love, rather than through force. She also mentioned that several global powers are working to weaken Pakistan, and some local individuals are aiding these efforts, but Balochistan remains crucial to Pakistan's future due to its natural resources and strategic location.

In response to a question regarding countries that have imposed visa restrictions on Pakistanis, Shah suggested that those countries should instead return Pakistani criminals and wrongdoers back to Pakistan, where they would face strict punishment.

At the event, Lahore Press Club President Arshad Ansari assured full media support for the "Imaan Pakistan" movement. Additionally, Dr. Christopher, an executive member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, discussed climate change and its impacts, noting that efforts would be made to address these challenges through joint initiatives.

He thanked the Pakistani public, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and the Punjab Assembly for their hospitality. In conclusion, President Arshad Ansari and Secretary Zahid Abid of the Lahore Press Club presented souvenirs to the distinguished guests.

LDA seals 59 properties

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on Monday sealed another 59 properties, during its on going daily operation against illegal commercial buildings and defaulters of commercial fees.

The operations took place in several neighborhoods, including Gulberg, Shadman, Shah Jamal, Samanabad, and Shadbagh. In Gulberg alone, 20 properties were sealed due to non-payment of commercial fees

and illegal commercial use. Meanwhile, 39 properties in Shadman, Shah Jamal, Samanabad, and Shadbagh were also sealed.

The sealed properties included private schools, restaurants, salons, food outlets, shops, offices, and other commercial establishments. Prior to the operation, multiple notices had been issued to the property owners. The operation was conducted under the supervision of Chief Town Planner Asad ul Zaman.

In another major operation, the LDA enforcement squad, along with district administration officials, carried out a joint anti-encroachment drive on Raiwind Road, from Adda Plot to Sher Shah Signal. During the operation, illegal encroachments along Raiwind Road were removed, including structures causing traffic congestion and those built directly on the road. Unauthorized stalls were also dismantled.

Foreign investors to be provided all facilities: Tessori

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori on Monday stated that investment, trade expansion and business delegation exchanges are being actively encouraged, while foreign investors are being provided with all possible facilities under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) framework. He expressed these views

during a meeting at Governor House with a four-member delegation led by Trade Champion CEO Rashid Iqbal, which included members of the Pakistan-British Business Council. The discussion focused on trade cooperation and matters of mutual interest.

The Pakistan-British Business Council delegation remarked that their meeting with the Governor would

enhance British investors' confidence in Pakistan.

The council assured that they would collaborate on IT and educational projects, including the establishment of new universities. Additionally, they formally invited Governor Sindh to visit London.

During their visit to Governor House, the delegation toured the IT Marquee, Ration Drive and

"Umeed Ki Ghanti" (Bell of Hope). The visitors rang the Bell of Hope with pleasant surprise and admiration and also reviewed the ration bags being distributed to the deserving under the Ration Drive initiative.

Rashid Iqbal lauded Governor Initiatives, stating that the projects launched under his leadership are exemplary.

Efforts being made to provide maximum benefits to farmers: Kirmani

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani on Monday said that under able leadership of Punjab CM, efforts were being made to provide maximum benefits to farmers through Kisan Card initiative.

He said this while presiding over a meeting which reviewed the progress of Punjab Chief Minister's Transforming Agriculture Punjab initiative, particularly Kisan Card Phase-II and agricultural mechanization financing projects, here.

During the meeting, various options were discussed regarding the inclusion of small and

medium-scale farmers (owning up to 25 acres of land) in the second phase of the Punjab Chief Minister Kisan Card.

The possibility of increasing the per-acre loan limit was also considered, with final approval to be given by the Punjab CM. Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani suggested that farmers should also be allowed to purchase diesel using the 30% cash withdrawal facility provided through the Kisan Card. Additionally, he emphasized the need to remove transaction charges on purchases made through the Kisan Card.

The Minister directed to introduce Cotton Crop Insurance Pilot Project under the Kisan Card and the formulation of a Disaster Crop Insurance Plan for other key crops. He also stressed the importance of gathering farmers' feedback for the second phase of Kisan Card distribution through SMS surveys. So far, 535,000 Kisan Cards had been approved for issuance.

Under Mechanization Bank Financing Programme, the Bank of Punjab would provide high-tech farm machinery to farmers over the next three years at a total cost

of Rs 50 billion, he added.

He further said that a farmer could receive interest-free loans of up to Rs 50 million for purchasing farm machinery, with a repayment period of five years.

Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani also highlighted the need to increase the number of rice and cotton farming machines.

The meeting also finalized arrangements for the upcoming Green Tractor Programme launching ceremony, scheduled for this month.

Punjab Agriculture Secretary Iftekhar Ali Sahoo also spoke on the occasion.

District City Police stand by martyr's family at his daughter's wedding



F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a heartfelt gesture of solidarity, SSP Arif Aziz (PSP) District City extended his warm congratulations to the daughter of a martyred police officer on her wedding on February 6, 2025 and personally attended the ceremony to show support and contributions.

The bride's father, Mohammad Pervaiz, head

constable, a brave police officer, was martyred in 2016 while performing his duty at a snap-checking post in Chakiwara, Karachi, when miscreants opened fire on him. In honour of his sacrifice, the City District Police, under the leadership of SSP City Arif Aziz (PSP), ensured that his daughter's wedding was a memorable and well-supported occasion, reaffirming their commit-

ment to the families of fallen officers.

Accompanying SSP City were SP Lyari Lal Bakhsh Solangi, SDPO Baghdadi Tabish Ali, and SHO Baghdadi Majid Alvi, all of whom participated in the event to pay tribute to the late officer's service and stand by his family to make the day memorable.

In a touching moment, female police constables

welcomed the bride with flowers, symbolising the force's deep respect and support. To further commemorate the occasion, the District City Police ensured that the martyr's daughter was escorted with full police protocol, highlighting their dedication to upholding the legacy of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Speaking on the occasion, SSP City Arif Aziz paid homage to the martyred policeman and all other personnel who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. He emphasised the police force's unwavering resolve to honour their fallen comrades, demonstrating courage, dedication, and the spirit to serve the city and the nation.

He reaffirmed the commitment to supporting the families of martyred police personnel with the same devotion as they protect the community.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
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Email: irrigation.mansehra@gmail.com
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NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING
(Single Stage Two Envelope Procedure E-Bidding System)

Executive Engineer Mansehra Irrigation Division Mansehra, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites Electronic Bids from eligible firms / bidders in accordance with KPRA Procurement Rules 2014 on Single Stage Two Envelope procedure for the following Works:

	Work Name	E/cost	Bid Security / Stamp duty	Time Limit
A13470- Others				
1	Emergent Nature Channelization of Kunhar river and Manoor Nullah at Mohandari District Mansehra.	10.00(M)	209000	(30 June 2025)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:-

Bid Solicitation documents including Instructions to Bidders can be download from Irrigation website <http://www.irrigation.gkp.pk/> as well as KPRA website, otherwise bids submitted without these documents (duly filled) will be considered non-responsive.

- Pre-bid meeting will be held on **26/02/2025 at 11.00 AM** in the office of Executive Engineer Mansehra Irrigation Division Mansehra.
- The last date for bid submission is **05/03/2025 at 12.00 PM**, in the office of Executive Engineer Mansehra Irrigation Division Mansehra.
- The eligible bidders are required to send their bids through courier services or by hand along with their PEC/ Renewal for 2024-25 and hard copies of all relevant documents.
- No Bank Guarantee is acceptable.
- The Bidder Shall submit as single Envelope (Sealed Bid), containing two separate sealed envelopes of Financial and Technical Proposals.
- The bid security and quoted rates on the BOQs shall be Provided in Sealed Financial Proposal Envelopes and duly stamped with firms/ Co seals.
- After opening of technical bids, the detail scrutiny of documents of the bidders will be carried out, the mandatory hard copies of following documents must be attach with the bid, if the bidder fails to submit any of the following mandatory hard copies of the following documents, the bid will be non responsive and straight way will be rejected.
(CNIC Copy of the bidder, II) Valid PEC Registration of Bidder, III) Valid Enlistment Certificate from Works Department, IV) FORM H in case of Companies, V) Valid KPRA Online verification form VI) Valid FBR online verification form VII) The bidder will provide the certificate on Affidavit that firm is not involve in any litigation case with Irrigation Division Mansehra. The bidder will provide a certificate on Affidavit that he has not been served with any notice w.e.f 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2024 by this Office regarding slow Progress / below specification or stoppage of execution of Public Works, VIII) The bidder will provide the certificate on Affidavit that no any recovery has been made by any investigation from last 3 years, IX) The Bidder will submit the experience certificate regarding similar nature / Emergent nature works executed during the last 2 years.
- Tender form Fee (non-refundable) @ 0.03% of the estimated Cost in the shape of call deposit should be accompanied with tender.
- The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional security as per KPRA Notification No S.R.O (14) vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated 10.05.2022. They shall also submit rates Analyses attached with bids duly certified by Engineer in-charge of their Firms, otherwise without additional CDR and rate analysis the bid will be considered as nonresponsive and straight way will be rejected.
- If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non responsive.
- Any bidder who failed to submit CDR and bidding fee before opening of bids will be considered as no responsive.
- The procuring entity reserves the right to accept / reject or declare non responsive any or all the participation bidder by assigning cogent reason.
- The Call Deposits / Additional Security of all the contractors will be retained till approval of the tenders by the tender approving authority.
- Govt. Taxes Shall be applied as prevailing.
- All other terms and conditions are as per KPRA rules, PEC, SBDs and other relevant laws.
- All bidders are required to be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 20213 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No XXI of 2013), consulting and non-consulting services as Listed in schedule-II of the Act (bid).

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Mansehra Irrigation Division Mansehra
INF(P)495/25



PESHAWAR: Amir Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) Maulana Fazl ur Rehman addressing the gathering of Mushawerti Jirga at Nishtar Hall.

PHC conditionally allowed Jinnah Medical College students to appear in exam

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Inam Ullah, has granted conditional permission to three final-year students of Jinnah Medical College to appear in their final exams and ordered them to clear their college dues within a month, on Monday.

The bench heard the writ petition filed by Sher Ali and others through their counsel, Amin Khattak Lachi and Syed Ali Shah advocates. During the hearing, the counsel for the petitioners informed the court that the petitioners are final-year students of Jinnah Medical College, who were transferred to the college from another institution following orders from the Pakistan Medical Council and various high court decisions.

The counsel stated that despite completing their studies, the petitioners were not being allowed to appear in their final exams due to outstanding college dues. The counsel requested the court to grant permission to the petitioner for appearing in the exams, subject to the condition that they would clear their

LHW program to provide zinc tablets, ORS across all districts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the directive of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Advisor Ihtesham Ali, the Lady Health Workers (LHW) Program will provide zinc tablets and low-osmolality oral rehydration salts (ORS) across all districts of the province this year for the treatment of childhood diarrhea. In his statement, the Health Advisor emphasized that this intervention will significantly reduce the rising prevalence of the disease among children under five.

Dr. Khizar Hayat, Director of MCH, Pirzada Asad, Deputy Director of the LHW Program, and Darya Khan, Provincial Coordinator for Nutrition International, signed the agreement for the distribution of zinc and ORS at the Directorate of Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS), approximately 21% of children under five in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa suffer from diarrhea. To address this pressing health issue, the Directorate of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and the Lady Health Worker Program, in collaboration with Nutrition International, are launching a large-scale intervention to combat diarrhea in children.

Nutrition International has donated zinc dispersible strips and low-osmolality oral rehydration solution (LO-ORS) to the Health Department for distribution across the province.

The combined use of zinc and low-osmolality ORS is a well-established and WHO-recommended approach to managing childhood diarrhea. It not only helps treat dehydration but also reduces the severity and duration of diarrhea while preventing future episodes.

Zinc plays a crucial role in boosting the immune system and ensuring long-term health benefits for children.

This initiative reflects a targeted, evidence-based effort to reduce child mortality and morbidity due to diarrhea in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ensuring that children receive essential care to recover and thrive.

Employees of the Strengthening Rehabilitation Services for Physically Disabled Persons' project staged a protest outside the Health Department to demand the release of their unpaid salaries.

During the protest, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Advisor Ihtesham Ali listened to their grievances and issued directives for immediate resolution.

Speaking with the representatives of the protesting employees, the Health Advisor stated that the project had been sent to the Planning and Development (P&D) Department for revision for the fourth time and was being actively followed up.

He expressed concern over the injustice of seven months of unpaid salaries for 54 physiotherapists and three support staff. "How can my staff work if they don't receive their salaries?" the Health Advisor questioned.

Satisfied over the majors taken upon the directions on the Health Advisor the protesters thanked the Health Advisor and ended their protest.

Whopping plantation a viable solution Snowless winter increases risks of drought, early summer

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

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

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

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

"In the past, winter rains and snowfalls would begin by the end of December," he said. "However, in 2024, the rain cycle altered, with the first winter rains arriving only in January. As of now, this year's winter rains have yet to fully commence in Pakistan. This delay significantly raises the risk of drought and desertification, particularly in southern Pakistan, which is highly dependent on glacier-fed water from the Indus River.

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



substantial shortfall.

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

The absence of adequate snowfall and rainfall last year in areas such as Malakand, Hazara, and northern Punjab led to unusually intense sun heat during February and March, exacerbating the situation. "The lack of winter precipitation is now threatening food security, making it imperative to undertake massive plantation initiatives to counter the growing environmental challenges," Afsar Khan emphasized.

Gulzar Rehman, a former Conservator of Forests, echoed these concerns, noting that the absence of winter snow could lead to greater desertification, land degradation, and drought (DDLD).

If left unaddressed, these issues could result in economic losses amounting to \$42 billion annually, while an estimated six million hectares of productive land could be lost to DDLD each year worldwide.

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

The National Forests Policy reveals that Pakistan loses about 27,000 hectares of forest annually, particularly in community-managed forests in KP and Gilgit Baltistan.

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

KP to provide electricity and gas to industries at concessional rates

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muzammil Aslam, has stated that the Federal Government's poor electricity and gas policy has disrupted the operations of major industries across the country. In light of this situation, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has decided to provide electricity to industries at concessional rates in the future and is also in a position to supply gas under the new gas policy.

In a message issued from his office, Muzammil Aslam announced that industries seeking electricity at 8 to 9 cents will soon have their demands met in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He emphasized that the growing interest of the country's textile and other industries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's industrialization is a testament to the government's business-friendly policies under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur.

The Advisor further stated that businesses associated with the service sector are also encouraged to establish their enterprises and franchises in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He invited business owners and investors to share their suggestions before the next budget, assuring them of the Provincial Government's commitment to providing all necessary facilities.

"Our goal is to strengthen the economy of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and contribute to the overall economic growth of Pakistan," Muzammil Aslam affirmed.

Dosti Peshawar Literature Festival Kicks Off

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar is set to witness a grand literary celebration as the fourth Dosti Peshawar Literature Festival kicks off today, February 11, at the University of Peshawar, continuing until February 22.

Bringing together renowned literary, academic, and social figures from across the country, the festival will serve as a hub for book lovers, writers, and cultural enthusiasts.

The main venue, Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, will host a dynamic lineup of literary sessions, poetry recitals, panel discussions, book launches, and cultural activities in multiple languages. Additionally, regional chapters in various universities will foster literary dialogues and creative exchanges.

With a strong focus on inclusivity, the Dosti Peshawar Literature Festival ensures representation of Urdu, English, Pashto, Hindko, and other regional languages. The event aims to promote literature, nurture a reading culture, and inspire the younger generation to embrace books and storytelling.

According to the organizers, renowned writers, poets, intellectuals, and journalists are expected to participate this year. Special sessions will highlight book appreciation and the importance of reading habits.

Literature enthusiasts, students, and the public are encouraged to attend and be part of this remarkable literary journey.

For more information and participation details, visit the festival's official website and social media pages.

Colorful Sports Gala begins at PCP



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sports Week at Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP) has commenced with vibrant celebrations and exciting sports competitions. The Chief Executive Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, inaugurated the grand sports gala by cutting the ribbon on Monday morning.

The Gala is witnessing enthusiastic participation from college students, the center's staff, inpatients, caregivers, and wheelchair athletes from different regions, including Skardu, Azad Kashmir, and Quetta Baluchistan besides other far flung areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In his inaugural speech, Dr. Ilyas reiterated that promoting healthy and positive activities at pcp aligns with its motto: "The patient is our boss."

He highlighted that the active participation of patients and wheelchair athletes in Sports Week is a symbol of determination and resilience, strengthening their journey toward rehabilitation.

A total of 35 teams and individual athletes are participating in the competitions.

On the first day, events such as tug-of-war, wheelchair volleyball, caregivers' race, and wheelchair race were successfully concluded, while other competitions will continue throughout the week. In the tug-of-war, the Attendants Team emerged victorious, with Security Zalmi securing the runner-up position. In the wheelchair race, Dawood Khan claimed first place, while Abdullah secured second position. Similarly, in the caregivers' race, Naveed won first place, and Huzaifa Malik was the runner-up. In wheelchair volleyball, Friends of Paraplegics took the top position, while CPMR College secured second place.

To ensure the successful organization of the Sports Gala, 18 coordinators have been appointed under the supervision of Chief Organizer Hafeezullah. The event is being jointly organized by Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP), the College of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (CPMR) and Friends of Paraplegics (FoP). The primary objective of the Sports Week is to support and encourage the physical and psychological rehabilitation of patients.

Five men arrested for illegal tax collection

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar district administration arrested 5 individuals for illegally collecting taxes from vehicles on De-Tour Road. The operation was carried out following directives from the provincial government.

Deputy Commissioner Sarmad Saleem Akram took immediate action after receiving reports of illegal tax collection. A team led by the Additional Assistant Commissioner (Mata) conducted the raid, leading to the arrests. The suspects have been sent to jail, and legal proceedings are underway to ensure strict punishment.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized that illegal activities will not be tolerated in Peshawar. Citizens are encouraged to report any such activities to the district administration for prompt action.

Pakistan's largest Youth Summit to begin

PESHAWAR (APP): Over the next three days, the summit would feature sessions on Artificial Intelligence, Freelancing, and E-Commerce, along with skill-building workshops designed to equip young individuals with essential knowledge and expertise.

Prestigious awards, including the Pride of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Awards, Journalist Awards, and Content Creator Awards, would recognize outstanding contributions across various fields.

Exhibitions and networking opportunities would provide attendees with insights into emerging business opportunities and industry trends.

The Pride of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Awards would honor 15 distinguished individuals for their remarkable achievements in innovation, entrepreneurship, sports, and social impact, while 14 prominent journalists will be recognized for their exceptional contributions to media and journalism.

With more than 10,000 participants expected and over 100 partner's showcasing business and industry insights, the summit provides a unique platform for networking, learning, and collaboration.

Hassan Nisar, Founder and CEO of Metrix Pakistan, highlighted the importance of the event, stating that the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possesses immense talent, resilience, and ambition.

He emphasized that the summit serves as a testament to their potential by bringing together industry experts, entrepreneurs, and changemakers to create an ecosystem of growth and opportunity.





In brief

Woman gives birth to quintuplets F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: A woman in Dir Lower had given birth to five babies at once, and both the mother and the newborns were in perfect health. Dr. Abbas, the Deputy Medical Superintendent (DMS) of Timergara Teaching Hospital told media on Monday the woman, a resident of Shago, delivered two sons and three daughters. Dr. Abbas confirmed that all five babies and their mother are completely healthy and doing well. The father, Siraj Khan, expressed his happiness and gratitude to Allah Almighty for the blessing of five children. It is worth mentioning that just last month, a woman in Bannu also gave birth to quintuplets.

Tribesmen facing extreme poverty F.P. Report

WANA: In South Waziristan, poverty is rising at an alarming rate due to the government's poor policies and administrative failures. Arbitrary decisions and the dominance of mafias have created severe hardships for the local population. The increasing trend of unemployment has forced many locals, including women and children, to resort to begging in various markets of Wana. Due to poverty, dozens of children have dropped out of school, pushing the region's future further into darkness. Public and social circles have urged the government to take immediate and effective steps to eliminate poverty and curb unemployment. They have called for the creation of educational and employment opportunities in the area so that locals can earn a dignified livelihood and provide a better future for their children. It is high time for the government and relevant institutions to wake up from their slumber and take practical steps to address the issues faced by the people of South Waziristan. Only then can the path to prosperity and development be ensured.

Dacoit killed in encounter F.P. Report

MUZAFFARGARH: A notorious and wanted dacoit namely Muneer alias Mini Baloch, with a bounty of Rs7 million on his head, was killed during an encounter with police in Rohilanwali area of District Muzaffargarh. A spokesman of Punjab police said that the dead dacoit was wanted by police as 62 cases were registered against him in different police stations. The spokesman further revealed that after noticing the police van the dacoits gang started indiscriminate firing on them. Soon after receiving the report, a heavy contingent of police force under the supervision of DSP Sadder reached the area for launching a counter action. During heavy exchange of firing the wanted dacoit was critically wounded while a police constable received severe bullet injuries and a police vehicle was partially damaged. The injured dacoit died on way to hospital while his other colleagues managed to escape from the scene. Police also recovered a motorcycle and an automatic rifle from the possession of the dead dacoit. The spokesman said that raids were being conducted to arrest the colleagues of dead dacoit. The dead body of dacoit was shifted to local hospital for autopsy while injured police constable who was identified as Asim was in a stable condition and also recovering fast.

Its high time for educational reforms: Governor

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Governor Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, urged students to focus on building strong moral character along with academic excellence. He expressed these views while addressing the convocation ceremony of Riphah International College, Attock Campus, as the chief guest.

The event was attended by a distinguished gathering, including CEO of Riphah International College Attock Campus, Sahibzada Ammar Hassan Qureshi, Principal Professor Sharif Zahid, Director Waqar Ahmed, Sahibzada Dr. Aftab Qureshi of Pirmiana Sharif, Pakistan People's Party leader Sardar Ashar Hayat Khan, Malik Amanat Rawal, Sardar Haider Ali Khan, Malik Sher Khan Sadryal, Managing Director Rao Talash Badr, students, and esteemed guests.

In his address, Governor Punjab emphasized the importance of hard work and perseverance in achieving success, stating that there is no substitute for diligence. However, he stressed that along with academic achievements, students must also cultivate strong moral values, as this defines a truly honorable individual. He commended Sahibzada Dr. Aftab Hassan Qureshi for his dedication to public service, which has significantly benefited the local community.

Governor Punjab acknowledged the challenges in acquiring modern education in Pakistan and appreciated the efforts of Riphah International College, Attock Campus, in facilitating underprivileged students by offering fee concessions and waivers. He lauded this initiative as a model worth emulating. He expressed his honor in attending the event, noting that it

was his duty to be present, given that Attock is his home district.

He announced that plans for establishing a medical college and the University of Attock are in progress. Additionally, a study center for UET Taxila has been set up in Jand, while PC-1 for UET Taxila's Jand campus and Punjab University's sub-campus in Fateh Jang has been completed and will soon be presented for approval in the provincial cabinet meeting. Furthermore, dialysis centers will be established in Fateh Jang and Pindigheb to enhance healthcare facilities.

Governor Punjab stated that he aims to introduce the public-private partnership model, successfully implemented in Sindh, to Attock to ensure improved public services. He also appreciated the dedication of Riphah International College CEO, Sahibzada Ammar Hassan Qureshi, for his continuous efforts in promoting quality education. He concluded the ceremony by distributing gold medals and certificates among successful students.

Later, Governor Punjab visited the District Jail Attock, where he was received by Superintendent Arif Shehzad Gill along with local leadership. During his visit, he inaugurated an automated bread-making plant, installed through his personal efforts and cooperation, and inspected newly completed tile work within the jail.

In response to a request from the Superintendent, he assured full support for the construction of a new mosque within the jail premises. Governor Punjab also visited the prison hospital, checked on the inmates' well-being, and inspected various sections of the facility. Superintendent Arif Shehzad Gill provided a comprehensive briefing on administrative and operational matters.

KP Minister visits various roads at Karak

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture Major (R) Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal has made a detailed visit to the proposed and ongoing developmental schemes, especially the roads in his constituency at District Karak to review progress on it. On this occasion, the authorities concerned, elites of the area, local leadership of the party and party workers also accompanied him.

During his visit, the provincial minister inspected the Ghundi Kala to Ahmedabad, Zarkhan Kala to Anzar Banda and Mirdal Banda to Niaz Khel roads. He directed the authorities present on the spot that public interest must be taken into account while finalizing the development projects so that maximum number of people can benefit from them.

Barkwal said, unlike the past rulers, he is serving his electorate beyond any political affiliation and personal

likes and dislikes and the collective interest of the area is being given priority anyway.

The Minister maintained, developmental works are being carried out keeping in view the necessities of the area. He added, beside health, education and communication, agriculture, irrigation and forestry sectors are also among his priorities. He said that it is his mission to make the district of Karak, which is rich in natural resources, an ideal district of the province.



QUETTA: Activists of different political parties holding a protest rally in front of Balochistan Assembly.

Polio worker injured on resistance robbery

F.P. Report

LARKANA: During the polio campaign in the limits of Sehara Police Station near Dokri city of Larkana district, unknown armed men tried to rob polio campaign in-charge Andalatif Khokhar at a Khairoo Jhatial lorry.

When he resisted, the robbers shot him dead with a pistol. The polio staff was shifted to the hospital in a critical condition for treatment. Meanwhile, a demonstration was led by polio staff Fida Hussain against the incident.

On this occasion, the brother of the injured polio

campaign in-charge, Faiz Muhammad Khokhar, talking to the media, said that my brother is the polio campaign in-charge of Tattiri Center, who was admitted to the hospital after being attacked by armed men during duty. They demanded justice from the higher authorities of the Sindh government and said that security arrangements for the staff during the polio campaign should be tightened.

New cabinet commits to uphold rule of law: A meeting of newly elected officials and members of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana in held under the

chairmanship president Muhammad Nawaz Umrani, which began with the recitation of the Holy Quran.

On this occasion, the elected office bearers and members of the Press Club jointly said that we will always work hard for Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana, we will make every possible effort to bring the voice of the oppressed to the houses, they further said that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana is an excellent platform for the underprivileged and the poor, where their every problem is resolved on a priority basis.

Three weeks cleanliness drive launched in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: The district administration and Tehsil Municipal Administration Daggar started the three-week-long cleaning campaign on the instructions of the provincial government, on Monday.

Tehsil Nazim Daggar Rozi Khan and Deputy Commissioner Kashif Qayyum lead awareness

walk during launching cleanliness drive from Government High School in Village Council Elai. Assistant Commissioner Daggar Madam Basharat, Additional Assistant Commissioner Sajjad Yousafzai, TMA Daggar Arrangements Incharge Sadaqat Khan, Village Elai 2 Nazim Imran Khan, Qaim Khan. The teachers of private schools, students and local

people and TMA Daggar sanitation staff participated.

The speakers stressed on the importance and necessity of cleanliness. They have given references to the Holy Qur'an and blessed Hadiths and said that cleanliness is a great virtue in Islam and has made cleanliness mandatory for prayer and has called cleanliness a part of faith.



ATTOCK: Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan addressing during a ceremony at Rafah International College.

Preparations for Ramazan reviewed

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram has under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda" convened an important meeting for the preparations of the month of Ramazan in his office on Monday.

The meeting beside others, was also attended by the officers of administration, police, Pesco, gas and other related departments and institutions.

In the meeting, responsibilities were assigned to all the departments and institutions and the authorities concerned were strictly directed to ensure implementation of the government measures in this regard. The meeting was told that 5 Ramazan Dastarkhwas will be set up in various places including hospitals during the Ramazan.

DC Kohat directed the authorities concerned to directly send the hoarders and illegal profiteers to jail along-with imposition of heavy fines. He said that monitoring desks, complaint cells and price checking teams will be formed in all markets which will be fully active throughout the month of Ramazan. He also directed the authorities concerned to launch mega crackdown against the hoarders before Ramazan.

Cleanliness drive launched

F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Awami Agenda Program, three weeks long cleanliness campaign has kicked off at Bab-e-Khyber, tehsil Jamrud district Khyber on Monday.

The activity was inaugurated by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Muhammad Nauman while it was attended by tehsil Chairman Jamrud Haji Azmat Khan, Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) Officer Syed Noorullah, Assistant Commissioner, Jamrud Dr Amir Zeb, councillors, TMA workers and scores of political workers.

Speaking on the occasion ADC Muhammad Nauman said that on the special direction of the CM Ali Amin Gandapur besides district Khyber, a three weeks long cleanliness drive was launched across the province. Cleanliness is not only mandatory in Islam but it is also necessary for hygienic living, he added and said to keep the province clean was the mission of the incumbent government.

It was the joint duty of the government and the people to carry out the drive honestly, he remarked. He urged the tribesmen to keep clean their houses and their surrounding environment and prove as responsible citizens of the country.

Toru: Govt taking steps to improve governance

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Provincial Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru officially inaugurated the cleanliness drive organized by District Administration Mardan and WSSCM Mardan and said that under the Chief Minister's public agenda, the process of improving governance is ongoing across the province, under which steps are being taken to provide timely provision of various services to the people and to improve the environment, on Monday.

The provincial said that the three-week cleanliness campaign in Mardan is also a part of this agenda. He said that during this campaign, the Food Department and Halal Food Authority will also ensure the cleanliness of the markets and shops dealing in food items. He said that during this campaign, government offices, schools, colleges, hospitals and other public and private places including streets, roads, canals and markets will be cleaned.

On this occasion, DC Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir said that district administration WSSCM and TMAs are conducting this three-week cleanliness campaign in Mardan city and all five tehsils and will make Mardan clean with the help of public representatives, business community, students and public at large. Members of Provincial Assembly Abdul Salam Afridi and Zarshad Khan said that cleanliness is half of faith, therefore the success of this three-day campaign is the joint responsibility of the administration and the people.

Commissioner commits for success of plantation drive: Commissioner Mardan said that we have to plant more and more trees to protect ourselves from the negative effects of changing climate conditions. He said that more than one lakh saplings will be planted in Mardan division during the current spring plantation drive.

He was speaking after planting saplings under the tree plantation drive at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan here on Monday. Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University Dr. Zahir Shah, Dean of Bacha Khan Medical College Dr. Amjad, Director of Administration Prof. Farhad Safi and faculty and staff members of the University were also present on this occasion.

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Enrolment campaign kicks off to achieve goals

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Education department Hafizabad has launched Student Enrolment Campaign. Chief Executive Officer Education Muhammad Akram Ashraf inaugurated the campaign at government high school No. 2, Hafizabad. DEO (SE) Anwar Ali Javed, DEO (W) Sofia Jabeen, principal Khalid Javed, teachers and parents were also present on this occasion.

Addressing the gathering, CEO Education Muhammad Akram Ashraf said that on the direction of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Vocational college organizes exhibition: An exhibition of dresses and other articles made by the under-training students arranged at Govt. Vocational Training Institute Sukheki Mandi. Principal VTI Khalida Rafiq and women social workers inspected different stalls. Guest women took

keen interest in designs dress and other decorative products.

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keen interest in designs dress and other decorative products. He said that TEVTA was providing skilled manpower to industrial units for improving standard of industrial production as a result of which, demand of Pakistani production was enhancing in the world. Govt commits for public welfare: Member Provincial Assembly Punjab, Mian Aoun Intisar Bhati has said that the Punjab government is taking revolutionary steps to ensure provision of different amenities of life to people at their doorsteps and fruits of people friendly measure are reaching to common people.

55 couple tried knot in joint marriage ceremony



F.P. Report

LODHRAN: Under the historic initiative "Dhi Rani Program" launched by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, a grand ceremony of collective marriages of 55 couples held in Lodhran, on Monday.

The ceremony was attended by Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Shaukat Butt as the guest of honor. Other notable attendees included Member of the Provincial Assembly Shazia Hayat Tarin, former MPA Malik Shah Muhammad Jatoti, Director General of the Department of Social Welfare Tariq Qureshi, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Lubna Nazir, and District Police Officer Kamran Mumtaz.

Addressing the ceremony, Provincial Minister Shaukat Butt said that the Dhi Rani Program has been successfully implemented in 27 districts so far, and by February 15, the program will be completed in 36 districts.

In a conversation with media representatives, Provincial Minister said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has proven herself to be a benevolent mother and a sympathetic leader through this program. He added that the dream of a welfare state can only be realized through social welfare. Minister further stated that it is heartening to see the state acting as a mother through the Dhi Rani Program. He emphasized

that this program has conveyed the message that daughters are a shared responsibility.

The Minister also said that the state is utilizing all its resources to deliver the rights of the people to their doorsteps. He added that the Punjab government is leading the country in public service, and under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, new records of development are being set.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Provincial Minister Saeed Shah and other dignitaries distributed ATM cards worth Rs. 100,000 each to the 55 newlywed couples. The ceremony featured a local folk dance, Jhumar, and a lavish meal was also arranged for the guests.

Miani Tribe holds 'Golden Night'

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: In a remarkable display of unity and cultural pride, the Miani tribe gathered in Dera Ismail Khan for a grand event, the Golden Night, aimed at fostering solidarity and collective action for the welfare of the Miani people.

The event, held at a local hall, was attended by prominent members of the tribe, elders, youth, and community leaders including chief guest Akbar Jan Miani,

Qismatullah Miani, Malik Jamil Miani, Engineer Ghulam Muhammad Miani and others. The Golden Night, marked by vibrant celebrations, speeches, and cultural performances, was a call for the Miani tribe to come together and address pressing issues facing their community.

In their address, they emphasized the importance of unity, urging tribe members to work together for the betterment of their people. "We have faced challenges over the years, but today we

stand together with a shared vision to uplift our community. This night is a testament to our strength, resilience, and the power of collective effort," they said. The event also featured discussions on social development, education, and healthcare, with a focus on creating initiatives that would improve the quality of life for Miani tribe members. Young leaders highlighted the need for youth involvement in decision-making processes.



White South Africans turn down Trump’s US immigration offer

CAPE TOWN: United States President Donald Trump's offer to rehouse white South Africans as refugees fleeing persecution may not spur quite the rush he anticipates, as right-wing white lobby groups want to "tackle the injustices" of Black majority rule on home soil.

Trump signed an executive order to cut US aid to South Africa, citing an expropriation act that President Cyril Ramaphosa signed last month aiming to redress land inequalities that stem from South Africa's history of white supremacy. Trump's order provided for resettlement in the US of "Afrikaners in South Africa who are victims of unjust racial discrimination" as refugees.

Afrikaners are mostly white descendants of early Dutch and French settlers, who own the majority of the country's farmland. "If you haven't got any problems here, why would you want to go?" asked Neville van der Merwe, a 78-year-old pensioner in Bothasig near Cape Town. "There hasn't been any really bad [people] taking over our land, the people are carrying on like normal and you know, what are you going to do over there?"

The act signed by Ramaphosa seeks to address racial land ownership disparities - which have left three-quarters of privately owned land in South Africa in the hands of the white minority - by making it easier for the state to expropriate land in the public interest. Ramaphosa has defended the policy. White people represent 7.2 percent of South Africa's population of 63 million, statistics agency data shows. The data does not break down how many are Afrikaners. Before South Africa's independence, its British colonial rulers handed most farmland to whites. In 1950, the apartheid-era National Party seized 85 percent of the land, forcing 3.5 million Black people from their homes.

Ramaphosa's African National Congress (ANC), the biggest party in the ruling coalition, says Trump is amplifying

misinformation propagated by AfriForum, an Afrikaner-led group. The group, which lobbied Trump's previous administration regarding its cause, said it was not taking up the offer. "Emigration only offers an opportunity for Afrikaners who are willing to risk potentially sacrificing their descendants' cultural identity as Afrikaners. The price for that is simply too high," AfriForum CEO Kallie Kriel said. Separately, the Solidarity Movement - which includes AfriForum and the Solidarity trade union and said it represents about 600,000 Afrikaner families and two million individuals - expressed commitment to South Africa.

"We may disagree with the ANC, but we love our country. As in any community, there are individuals who wish to emigrate, but repatriation of Afrikaners as refugees is not a solution for us," the Solidarity Movement said. Representatives of Orania, an Afrikaner-only enclave in the heart of the country, also rejected Trump's offer. "Afrikaners do not want to be refugees. We love and are committed to our homeland," Orania said. South Africa's land policies since the end of apartheid have never involved the forced seizure of white-owned land. Still, some said they appreciated Trump's offer. "I think it's a very nice gesture from Donald Trump to offer us asylum over there," said Werner van Niekerk, 57, a carpenter in Bothasig, without saying whether he would be migrating to the US. Others saw the funny side. "Some questions: is there a test to determine your Afrikanership? Must you hold AfriForum membership? ... Will Elon help with some startup cash on the other side? ... Are there bakkies (pick-up trucks) in the US?" author Pieter du Toit wrote on X, making a reference to South African-born billionaire and Trump aide Elon Musk, who has accused Ramaphosa's government of "openly racist ownership laws". — Aljazeera

PM Albin’s party on top in Kosovo election exit poll

MITROVICA: Polls have closed in Kosovo's parliamentary election, in a vote that is seen as a referendum on Prime Minister Albin Kurti, who has been at odds with his Western allies over relations with neighbouring Serbia. Exit polls from Klan Kosova TV show Prime Minister Albin Kurti's Vetevendosje party in first place with 38.2 percent of vote.

The opposition Democratic Party of Kosovo is set to come second with 22.4 percent of the votes, with the Democratic League of Kosovo winning 20.1 percent. Al Jazeera's Maja Blazevska, reporting from Pristina, said Vetevendosje will need to negotiate with potential coalition partners to form the government. "Exit polls are suggesting that no single party can form a government by itself, so Kosovo will go back to having a coalition government," she said.

Voting began at 7am local time (06:00 GMT), according to the Central Election Commission, as Kosovars headed to the polling stations to elect a new parliament and cabinet in a contentious race also focused on the economy and corruption. Polls remained open until 18:00 GMT - the ninth such vote in Kosovo since the end of the 1998-99 war that pushed Serbian forces out of the self-declared republic.

A vote, a key test for Kurti, will elect 120 lawmakers to the assembly, determining who leads Kosovo's stalled negotiations on normalising ties with Serbia. Kurti's left-

wing Vetevendosje, or Self-Determination Movement party, which has sought to dismantle remaining Serbian institutions in Kosovo, is seen as the frontrunner in the election. But the party is not expected to win the necessary majority to govern alone, leaving open the possibility the other two contenders join ranks if he fails to form a cabinet. The other contenders are the Democratic Party of Kosovo (DPK), whose main leaders are accused of war crimes at The Hague tribunal, and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the republic's oldest party.

The opposition parties have made big-ticket pledges to increase public salaries and pensions, improve education and healthcare services and fight poverty. Kosovo, with a population of 1.6 million, is among the poorest in Europe with an annual gross domestic product of less than 6,000 euros (\$6,200) per person. Kurti, whose government is the first in Kosovo's history to finish its full term in office, has had a turbulent rule, marked by regular unrest between Serbs and ethnic Albanians. Tensions spiked after negotiations backed by the European Union and the United States between Kosovo and Serbia all but collapsed in March 2023.

In the aftermath, NATO peacekeepers were assaulted by rioting Serbs, a deadly armed standoff in the north sent regional tensions soaring, and an explosion targeting a canal vital to Kosovo's power plants late last year

saw Kurti blaming Belgrade. Kurti also drew Western criticism for controversial measures he took last year, such as a ban on using the Serbian dinar and transfers from Serbia to Kosovo's ethnic Serb minority members who depend on Belgrade's social services and payments. The US, the EU and the NATO-led stabilisation force KFOR have urged the government in Pristina to refrain from unilateral actions, fearing the revival of interethnic conflict.

While Kurti retains a strong support base, his opponents have denounced him for the fraying ties with the US and the EU. Shpend Kursani, a lecturer at the University of Tartu told Al Jazeera that voters most identify Kurti with "anti-corruption, national dignity and being - at least from a Balkan perspective - an honest politician". Opposition parties, however, blame Kurti's willingness to confront Serbia as costing the country support and funding from the international community, even as he was able to secure the sale of anti-tank Javelin missiles from the US, Kursani said. "It's the same with Turkey; he purchased drones and what not, so the support from international communities is a bit mixed," Kursani said. "He's largely not corrupt... and it's very difficult [for outside powers] to manage these small country leaders if they are not corrupt." KFOR has increased its presence in Kosovo and added more forces for the election. — Aljazeera

African summit urges DR Congo ceasefire

DAR ES SALAAM (BBC): Leaders from east and southern Africa have called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to end the deadly fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo. At a crisis summit in Tanzania, the Southern African Development Community and East African Community (EAC) blocs urged all warring parties to hold peace talks within five days, including with the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels.

The rebels - fighting government forces - have seized vast swathes of land in the eastern DR Congo, including the city of Goma. Their push towards Bukavu has raised fears of a wider regional war. As part of their talks, army chiefs have also been told to draw up a security plan for Goma and surrounding areas. The latest UN figures suggest 2,900 people have been killed since early January, as a result of the hostilities between M23 and armed forces of the DR Congo.

Around 700,000 are estimated to have been displaced and thousands more injured. Gathering in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's biggest city, brought together heads of state and government representatives to try to resolve the worsening security and humanitarian situation. "The summit emphasises that political and diplomatic engagement is the most sustainable solution to the conflict," said the follow-up communique.

It also demanded the reopening of Goma airport and other key routes to facilitate humanitarian aid, as well as the withdrawal of uninvited foreign armed forces from Congolese territory. M23, which is made up of ethnic Tutsis, say they are fighting for minority rights while DR Congo's government says the Rwanda-backed rebels are seeking control of the eastern region's vast mineral wealth.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame - who was at the summit - has repeatedly denied any involvement in supporting the rebels. But, as reported last month by the BBC's Ian Wafula, a group of UN experts maintains the Rwandan army is in "de facto control of M23 operations" - detailing how M23 recruits are trained under Rwandan supervision and supported by high-tech Rwandan weaponry. Following the summit, Kagame posted on Facebook, accusing the DR Congo of "mounting a security problem against our country".

The DR Congo's President, Félix Tshisekedi, opted to appear at the summit via video link. Prime Minister Judith Suminwa was there in person. There was no immediate response from Suminwa or the Congolese delegation to the joint communique. Kenyan President William Ruto, the current EAC chairperson, stressed military solutions alone could not resolve the crisis. "We must resist the temptation to think that we can somehow shoot or bombard our way into a solution in the face of such a complex situation," he said. Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan underscored a "collective responsibility" of regional leaders to end the conflict, saying "history will judge us harshly."



NEW YORK: Two women arrive by taxi to cross into Canada at US border in Champlain.

Sudan army makes huge gains as it seeks to recapture capital

KHARTOUM (BBC): Residents of Sudan's capital Khartoum say the army has recaptured large parts of the city from RSF paramilitaries, marking its biggest victory in a year. "Shrapnel and stray ammunition are falling on my neighbourhood," a doctor we are calling Mustafa tells the BBC. "The clashes these days are heavy".

Key sites recaptured by the army this week include the mint - where money is printed. At the time of writing, the RSF still controls most of Khartoum proper. Whereas the army now holds the majority of territory across the wider tripartite capital - meaning Omdurman, Bahri and Khartoum. But, after winning back near total control of the crucial state of Gezira, the army believes it now has the momentum to take the capital too, and break the RSF's almost two-year siege. "Very soon there will be no rebels in Khartoum," announced army leader and de facto ruler Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. An end to this conflict cannot come fast enough. Aid workers say people are starving across the country as a result of the war - in Khartoum alone more than 100,000 people are suffering from famine, according to UN-backed researchers. Since war broke out almost two years ago between Gen

Burhan and his deputy-turned-rival Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo who leads the RSF, 12 million people have been forced from their homes and tens of thousands of civilians have been butchered. Sudan is the world's worst humanitarian crisis, agree international aid agencies.

They say both the army and the RSF are guilty of committing some of the gravest atrocities imaginable against innocent civilians, including that the RSF has carried out a genocide in Darfur. Both forces deny the accusations. The army has been jubilantly welcomed by many inhabitants of the areas it has recently recaptured, as the RSF has been widely accused of killing and raping civilians in Khartoum, as well as looting the homes of the many residents who have fled the city.

Reports of the army's advance have been dismissed by the RSF as "lies and rumours". They have made similar denials ahead of every retreat in recent weeks. Analysts say the army's recent successes have been the result of enlisting more fighters and buying more weaponry. Winning back the besieged army headquarters was also a huge boon earlier this month. The army's expulsion of the paramilitary group from the central city

of Wad Madani in January was marred by allegations of summary executions and arbitrary retribution attacks on those perceived to be RSF informants or collaborators.

This will no doubt raise fears among some Khartoum residents that the same fate awaits them. "When you open social media and you see all the killing, if you've committed something wrong you must be worried," Mustafa told the BBC. "Some of them led fighters to people's homes. Others joined [the RSF] and stole property, terrorised people - even held women against their will [as sex slaves]. They did horrible things. "Are they terrified of what is to come? Of course." But sometimes there is a fine line between being seen as a collaborator, and the reality of survival in war.

"I am worried for my cousin," says Amir, who lives in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman, which lies just across the River Nile. "He is not a collaborator or an informant - he often has to deal with these people [the RSF] because he's looking after his mother and his kids. Will he be slaughtered [by the army] or will he be left alone?" For now, as the army approaches and Sudan's future hands in the balance, all that Mustafa and Amir can do is wait.

Rights groups call for criminal charges over deadly migrant shipwreck

ATHENS (AP): Rights groups are seeking criminal charges against Greek coast guard members over a deadly 2023 migrant shipwreck, after the country's ombudsman said there were indications that officers overlooked the danger of the boat sinking.

The Adriana, a massively overcrowded fishing trawler, had been heading from Libya to Italy with an estimated 500-750 people on board when it sank in international waters west of Pylos in western Greece in June 2023. Only 104 people survived, while 82 bodies were recovered. The rest went down with the trawler in one of the deepest parts of the Mediterranean.

An independent investigation by Greece's ombudsman into the shipwreck concluded this week that there were "clear indications" that eight senior coast guard officers should face disciplinary action for overlooking the dangers posed by the trawler. The coast guard, which had been notified about the boat by Italian authorities, had been shadowing the vessel for hours as it sailed in international waters but within Greece's area of responsibility for search and rescue.

At the time, the coast guard said the Adriana's captain had insisted he did not want assistance and wanted to

continue sailing to Italy. But several survivors said passengers had been calling for help repeatedly, and said that the boat capsized during an attempt by the Greek coast guard to tow it. The ombudsman said its report noted "a series of serious and reproachable omissions in the search and rescue duties by senior officers of the Hellenic Coast Guard which constitute clear indications" for establishing a case against the officers for endangering the lives of the Adriana's passengers.

The independent body began its own investigation in November 2023 after "the direct refusal of a disciplinary investigation by the Coast Guard," it said. The Shipping and Island Policy Ministry, under whose jurisdiction the coast guard lies, rejected the ombudsman's report, accusing it of "attempting to shift the conversation from the criminal smuggling networks to the members of the coast guard, who fight day and night for the protection of the country." It accused the report of frequently favoring versions of events that called into question the coast guard's actions "without the slightest credible evidence."

"At a time when irregular migration is causing global concern, the

government remains steadfastly committed to a strict but fair policy of guarding the country's borders," the statement said. Rights groups hailed the ombudsman's report, and blasted the government's reaction. The ministry's statement "is a monument of hypocrisy but also a confession it will continue to cover up the crime," said the Movement United Against Racism and the Fascist Threat, or KEERFA.

The group organized a protest rally outside a naval court in the Greece's main port city of Piraeus. Demonstrators, many from the Pakistani migrant community in Greece, held up a large banner displaying numerous photographs of victims of the shipwreck, along with images of their identification documents. Lawyers representing some of the survivors filed a request with the Piraeus naval court in December seeking criminal charges to be brought against members of the search and rescue operation.

"The transparency of administrative action and the attribution of responsibilities, where applicable, for the deadly Pylos shipwreck is an elementary legal demand, inextricably linked to the respect of the rule of law," Ombudsman Andreas Pottakis said in a statement.

DR Congo rebel leader whose fighters have created turmoil

DR CONGO (BBC): The Democratic Republic of Congo is in turmoil - fighters from the notorious M23 rebel group have been surging through the country's east, battling the national army and capturing key places as they go.

In just a fortnight, thousands of people are said to have been killed and the fighting has sparked an ominous war of words between DR Congo and its neighbour, Rwanda. The origins of this complex conflict can be understood through the story of one man - M23 leader Sultani Makenga, who is the subject of various war crime allegations. To go back through Makenga's life so far is to look into decades of warfare, intermittent foreign intervention and the persistent lure of DR Congo's rich mineral resources.

His life began on Christmas Day in 1973, when he was born in the lush Congolese town of Masisi. Raised by parents of the Tutsi ethnic group, Makenga quit school at the age of 17 to join a Tutsi rebel outfit across the border in Rwanda. This group, named the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), were demanding greater Tutsi representation in Rwanda's government, which at the time was dominated by politicians from the Hutu majority.

They also wanted the hundreds and

thousands of Tutsi refugees who had been forced from the country by ethnic violence to be able to return home. For four years, Makenga and the RPF fought the Hutu-dominated army in Rwanda. Their battle was enmeshed with the 1994 genocide, when Hutu extremists killed 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. When looking back at this time in a rare 2013 interview, Makenga stated: "My life is war, my education is war, and my language is war... but I do respect peace." The RPF gradually seized more and more land before marching into Rwanda's capital, Kigali, and overthrowing the extremist Hutu government - many of whom fled into what is now DR Congo. With the RPF in power, Makenga was absorbed into the official Rwandan army and rose to the rank of sergeant and deputy platoon commander.

"He was very good at setting up ambushes," one of Makenga's fellow RPF fighters told the Rift Valley Institute non-profit research organisation. His progress in the Rwandan army hit a ceiling however. The fact that he only had a basic education and spoke broken French and English was "an obstacle to his military career", the Rift Valley Institute said. Makenga is also said - to this day - to be very reserved and to struggle with

public speaking. In 1997, he was part of the Rwanda-backed forces who ended up seizing power in DR Congo, ousting long-serving ruler Mobutu Sese Seko. In his place they installed veteran Congolese rebel leader Laurent Kabila. However, Makenga began to clash with his superiors - he was arrested by the Rwandan authorities after refusing orders to return to Rwanda, a UN Security Council report said.

He was therefore imprisoned for several years on the island of Iwawa. Meanwhile, relations between Kabila and Rwanda's new leaders deteriorated. Rwanda had sought to crush the Hutu militiamen who were responsible for the genocide but had fled across the border in 1994. Rwanda's fear was that they could return and upset the country's hard-won stability. But Kabila had failed to stop the militants from organising and he also started to force out Rwandan troops. As a result, Rwanda invaded DR Congo in 1998. When Makenga was released from prison, he was appointed to serve as a commander on the front line with a Rwanda-backed rebel group. Over the years, he gained a reputation for being highly strategic and skilled at commanding large groups of soldiers into battle.

After Rwandan troops crossed into

DR Congo, there was a surge in discrimination against the Tutsi community. Kabila alleged that Tutsis supported the invasion, while other officials incited the public to attack members of the ethnic group. Makenga - still in DR Congo - accused the Congolese leader of betraying Tutsi fighters, saying: "Kabila was a politician, while I am not. I am a soldier, and the language that I know is that of the gun." Several neighbouring countries had been drawn into the conflict and a large UN military force was deployed to try to maintain order. More than five million people are believed to have died in the war and its aftermath - mostly from starvation or disease.

The fighting officially ended in 2003 but Makenga continued to serve in armed groups opposed to the Congolese government. In the spirit of reconciliation, Tutsi rebels like Makenga were eventually amalgamated into the Congolese government's armed forces, in a process called "mixage". But the political sands in DR Congo are ever shifting - Makenga eventually defected from the army to join the rising M23 rebellion. The M23 had become increasingly active in DR Congo's east, stating that they were fighting to protect Tutsi rights, and that the government

had failed to honour a peace deal signed in 2009. Makenga was elevated to the rank of an M23 general, then soon after, the top position. In November 2012 he led the rebels in a brutal uprising, in which they captured the city of Goma, a major eastern city with a population of more than a million. DR Congo and the UN accused Rwanda's Tutsi-dominated government of backing the M23 - an allegation which Kigali has persistently denied. But recently, the official response has shifted, with government spokespeople stating that fighting near its border is a security threat.

By 2012, Makenga and others in the M23 were facing serious war crimes allegations.

The US imposed sanctions on him, saying he was responsible for "the recruitment of child soldiers, and campaigns of violence against civilians". Makenga said allegations that the M23 used child soldiers were "baseless". Elsewhere, the UN said he had committed, and was responsible for, acts such as killing and maiming, sexual violence and abduction. Along with asset freezes, Makenga was facing a bitter split within the M23. One side backed him as leader while the other backed his rival, Gen Bosco Ntaganda. The Enough Project, a non-profit group working in DR

Congo, said the two factions descended into a "full-fledged war" in 2013 and as a result, three soldiers and eight civilians died.

Makenga's side triumphed and Gen Ntaganda fled to Rwanda, where he surrendered to the US embassy. Nicknamed the "Terminator" for his ruthlessness, Gen Ntaganda was eventually sentenced by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to 30 years for war crimes. However, months after Makenga's triumph, another, larger threat appeared. The UN had deployed a 3,000-strong force with a mandate to support the Congolese military in reclaiming Goma, prompting the M23 to withdraw. The rebel group was expelled from the country and Makenga fled to Uganda, a country which has also been accused of supporting the M23 - an allegation it denies.

Uganda received an extradition request for Makenga from DR Congo, but did not act on it. Eight years passed. Dozens of other armed groups roamed the mineral-rich east, wreaking havoc, but the Congolese authorities were free of the most notorious militants. That is, until 2021. Makenga and his rebels took up arms again, capturing territory in North Kivu province.

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Cooperation vital to keep the genie in the bottle

THE development of artificial intelligence is constantly gaining pace, and its immense potential is transforming our lives. "It can predict, calculate and reproduce; it can accelerate the progress of our knowledge, our technology and our creativity."

These were the opening words of French President Emmanuel Macron in the press kit for the two-day AI Action Summit that will conclude in Paris on Tuesday. As the French leader highlighted, despite the great opportunities the technology promises, it is the risks and legitimate concerns associated with its ability that have brought stakeholders from around the world to the French capital for the summit.

It is good that the discussions focused on actions to synergize the efforts of governments, companies and societies to build an inclusive AI global governance system to ensure that the technology serves the common good of humanity.

Yet the slow progress of the world in promoting the global governance of cyberspace, including data, algorithms and related software and hardware, on which AI technology operates — not to mention the outcomes of the first two AI action summits held in London and Seoul respectively in the past two years being only symbolic — means the participants at the solution-oriented Paris summit face an uphill task in coming up with a workable joint action plan.

The themes of the Paris summit, including public interest AI, the future of work, innovation and culture, trust in AI and global AI governance, highlight some of the contentious issues related to the technology, as well as the directions in which collective efforts are called for to address the challenges.

At present, there is no unified governance at the international level, raising all sorts of questions about safety, competition, standards and sovereignty.

The development of AI, a scientific, economic, cultural, political and civic issue, entails intense international dialogue among many actors to ensure the science, solutions and standards that shape AI are developed collaboratively.

The participation of Chinese President Xi Jinping's special representative Zhang Guoqing, who is a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and a vice-premier of the State Council, in the Paris summit is an indication of the importance China attaches to the issue and its willingness and readiness to work with other parties to establish a global governance system for AI.

An important country in the AI field, China is ready to share its own experiences and contribute to global cooperation on AI, and actively advance the implementation of the United Nations Global Digital Compact.

Since the release of its AI development plan in 2017, China has made rapid progress in AI development and applications, accumulating extensive experience in both growth and governance.

In October 2023, President Xi proposed the Global AI Governance Initiative, offering a Chinese solution to this major issue of the times. In July 2024, a resolution on strengthening international cooperation in AI capacity building, proposed by China, was adopted by consensus at the 78th UN General Assembly. This is the first consensus document adopted by the UN on AI capacity building and is a testament to Chinese wisdom.

During President Xi's visit to France in May last year, China and France released a joint declaration on AI and global governance. Vice-Premier Zhang attending the Summit is a step toward implementing the common understanding between the two presidents regarding AI, and demonstrates China's responsible attitude as a major country in the field of AI and its commitment to advancing the development and security of AI, as the Chinese Foreign Ministry said via a spokesperson.

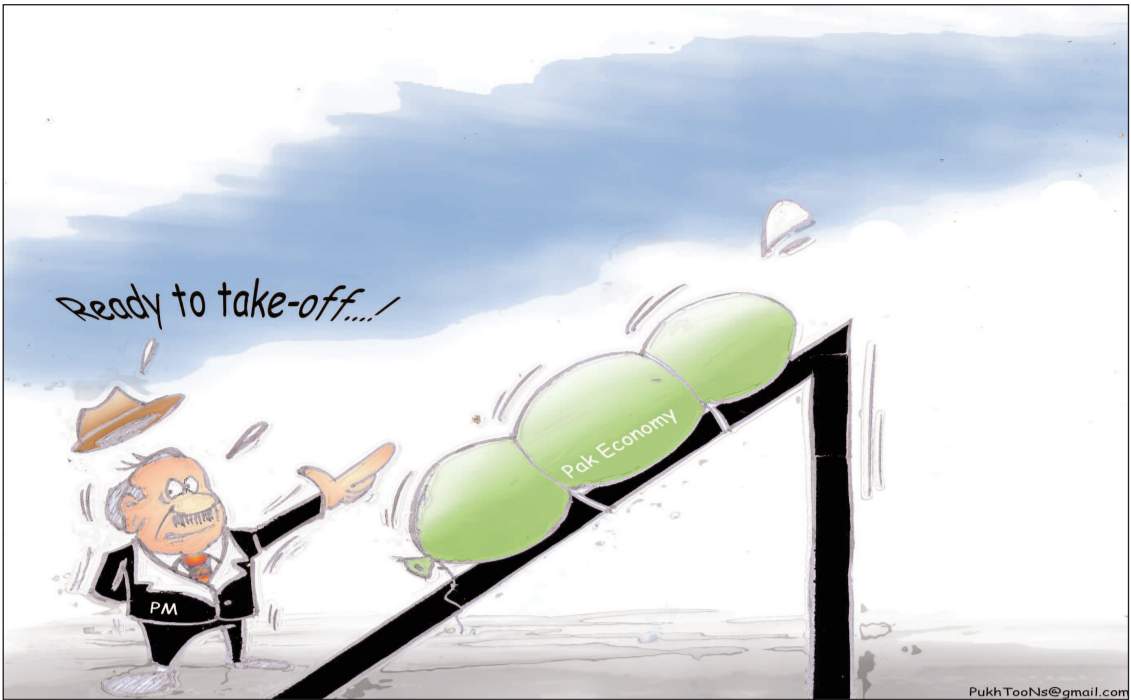
It is hoped that the Paris summit will open a new chapter in global AI cooperation.

China is willing to make its due contribution to that. Through this summit, China looks forward to enhancing communication and exchanges with all sides, and reaching a consensus on AI cooperation. It also hopes to take it forward.

China invites countries around the world to participate in the 2025 World AI Conference in China with the goal of shaping an AI global governance framework based on broad consensus that promotes AI for the good of all.

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The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Our ‘return’ to northern Gaza is not the end of exile

Nour Elassy

FOR 15 months, I was displaced from my home in northern Gaza. For 15 long months that felt like 15 years, I felt like a stranger in my own homeland. Not knowing when the exile would end, I lived with an unbearable sense of loss, with memories of a home frozen in time that I could see in my mind but could not go back to.

When the ceasefire was announced, I did not believe at first that it was actually happening. We had to wait a week before the Israeli army allowed us to go back north. On January 27, finally, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians embarked on a journey back to their homes. Sadly, I was not among them.

I had broken my leg during an incident last year and it is still not healed. I could not make the 10km trek through the sand and dust of al-Rashid Street, whose asphalt the Israeli army had dug out. My family also could not afford the exorbitant amount private cars were charging to drive us via Salah al-Din Street. So my family and I decided to wait.

I spent the day looking at footage and images of Palestinians walking back on al-Rashid Street. Children, women and men were walking with smiles on their faces, chanting “Allahu Akbar!” and “we are back!”. Family members — having not seen each other for months, sometimes a year — were reuniting, hugging each other and crying. The scene was more beautiful than I had imagined it would be.

Seeing those images, I could not help but think about my grandfather and the hundreds of thousands of other Palestinians who in 1948 arrived in Gaza and waited — just like us — to be allowed to go back home.

My grandfather Yahia was born in Yaffa to a family of farmers. He was just a child when Zionist forces expelled them from their home city. They had no time to pack up and go; they just took the house keys and fled.

“They erased our streets, our homes, even our names. But they could never erase our right to return,” my grandfather used to say with tears in his eyes.

He transferred his longing for his home to my mother. “My father used to describe the sea of Yaffa,” she would say, “the way the waves kissed the shore, the scent of orange blossoms in the air. I have lived my whole life in exile, dreaming of a place I have never seen. But maybe one day, I will. Maybe one day, I will walk in the streets my father walked as a child.”

My grandfather died in 2005 without ever seeing his home again. He never found out what had happened to it — whether it was demolished or taken over by settlers.

The images of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians walking on foot back to their homes made me wonder: what if my grandfather had also been allowed to walk back home? What if the world had stood up for justice and upheld the Palestinians’ right to return?

Would we now have black-and-white photos of smiling Palestinians walking on dusty, crowded roads on the way back to their villages and towns?

Back then — like today — the Zionist forces had made sure that Palestinians would not have anything to go back to. More than 500 Palestinian villages were completely destroyed. Desperate Palestinians kept trying to go back. The Israelis would call them “infiltrators” and shoot them. Palestinians who tried to go back to the north before the ceasefire were also shot. On February 2, my family and I finally travelled north by car.

There was joy, of course: the joy of reuniting with our relatives, of seeing the faces of cousins who survived even after losing some of their loved ones, of breathing familiar air, of stepping onto the land where we grew up.

But the joy was laced with agony. Although our home is still standing, it has suffered damage from nearby bombings. We no longer recognise the streets of our neighbourhood. It is now a disfigured wasteland.

Everything that once made this place liveable is gone. There is no water, no food. The smell of death is still lingering in the air. It looks more like a graveyard than our home. We still decided to stay.

The world calls the movement of Palestinians back to the north a “return”, but to us, it feels more like an extension of our exile.

The word “return”

should carry with it a sense of triumph, of long-awaited justice, but we do not feel triumphant. We did not return to what we once knew.

I imagine that this is what would have been the fate of many Palestinians returning to their destroyed and burned villages after the Nakba of 1948. They, too, would have probably felt the shock and despair we feel now at the sight of mountains of rubble.

I also imagine that they would have worked hard to rebuild their homes, having experienced the hardship of displacement. History would have been rewritten with stories of resilience rather than unending exile.

My grandfather would have run back to his home, keys in his hands. My mother would have seen the sea of Yaffa she had so much longed for. And I would not have grown up with the generational trauma of exile.

Most of all, a return back then would have probably meant that the never-ending cycles of Palestinian dispossession, lands stolen and homes bulldozed or exploded would never have happened. The Nakba would have ended.

But it didn’t. Our ancestors were not allowed back and now we live the consequences of justice being denied. We have been allowed to return, but only to see wholesale destruction, to start over from nothing, with no guarantees that we will not be displaced again and that what we build will not be destroyed again. Our return is not the end of exile.

Starmer must stand up for international law

Chris Doyle

IN just three weeks, US President Donald Trump has shaken up the global order, rewritten it even. He has certainly flooded the zone and the world is now watching to see who will sink and who will swim.

How much of what Trump has pledged will materialize remains to be seen, but even if these are the opening gambits of a negotiation, they have had allies and enemies reeling. Trump’s push for the US to take over Gaza is perhaps the most jaw-dropping of all, coming not long after his “clean up” Gaza comments.

Few have felt the brunt of this whirlwind more than the UK, which always used to pride itself — to the point of an unhealthy obsession — on its “special relationship” with Washington. If you want to know what a special relationship with the US really looks and feels like, then check out the grinning Cheshire cat pose of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as Trump proposed ethnically cleansing Gaza.

At a leadership level, it is harder to think of a more challenging time for a British prime minister. Keir Starmer is not in the inner circle of Trump’s loyalist core. It took a week after the inauguration for the two to have their first conversation since Trump returned to the Oval Office. Few will read too much into Trump’s statement that the two have a “very good relationship.” Questions

remain as to whether Trump approved of the deluge of posts against Britain — and Starmer in particular — by his ally Elon Musk in recent weeks. He has certainly never distanced himself from them.

So, how is Starmer handling this and how will the relationship develop? The reaction to Trump’s Middle East comments is indicative of the direction of travel. Not one British minister has directly criticized Trump’s desire to empty Gaza of its population. The phrase “ethnic cleansing” will not cross their lips. Starmer dodged a direct question about Trump and Gaza at last week’s Prime Minister’s Questions in Parliament.

Without directly criticizing the president, British ministers have outlined a position that is diametrically opposed to Trump’s. “We would oppose any effort to move Palestinians in Gaza to neighboring Arab states against their will.”

There must be no forced displacement of Palestinians,” Development Minister Anneliese Dodds said last week. Asked countless times to condemn Trump’s comments, she resisted the temptation. Similarly, as Trump defunds UNRWA, the UK continues to offer verbal and financial support.

But what about the International Criminal Court? Again, little has been said despite the fact that the court’s chief prose-

cutor, Karim Khan, is a British national. He will undoubtedly be one of the officials to face US sanctions. One appropriate step that states like the UK could take is to increase funding to the International Criminal Court. More importantly, member states must reiterate their support for the arrest warrants that the court issued for both Israeli and Hamas leaders. There was a joint statement from 79 state parties to the Rome Statute, including the UK, defending the court, which was welcome, but it needs leaders to step up and make such statements personally. As a human rights lawyer, Starmer should be taking that lead.

Starmer’s inaction should be embarrassing for a man who only in September, when addressing the UN General Assembly, stated: “We must stand up for international law.” This rings hollow, as the UK remains complicit in the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza through continuing to sell it parts for F-35 planes.

All this is simply caving in to Trump and Netanyahu. Middle East states have led the way in pushing back firmly against the forced expulsion of Palestinians, but London is only following at a distance. The opposition to what Trump has said and done should be clear and explicit. No leader of any state should be proposing ethnic cleansing anywhere.

The West Bank and Gaza are for Palestinians, not for Israel and not for the US. Palestinians do not belong in Egypt, Jordan or Saudi Arabia, let alone Morocco, Puntland or Somaliland, which are apparently also being considered. A more appropriate response from European powers would be to make the long overdue decision to recognize the state of Palestine. This is another opportunity for the UK to take the lead, not least given its historical responsibility.

Trump feeds off weakness. Those leaders who cave in will not earn his respect. Starmer will have to ensure he stands up for British interests and, just as importantly, for international law and justice.

Work on this is required now. It is pointless opposing Trump in isolation. The UK should help coordinate a strong joint international response with European, Middle East and other actors. This would render Trump’s proposals utterly meaningless.

British officials claim that Starmer will be going to see Trump within weeks. If so, he must conjure the clarity, conviction and courage to articulate not just a clear opposition to Trump’s proposals on the Middle East, but also alternative, legal ways forward to ensure the Israel-Hamas deal goes forward, that reconstruction happens without forced displacement, and that there is a proper, credible political process to end this conflict.

America and the post-earthquake dimensions

Ghassan Charbel

THIS is America. The world’s most powerful economy. The master of sea and skies. The land of prestigious universities, inventors, innovators and pioneers of the technological and digital revolution. It is capable of striking any target in the global village. It can listen to what you are whispering in your own home or at a cafe. The world is asking it to adapt to it, but it responds by demanding that the world should adapt to the US.

When it elects a president, it is effectively electing a president of the world. This is especially true if that president is Donald Trump. The Chinese president must keep his eyes on the White House for any surprises that may arise. The master of the Kremlin must wait for his approval to end the Russian war on Ukraine. The leaders of elderly Europe must pray that the US president will show mercy in terms of his relations with NATO and the EU. What applies there also applies to the Middle East.

This is America. How difficult it is to be its enemy. Battles with it are costly. It killed the Soviet Union without firing a single shot. Muammar Qaddafi pestered it and it responded by terrorizing him in his own home. Saddam Hussein defied it, so it toppled his regime and tied a noose around his neck.

The US suffers losses and setbacks but it comes right back with the support of its economy and history’s most powerful military machine. How difficult it is to be its friend. It is a thorny and tumultuous, albeit necessary, relationship. It is difficult to wash your hands clean of it. Ignoring it will sideline you. It is like a bitter pill that you must take regardless of the side effects. How difficult it is to dance with the master of the White House. This is America. It was necessary to deal with it to end the massacre in Gaza and ensure the release of hostages and prisoners. Dealing with it was necessary to end the Israeli war on Lebanon and prevent it from turning into another Gaza. The Middle East has known the story for decades. The US is a side and a mediator. It has the ability to end wars, but that comes at a price, especially given the close ties between it and Israel, and between Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu. In Beirut, the visitor does not need to be reminded of the earthquake that hit the region.

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In Beirut, the visitor does not need to be reminded of the earthquake that hit the region. The ceasefire that was engineered by former US envoy Amos Hochstein does not prevent the Israeli drones from hovering above the capital and punishing anyone it deems hostile. It does not prevent it from wiping out Lebanese villages bordering Israel.

The sound of the drones reminds us of the upending of the balance of power that existed before the war. Hezbollah is no longer capable of waging a new war with Israel. It lost thousands of fighters and its most prominent leader, Hassan Nasrallah. It is a loss that will not be easily replaced. It also lost its reach inside Syria, which was its lifeline for weapons and finances from Iran. The party also knows that most of the Lebanese people were opposed to its “support front” and they are now clearly demanding that the possession of weapons be limited to the state.

The consultations that preceded the formation of the new Lebanese government, headed by Nawaf Salam, reflected the extent of the changes that took place after the earthquake. Amid these circumstances, deputy US envoy to the Middle East Morgan Ortagus emerged from a meeting with President Joseph Aoun to lob her own bombs. She demanded that the new Lebanese authorities form a government that reflects the new balance of power after the earthquake. She ignored the complex and difficult relations between parties and segments.

Luckily, Aoun and Salam succeeded in forming a government that enjoys regional and international support and that avoided stirring tensions in Lebanon. It is evident that Ortagus uses the same dictionary as Trump, which allowed him to suggest removing the people from Gaza ahead of transforming the enclave into a beautiful “riviera.” There can be no denying the extent of the major earthquake that struck the region. Netanyahu has gloated that his wars changed the Middle East. It is not easy for the world to condition its help for Lebanon on the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. This means taking Hezbollah out of any military confrontation with Israel. This not only means taking Hezbollah down a few sizes, but also reducing Iran’s role in the region.

The dimensions of the various parties after the earthquake is an issue that will preoccupy the region in the near future. Iran was not dealt a complete defeat in Lebanon, but it was in Syria. Syrian Arab Republic President Ahmad Al-Sharaa is acting with a responsibility that has impressed his guests. He is taking into consideration the regional and international facts, realizing the importance of Syria’s return to its

Arab family. He has used reassuring rhetoric, encouraging Western nations to be open to Damascus ahead of helping Syria in its reconstruction and toward becoming a beacon for stability.

Trump is addressing Iran while taking into consideration its losses in the earthquake. He is proposing that he will not strike it — meaning Israel will not attack its nuclear facilities if it agrees to a new deal that also includes its missile arsenal and regional proxies. It will not be easy for the Iranian supreme leader to accept the new size of his country at a time when Türkiye is assuming an expanded role in the region through Syria.

Amid these new dimensions lies a problem, which is the lack of a realistic American approach toward the Palestinian issue. The people of the region know that the Palestinians are not searching for a new land to reside on. The only solution to this destructive and long conflict lies in the two-state solution that Arab and Islamic countries, along with the Europeans, are committed to.

The Palestinians must obtain their rights and know the limits of Israel’s borders. Only the two-state solution can defuse the chronic fighting in the region and pave the way for the establishment of normal countries whose governments are focused on joining the age and strengthening their economies and stability, instead of becoming embroiled in the battle over dimensions.

Musk charges on with new targets in sight and Trump’s blessing

THE vast and opaque power of Elon Musk is only growing as he seeks new targets for his federal government shredding machine.

The head of President Donald Trump’s Department of Government Efficiency is closing in on his latest victim — an independent government agency set up to shield Americans from the Wall Street excesses that caused the Great Recession.

Employees of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau were abruptly told Sunday afternoon that the watchdog’s Washington, DC, headquarters will be closed this week and they should work remotely, a day after Trump’s budget chief, Russell Vought, took over as acting director and told staff to stop fighting financial abuse.

“CFPB RIP,” Musk wrote on X on Friday.

The agency, which has long been in GOP sights, seems to be following a similar path to doom as the US Agency for International Development, which has saved millions of lives around the world and promoted democracy for decades, but that Musk has eviscerated. On Sunday, Trump called USAID “crazy” and “a big scam.”

Trump’s untrimmed use of executive power to throttle agencies enshrined in the law, dismiss staff and halt spending already approved by Congress is raising alarms that he’s openly defying the Constitution, seizing power that the presidency does not have.

But the role of Musk, with his unelected power, is unprecedented. The richest man in the world is firing or suspending government workers, destroying US soft global power, and accessing data and private information about potentially millions of Americans — all with zero accountability.

Multiple courts have now stepped in to temporarily halt Trump and Musk’s plans. But everything is trending toward one of the most significant showdowns over the scope of presidential power in modern history, which is destined for a Supreme Court whose conservative majority has an expansive

view of executive authority.

Plenty of people have predicted that Musk and Trump are headed for a breakup given their volatile personalities and need to be the alpha dog in every room. But Trump is showing no public sign of tiring of the Tesla pioneer, who is acting as the lead agent in the president’s revenge and disruption agenda. The president even shrugged off a Time Magazine cover that showed Musk behind the Oval Office desk.

“I’ve had a great help with Elon Musk, who’s been terrific,” Trump said in a Super Bowl interview that aired on Fox on Sunday. As to whether he trusted Musk, Trump replied: “Trust Elon? Oh, he’s not gaining anything. In fact, I wonder how he can devote the time to it. He’s so into it.”

Their alliance might be more enduring than many expect.

In many ways, Trump and Musk have complementary goals. Each has shown in their business careers that they abhor rules and regulations that constrain their actions. The political activity of the president and the tech visionary also shows disdain for checks and balances. Musk has recently been agitating on behalf of far-right parties in Europe, for example, mirroring Trump’s contempt for the will of voters in 2020.

And ahead of midterm elections in 2026, Republicans have every incentive to keep on the good side of the X owner, who threw many millions of dollars into electing Trump and fellow Republicans last year.

So far, Trump’s political blitzkrieg — featuring endless TV appearances, a blizzard of executive orders and an appearance at the NFL’s big day Sunday — seems to be working.

A new CBS News poll Sunday showed 53% of adults approve of his handling of the presidency — a figure higher than his typical ratings during his first term. Some 70% of poll respondents say what the president has done so far are “the same things he promised in the campaign.” Pursuing what he calls a “commonsense” agenda, Trump has launched a headline immigration purge, banned transgender athletes from women’s

Stephen Collinson

sports and targeted federal bureaucrats. Many of these issues resonated with Trump’s loyal base and a wider cohort of swing voters in last year’s election.

But there are several warning signs for Trump. The CBS poll found that two-thirds of Americans don’t believe the new administration is focusing enough on lowering prices — perhaps the most important issue in the election. And only 28% believe his policies will bring costs down. The president’s tariff policy, cemented by his promise to announce 25% duties on steel and aluminum imports on Monday, risks reigniting inflation and hiking the costs of goods and services.

And while it is a perennially popular position for outsider politicians to attack the federal government, Trump could eventually pay a price if his dismantling of agencies begins to infringe on the services and benefits many Americans derive from Washington.

Newly inaugurated presidents almost always overreach. And Trump’s pulverizing of the federal government risks alienating many more moderate voters — even if Democrats are still struggling to find a message that would counter him.

They have tried to goad Trump by referring to “President Musk,” but many of their attempts to push back against the White House’s assault on Washington institutions have put them in the position of defending the federal government that many voters distrust.

The president’s solid public support for Musk explains why top Trump officials, Cabinet secretaries and senior Republicans in Congress fanned out across Sunday morning news shows to defend Musk, even though his dominance is eclipsing their power.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem told CNN’s Dana Bash that she’d back Trump and Musk closing the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which falls under her authority, even though its role is mandated by law. “I would say, yes, get rid of FEMA the way it exists today,” Noem said on

“State of the Union,” adding that the funds normally used for FEMA should just be sent to state and local authorities after disasters.

This would represent a significant political risk for Trump, who suggested “getting rid of FEMA” when touring North Carolina flood damage last month. In many previous disasters, including hurricanes or wildfires, local officials have sometimes struggled without the expertise or scale of FEMA. And natural disasters have the potential to backfire on presidents politically if they are mismanaged.

Noem also insisted she had no problem with Musk burrowing deep into the DHS, which she insisted needed to be downsized. Her interview included a remarkable exchange, underscoring the SpaceX boss’ immense power.

Noem was asked whether she was OK with Musk — a private citizen who is not confirmed by Congress — accessing private data about disaster victims, as reported by The Washington Post. “The president has authorized him to have access to that,” Noem said. “And you feel comfortable with that?” Bash asked. Noem replied: “Absolutely ... We can’t trust our government anymore.”

“But you are the government now,” said Bash.

“Yes, that’s what I’m saying, is that the American people now are saying that we have had our personal information shared and out there in the public,” Noem said.

Bash added: “Elon Musk has access to it. You just said he does.” To which Noem replied: “Yes, but Elon Musk is part of the administration that is helping us identify where we can find savings and what we can do.”

National security adviser Mike Waltz, a former member of Congress who has supported USAID in the past, justified Musk’s move in shuttering many of the agency’s programs, which critics say will offer US adversaries such as Russia and China a chance to fill the vacuum in the developing world.

He told NBC’s “Meet the Press” that the mission of USAID was worthy when it “is aligned with US objectives, and US objec-

tives meet the president’s objectives as a commander in chief.” He added: “But that is not the case. Many of these senior aid officials have their own agenda, have gone in their own direction.”

Waltz pointed out that Secretary of State Marco Rubio had issued a waiver for USAID programs that focus on lifesaving nutrition and medicines. But many aid workers around the world have told CNN there is huge confusion what is included, and programs and projects everywhere are shutting down.

Another agency that could soon be feeling the presence of Musk is the Pentagon. The issue of the SpaceX chief’s billions of dollars in federal contracts raises particular red flags here, although the second Trump administration seems utterly unconcerned with ethics issues and conflicts of interest involving Musk or any other senior official.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth insisted on “Sunday Morning Futures” on Fox Business that “we welcome Elon Musk and DOGE coming into our department to help us identify additional ways in which we can streamline processes, fast-track acquisitions, cut waste, cut tail, to put it to tooth.”

House Judiciary Committee Chair Jim Jordan, meanwhile, told Manu Raju on CNN’s “Inside Politics” that Trump was doing exactly what he was elected to do. “No one wants to defend the waste, fraud and abuse, so they attack the guy who’s exposing all the waste, fraud and ridiculous things we’re spending money on,” the Ohio Republican said of Musk. And referring to Trump, Jordan added: “Frankly, 77 million people knew he was going to do this, and they voted for him on Election Day because of this.”

Yet even presidents do not acquire the power to ignore laws passed by Congress and the constitutional reality that lawmakers have the power of the purse.

So, while Trump is riding high now as Musk trains his wrecking ball on new targets in Washington, a massive and historic constitutional battle may lie ahead.

—CNN

Gaza was once a thriving touristy, culture hub

Michael Jansen

Donald Trump’s plan to turn Gaza into a tourist destination is nothing new. In the nineties, Palestinians began to attract visitors to Gaza by opening an airport in the south and building dozens of hotels. Finance came from Gazan businessmen and foreign aid donors who sought to build Gaza’s economy to make it independent from Israel which still controlled land, sea, and air access and subjected Gaza to “de-development.”

Gaza’s international airport was formally inaugurated on December 14th, 1998, by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and US President Bill Clinton who that evening addressed a gathering at the Rashad Shawwa Centre in Gaza City before hurrying to Bethlehem to attend the lighting of the city’s Christmas tree. I flew into Gaza and attended all these events which were seen as turning points for Gaza.

At that time Palestine Airways operated flights between Gaza and Larnaca in Cyprus and Amman in Jordan, Dubai and other destinations. The airport ceased operations in 2000 following the eruption of the Second Intifada and was subsequently bombed by Israel.

Hotels mushroomed along the seafront and inside the Strip. Until then Marna House, founded in 1946, had been the sole Western-style hotel in Gaza. Its garden was a popular venue for Gazans seeking a quiet place to sip tea and mint-laced lemonade and smoke shisha. The most luxurious new hotel was the handsome Moroccan-style Deira while Al-Mathaf was attached to a small museum housing artifacts collected by contractor Jawdat Khoudairi who found them in construction sites.

The museum not only attracted foreign visitors but hosted busloads of schoolchildren learning about Gaza’s millennial history. Gaza had at least eight major cultural heritage sites, including a palace where French emperor Napoleon stayed, the 12th century Saint Porphyrius church, the 4th century Saint Hilarion Monastery, and 13th century Grand Omari Mosque.

In December 2023, Israeli bombers destroyed the Shawwa Centre and adjacent library and have since targeted other cultural sites with the aim of erasing Gaza’s heritage as well as its people. More than 70 per cent of 2.3 million

Gazans are refugees; the rest are Gazans to whom Gaza’s land, sea and heritage belong. Driven from their homes in Palestine’s coastal cities during Israel’s 1948 war, Gazan refugees are as unwilling as native Gazans to be ethnically cleansed a second time.

Gazans have flatly rejected the plan put forward by ignorant and crass Trump who called for Israel to hand over Gaza to US ownership when the war is over so he could deport its population and turn the strip into a Mediterranean resort peopled and frequented by non-Gazans.

Gazans, he said, could be settled in “far safer and more beautiful communities” in the region, naming Egypt and Jordan. Both have flatly rejected displaced Gazans and argue that pressure to make them accept would violate their 1979 and 1994 peace treaties with Israel. Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told Middle East Eye Amman will close its border and could even go to war to prevent Israel from opening the border to expel Gazans into the kingdom.

The most sensible solution for Palestinian refugees in Gaza — but not native Gazans — would be for them to return to Haifa, Jaffa, and Askelon from which they were expelled by Israel. In 2018-2019, refugees in Gaza mounted demonstrations dubbed “The Great March of Return” along the strip’s border with Israel. Israel fended them off with violence.

Return would amount to implementation of paragraph 11 of UN General Assembly resolution 194 which called for refugees to be allowed to go home at the earliest “practicable date” and be compensated for their losses whether they choose to return or not. Trump and his partner Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu would never contemplate even limited return as this would form a precedent for the repatriation of Palestinians who were expelled in 1948 to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Trump has undermined his ethnic cleansing plan for Gaza by dismantling the US Agency for International Development (USAID) which has a budget of \$40 billion a year and carries out humanitarian and development projects in scores of countries. Ten thousand USAID workers were suspended and programmes providing

medicine and clean water to poor communities here halted. With a stroke of a pen, Trump has deprived himself of leverage over Amman and Cairo. USAID provides Jordan with \$770 million and Egypt with \$65-85 million in economic aid annually. Egypt could, however, continue to receive \$1.2 million in yearly military funding as this is tied to its peace treaty with Israel.

Trump has also reduced his leverage with Netanyahu by imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court due to warrants issued in November for the arrest of Netanyahu and former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. Instead, Trump has granted Netanyahu freedom to transfer to the occupied West Bank his Gaza strategy of total devastation. The Israeli army has already invaded the city and refugee camp of Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus, and Tubas, killing and wounding dozens of Palestinians. At least 26,000 Palestinians have been expelled from their homes.

Scores of checkpoints prevent Palestinians from reaching hospitals — which are surrounded by Israeli troops — jobs, and schools. Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) reported the healthcare system has been in “a state of perpetual emergency” since October 2023. The Palestinian Health Ministry has said 884 Palestinians have been killed by soldiers and settlers since then.

It is historically significant that Israel calls the West Bank operation “Iron Wall” as this was the title of an essay written by Russian Zionist ideologue Vladimir Jabotinsky in 1923. He was among the first to say that Jews had to use military force to achieve their goals in Palestine. He said the Arabs/Palestinians would never agree to Jewish majority in Palestine and had to be kept in check behind an Iron Wall which they “cannot breach.” Jabotinsky’s “Revisionist Movement” became the godfather of Netanyahu’s Likud. This term is personally significant for Netanyahu as his father Benzion Netanyahu was assistant to Jabotinsky’s secretary and favoured the transfer of Palestinians out of Palestine. Binyamin Netanyahu grew up in his shadow and has followed Jabotinsky’s recommended *modus operandi* by cultivating Israel’s alliance with the US, the global hyper-power currently headed by his ally Donald Trump.

Road back to power will be challenging for UK’s Conservatives

Andrew Hammond

FIFTY years to the week after Margaret Thatcher became leader of the UK’s Conservative Party, comparisons are often drawn between that so-called Iron Lady and the party’s new leader, Kemi Badenoch.

However one might view the relative merits of the two leaders, the pathway back to power is today much more challenging for the Conservatives than it was in the late 1970s under Thatcher, not least because the political right in the country is so fragmented.

Remarkably, the upstart right-wing populist Reform UK has overtaken the Conservatives in many major polls in recent weeks.

In a YouGov poll published last week, for instance, Reform was on 25 percent, Labour 24 percent and the Conservatives 21 percent.

This survey also marked the first time that Reform had placed first overall, surpassing even the ruling Labour Party. Among those polled, only 60 percent of people who voted for Labour in the party’s landslide general election victory last July said they would do so now. One in four who voted Conservative at the election said they would now vote for Reform.

The growing threat Reform poses to the Conservatives, and potentially Labour, is significant because the party’s leader, Nigel Farage, has proven himself to be one of the most effective, albeit controversial, politicians of recent decades. This included his contribution to the “Leave” campaign during the 2016 referendum on whether the UK should leave the EU, during which

he earned the nickname “Mr. Brexit.”

Certainly, Badenoch is a formidable politician and should not be underestimated. Her personal journey, with much of her childhood spent in Nigeria, is as remarkable as her political ascent in recent years. She won the Conservative leadership contest last November because many party members believed she would bring Thatcherite qualities to the post of leader of the opposition, including what they perceive as a moral clarity that makes her the natural political heir to Thatcher.

While the challenges Badenoch faces in 2025 are much different to those the Iron Lady had to contend with in the mid-1970s, it is clear that the former is trying to copy key elements of the latter’s playbook to regain power.

One example of this is Badenoch’s reluctance to announce an array of new policies, at least in the short term. This follows a template set by Thatcher in February 1975 after she won the party leadership contest, defeating former Prime Minister Edward Heath, who had led the Conservatives to a general election loss to Labour the previous year.

It remains to be seen whether Badenoch can remain in a policy-free zone for as long as Thatcher did. However, her instincts are to follow the former prime minister’s path as closely as possible and only set out her specific policies much closer to the next election, which is likely to be in 2028 or 2029.

If Badenoch succeeds in

her mission to become the next prime minister, she will defy recent history and match Thatcher’s own achievement of winning power after only a single term as opposition leader.

There is another major reason why the scale of the challenge the Conservatives face today is significantly greater than it was when Thatcher became leader in 1975 after the party lost power in 1974. Fifty years ago, few people seriously considered the possibility that the Conservatives would not return government at some point. In 2025, this prospect is less certain.

There are several key structural differences to the political landscape now compared with the second half of the 1970s. For one thing, Reform UK is eating into the core voter base of the Conservatives.

Secondly, the Liberal Democrats have once again become a major political force, winning more than 70 seats in the election last July. The centrist party is challenging the Conservatives for preponderance in much of southern England. The Liberal Party of the 1970s had a much smaller number of seats.

All of this explains why the political mountain Badenoch will have to climb as leader of the opposition in Westminster is so great.

The political landscape in the UK that the Conservatives of the mid-2020s have to contend with is significantly more challenging that it was half a century ago, when Thatcher began to plot the path to power that led to her 1979 election victory.



BoK and BenchMatrix entered into a partnership

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Bank of Khyber (BoK) and BenchMatrix have entered into a partnership under which BoK has selected BenchMatrix's RiskNucleus Loan Origination System (LOS) to streamline and automate various stages of the lending and financing approval process. This strategic move leverages advanced technology to enhance loan origination, improve efficiency, and ensure

regulatory compliance.

The official agreement was signed in the presence of Hassan Raza, Managing Director & CEO, BoK, by Sher Muhammad, Group Head Conventional Banking, BoK, and Taimur Kaleem, Chief Executive, BenchMatrix, along with other senior executives from both organizations in attendance.

The RiskNucleus Loan Origination System is a robust solution aimed at streamlining the loan approval journey.

The key features include Request Details and Obligor details modules; which allows to capture and easily update both request and obligor information during the credit reviews ensuring that all relevant data is updated.

Facility, Collaterals and Facility Coverage modules allows the users to manage and track financing limit requests, offers visibility into security coverage against the requested facilities enabling the users to

assess the associated risk and ensuring comprehensive coverage analysis.

Financial and Risk Rating modules enables the capturing of financial and non-financial data relevant to loan applications; which assists in evaluation of credit worthiness of the obligors, contributing to informed decision making through automated credit approval workflow process enhancing efficiency, transparency and operational effectiveness.



PESHAWAR: Group Head Conventional Banking BoK Sher Muhammad and Chief Executive BenchMatrix Taimur Kaleem exchanging documents after signing an agreement.

Shaza Fatima calls for ethical AI governance, data security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Shaza Fatima Khawaja, State Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunication, stressed the need for ethical AI governance, data security, and digital inclusivity at the DCO Ministerial Panel at LEAP 2025 in Riyadh Saudi Arabia.

The LEAP 2025 being held in Saudia Arabia Riyadh from February 9 to 12 witnessed a large gathering of Pakistani and Saudi business leaders, government officials, and technology experts, according to a news release received on Monday.

The panel, titled "Shaping the Future of Ethical AI: Multilateral Perspectives on Governance and Risk Management," was hosted by Deemah Al Yahya,

Secretary General of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), and gathered global leaders to discuss responsible AI implementation.

During the discussion, Shaza Fatima highlighted the transformative impact of AI, urging multilateral cooperation and strong regulatory frameworks to ensure AI benefits all segments of society.

She stressed the importance of data privacy, security, and fairness in AI systems, calling for global collaboration to establish responsible AI governance models that prevent discrimination and ensure equal access to digital opportunities.

She also emphasized bridging the digital divide, particularly in developing nations, by promoting

inclusive policies and capacity-building initiatives.

Shaza Fatima advocated for AI to be a tool for social empowerment, ensuring that its benefits extend beyond economic growth to create a more equitable digital future.

Addressing sustainability and accountability, Minister Shaza urged for environmentally responsible AI development, highlighting the need to minimize AI's carbon footprint.

She reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to transparency and accountability in digital platforms, advocating for a global governance framework that ensures ethical AI deployment while fostering innovation.

Speaking on Pakistan's

AI strategy, the Minister underscored the government's dedication to developing a comprehensive AI policy that prioritizes technological advancement alongside ethical considerations.

She emphasized that Pakistan aims to leverage AI to enhance public services, drive economic growth, and build a sustainable digital ecosystem.

Shaza called for strengthened international cooperation to shape an inclusive, transparent, and accountable AI-powered future.

She encouraged governments, businesses, and technology leaders to work together to establish global ethical AI frameworks that promote stability, innovation, and sustainable progress.

Workers' remittances increased F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The workers' remittances increased by 31.7 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, said the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday.

The remittances reached to US\$ 20.8 billion during July-January 2024-25 as against the remittances of US\$ 15.8 billion received during July-January 2023-24.

On year-on-year basis, workers' remittances during January 2025 recorded an inflow of US\$ 3.0 billion, posting an increase of 25.2 percent as compared to same month of last year.

Remittances inflows during January 2025 were mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (\$728.3 million), United Arab Emirates (\$621.7 million), United Kingdom (\$443.6 million) and United States of America (\$298.5 million).

China's robot industry sees robust growth

BEIJING (APP): By the end of 2024, the number of enterprises in the smart robot industry in China had reached 451,700, with a total registered capital of 6.44 trillion yuan (about 880 billion US dollars), according to the State Administration for Market Regulation.

The number of such enterprises grew by 19.39 percent compared to the end of 2023, demonstrating a steady upward trend in the industry's development in China. Nearly 80 percent of these enterprises were concentrated in three sectors, namely scientific research and technical services; information transmission, software and information technology services; and wholesale and retail, the administration said.

The eastern region of the country, with its distinct geographical advantages, robust research and development strength, and well-established industrial ecosystem, has become a hub hosting about two-thirds of smart robot industry enterprises in China.

The number of such enterprises in China's central and northwestern regions account for 15.33 percent and 14.97 percent of the total, respectively.

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 1,055 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 1,055.03 points, a positive change of 0.96 percent, closing at 111,377.97 points as compared to 110,322.94 points on the last trading day.

A total of 415,160,931 shares were traded during the day as compared to 299,678,289 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs23,947 billion against Rs15,624 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 429 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 198 of them recorded gains and 172 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 59 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab with 55,937,922 shares at Rs10.28 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 34,117,748 shares at Rs1.53 per share and Cnergico PK with 31,378,841 shares at Rs7.53 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs787.49 per share closing at

Rs23,232.28 whereas runner-up was Ghandhara Industries Limited with Rs57.88 rise in its share price to close at Rs636.70.

Bata Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs44.24 per share price, closing at Rs1,919.00, whereas the runner-up was Faisal Spinning Mills Limited with Rs36.15 decline in its per share price to Rs325.96.

Rupee sheds 17 paise against dollar
Pakistani rupee on Monday depreciated by 17 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.21 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.04.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs279.75 and Rs281.25, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.87 to close at Rs287.97 against the last day's closing of Rs289.84, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.83, whereas a decrease of 75 paise was

witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs346.41 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs347.16.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 05 paise each to close at Rs76.02 and Rs74.45 respectively.

Gold prices surge by Rs4,000 to Rs303,000 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs4,000 and was sold at Rs303,000 on Monday against its sale at Rs299,000 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs3,429 to Rs259,773 from Rs256,344 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs238,133 from Rs234,990.

The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs43 to Rs3,373 whereas that of ten gram went up by Rs37 to Rs2,891.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$42 to \$2,903 from \$2,861, the Association reported.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 92.05 percent during the first six months of the fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$504.308 million during July-December (2024-25) against exports of US \$262.583 million during July-December (2023-24), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data revealed.

On a year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan also surged by 248.45 percent from \$28.019 million in December 2023, against the exports of \$97.634 mil-

lion in December 2024.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan decreased by 15.02 percent during December 2024 as compared to the exports of \$114.902 million in November 2024, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data revealed.

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 7.15 percent in the first six months, from US \$15.146 billion to US \$16.229 billion, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from Afghanistan into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$9.994 million against US \$4.425 million last year, showing

an increase of 125.85 percent in July-December (2024-25).

On a year-on-year basis, the imports for Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 18.41 percent from US \$1.238 million in December 2023, against the imports of US \$1.466 million in December 2024.

On a month-on-month basis, the imports from Afghanistan into the country also witnessed an increase of 8.27 percent during December 2024, as compared to the imports of US \$1.354 million during November 2024, according to the data.

The overall imports into the country witnessed an increase of 9.33 per cent, from \$25.375 billion to US \$27.743 billion, according to the data.

SECP grants license to first digital, online-only securities broker

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) had granted license to Tamkeen Securities (Pvt) Ltd, Pakistan's first fully digital, online-only securities broker, marking a significant milestone.

The award of license marked a significant leap toward modernizing Pakistan's capital markets, enhancing accessibility, and democratizing investment opportunities for retail and institutional investors nationwide, said press release issued by SECP here Monday.

The newly licensed digital brokerage house would allow investors to open accounts and execute trades, completely eliminating the need for physical

visits, paperwork, or traditional brokerage channels.

This initiative aligns with SECP's strategic vision to accelerate digital transformation, promote financial inclusion, and strengthen Pakistan's capital markets through innovation.

With this development, Pakistan joins the ranks of global markets that had successfully implemented fully digital trading platforms, catering to the evolving needs of tech-savvy investors and boosting retail participation in the stock market.

The fully digital onboarding transaction process, was expected to attract a wider range of investors, fostering greater stock market participation,

enhancing liquidity, and strengthening investor confidence.

Developing Digital intermediaries was a focus area of the Commission. Prior to this, under digital framework an Asset Management Company and a life insurance companies have been licensed while an application for digital only non-life insurance is under process.

Digital intermediaries

apart from lower cost structure had wider outreach and ability to build in compliance mechanism, the press release said.

SECP remains committed to strengthening Pakistan's capital markets by introducing innovative, technology-driven solutions and ensuring robust regulatory frameworks that support a secure, transparent, and investor-friendly ecosystem, it added.

Türkiye's industrial production up 7 per cent

ISTANBUL (APP): Türkiye's industrial production posted an annual increase of 7% in December 2024, official figures from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) showed on Monday.

Among sub-indexes, the mining and quarrying index increased by 1.8%, the manufacturing index by 6.8% and the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply index by 11.4% in December 2024, year-on-year.

On a monthly basis, the industrial production index rose by 5%.

The mining and quarrying index increased by 2.2%, the manufacturing index by 5.6%, and the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply index by 0.4% in December 2024 versus November.

Most Asian markets drop as traders weigh Trump's latest tariff salvo

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Equities were mostly down in Asia on Monday after Donald Trump ramped up his trade war by announcing huge tariffs on steel and aluminium imports and warned every country would face "reciprocal" levies.

Another week got off to an uncertain start following losses on Wall Street that came in reaction to data showing US consumers increasingly worried about inflation and news that far fewer jobs than expected were created last month.

The US president has resumed his hardball tactics on trade since returning to the White House by last week hitting China with a fresh batch of tariffs, having reached a deal to delay measures against Canada and Mexico.

The moves have fanned concerns about the global economy and jolted a recent rally in markets.

Trump said Sunday 25 percent duties would be imposed on "any steel coming into the United States", adding this will also affect aluminium.

He also said he would announce "reciprocal tariffs" to match his government's levies to the rates charged by other countries on US products.

"Every country will be reciprocal," he warned, adding that he would provide details on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Guo Jiakun, spokesman of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reiterated Beijing's line Monday that "there is no winner in a trade war", while French foreign minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the European Union will counter in kind to "replicate" any tariffs imposed on it by Washington.

The news weighed on commodity-linked currencies, with the Canadian dol-

lar, Mexican peso and South Korean won all weaker.

Canada is the largest source of steel and aluminium imports to the United States, according to US trade data. Brazil, Mexico and South Korea are also major steel providers to the country.

At a meeting with Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba in Washington on Friday, Trump threatened to target Japanese goods if the US trade deficit with the country is not equalised.

Equities struggled, with Sydney, Seoul, Manila, Bangkok, Mumbai, Jakarta, Wellington and Taipei all lower.

"Trump's latest move isn't merely another trade skirmish; it's an escalation of his 'America First' trade doctrine where 'no country is off-limits'," said Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management.

"This high-stakes gam-

ble could disrupt global supply chains. Markets have witnessed this scenario before -- last-minute exemptions and backroom deals (see: Mexico and Canada tariffs) -- but if Trump maintains his hardline stance this time, Asian economies will be the first to feel the impact."

Still, Hong Kong and Shanghai extended last week's gains, with Chinese tech firms boosted by the emergence of startup DeepSeek, which has shaken up the AI sector with a chatbot that it said rivalled those of US giants but at a fraction of the cost.

There were also gains in Singapore, while Tokyo was marginally higher.

London, Frankfurt and Paris rose at the open.

All three main indexes in New York fell as the University of Michigan's consumer survey showed a drop in consumer sentiment in February to 67.8, down

from 71.1 in January.

Another report showed respondents expect inflation to hit 4.3 percent a year from now, up a full percentage point from a month earlier.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood, Civil Judge II, Alaqi Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No 283/1. Institution. 2024. Date of hearing. 21/2/2025. Tajbar VS Sarfaraz Khan. Notice to No.1/1. Jamela. 1/2. Amena. 1/3. Norjihan daughters of Sarfaraz Khan resident of district Mowang Province Samot Sakon Thailand. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 21/2/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

GBC, PRBC sign MoU to foster cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Gujranwala Business Centre (GBC) and Pakistan Romania Business Council (PRBC) on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote economic cooperation and bilateral trade between Pakistan and Romania.

The MoU aims to facilitate collaboration in various sectors, including agriculture, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and technology.

Both parties will work together to organize B2B meetings, exhibitions, and

conferences to promote trade and investment opportunities, said in a PRBC press release received here.

Ahmad Ikram Lone, Chairman-BoD of GBC, and Sohail Shamim Firpo, Chairman of PRBC, signed the agreement.

Atif Farooqi, Advisor and Chief Operating Officer of PRBC, stated, "This partnership will enable us to tap into the vast potential of SMEs in Gujranwala, which will be a significant boost to Pakistan-Romania bilateral trade.



In brief

Haroon wins Bronze

FUJAIRAH (APP): Pakistani taekwondo athlete Haroon Khan had won a bronze medal at the 12th Fujairah Open International Taekwondo Championship 2025 in the G-2 category. According to a press release, Haroon showed great skill and determination, winning three matches before losing in the semi-finals to Iran's Hosseinpour Alireza. In his early rounds, Haroon impressed fans by defeating Kuwait's Alqallay F and Iran's Khajavi Rastin, demonstrating his strong tactics and powerful kicks. Although he fought hard, he was unable to advance past the semi-finals. After the match, Haroon expressed his pride in representing Pakistan. "It's an honor to win a medal for Pakistan on such a prestigious platform. I am motivated to train harder and aim for gold in future competitions," he said.

Bulls bag Basketball title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Bulls clinched the title of the Islamabad Cup 3x3 Basketball Tournament here at the outdoor basketball courts of the Pakistan Sports Complex. In an exhilarating final, Islamabad Bulls triumphed over Islamabad Timberwolves. Rizwan UI Haq Razi, Secretary General of the Islamabad Olympic Association (IOA), graced the closing ceremony as the chief guest. Ouj E Zahoor, General Secretary of the Federal Basketball Association (FBBA), Muhammad Azam Dar, and other dignitaries also attended the final. The tournament successfully brought together the best local talent for an intense two-day competition, with 20 teams participating under the banner of the Federal Basketball Association (FBBA). Rizwan UI Haq Razi commended the efforts of the Federal Basketball Association in promoting 3x3 basketball and providing a competitive platform for Islamabad's players. During the closing ceremony, FBBA General Secretary Ouj E Zahoor announced the All Pakistan 3x3 Basketball Night Tournament, scheduled for Ramzan 2025. This prestigious event will feature three categories: Inter-Club, Inter-Departmental, and Girls' competitions. As a FIBA-endorsed event, the tournament will contribute to Pakistan's official FIBA 3x3 world ranking, offering a unique opportunity for local players to gain international recognition. The Federal Basketball Association remains committed to promoting basketball in Islamabad and beyond, providing opportunities for players to showcase their talent at both national and international levels. The final was supervised by Rao Moazzam Naveed and Muhammad Muddasar.

Commissioner reviews arrangements

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Commissioner Musarrat Jabeen visited the Derawar Fort to review arrangements for the 20th International Cholistan Desert Rally. She was accompanied by RPO Bahawalpur Rai Babar Saeed, Deputy Commissioner of Bahawalpur Dr. Farhan Farooq, and Managing Director Cholistan Development Authority Tariq Mahmood Bukhari. Commissioner Musarrat Jabeen inspected the reconstruction of the Kundewala Bridge and the measures taken to eliminate encroachments.

Williamson's century guides New Zealand into tri-series final

LAHORE (APP): Commanding knocks from Kane Williamson and Davon Conway with 187-run partnership helped New Zealand ease past South Africa as they scored 308-4 in the second match of the tri-nation series at Gaddafi stadium and made to the final on February 14.

Williamson's 133 (113) trumped world-record debut innings of 150 by Breetzke and the Proteas could not defend 304-6 total on a Gaddafi stadium pitch which became placid as the match progressed. Player of the Match Kane Williamson reached 7,000 ODI runs in the match.

Williamson and Conway got together when Will Young 19 (31) got out in the 10th over with the team total at 50. Both the batters played contrasting innings as Williamson played a quickfire knock and reached his century in 72 balls while Conway could not reach the three-figure mark and lost his wicket to an excellent catch by Muthusamy at point.

Kane Williamson played the sheet anchor to carry the Black Caps home after they lost three wickets in quick succession with the fall of Conway 97 (107) in the 36th over off Dala and Daryl Mitchell 10 (10) and Tom Latham 0 (1) scalps were claimed by

Muthusamy.

An unbroken partnership pf 57 (61) between Glenn Phillips and Kane Williamson ensured that there were no more hiccups and New Zealand stay undefeated in the tri-series so far.

Senuran Muthusamy was pick of the bowlers for South Africa who claimed two wickets for 50 runs in 8.4 over. Eathan Bosch and Junior Dala picked a wicket each as they bowled eight and seven overs each for 47 and 33 runs respectively. Tabraiz Shamsi remained wicketless in nine over sand conceded 62 runs.

Earlier, Matthew Breetzke's world record ODI debut score of 150 helped South Africa post a total of 304 – 6 against New Zealand. In the only day match of the tri-series, New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner won the toss and elected put South Africa to bat first on a fresh pitch which encouraged pace-bowlers in the early part of the innings.

Breetzke played a mature knock and became the fourth South African cricketer to hit a century on debut after Colin Ingram, T Bavuma and Reeza Hendericks. He is the first cricketer in the world to score 150 runs on ODI debut. West Indian Desmond Haynes had

scored 148 runs on debut in 1978. Breetzke innings was a combination of caution and aggression as he stitched his century in 128 balls including six 4s and two 6s but he took only 19 balls to reach 150 run mark. He clubbed three 6s and five 4s in the fifty runs.

Breetzke and Jason Smith 41 (51) build a partnership of 93 runs for the second wicket after skipper Temba Bavuma 20 (23) departed early in the eighth over the South African innings. Wicket-keeper batter, who was promoted to bat at No. 4 (in the absence of some of the South African main batters who stayed back home due to SAT20 or ILT20 in the UAE) fell early.

Pace-bowling all rounder Wiaan Mulder hit 64 off 60 balls to and partnered in a partnership of 132 with debutant Breetzke to take South Africa to a respectable beyond 300. Mulder's innings included five boundaries and one 6.

New Zealand bowlers made good use of the juicy Gaddafi stadium pitch in the first power-play. Matt Henry and Will O'Rourke tested South African openers with swing and bounce. Bavuma fell to a bouncer from O'Rourke. In his first spell, Sears conceded mere 16 runs but he was punished by Breetzke and

Mulder in the latter half of the innings as he conceded 65 runs off his 10 overs and returned wicketless. Henry and O'Rourke grabbed a brace in their quota of 10 overs and conceded 59 and 72 runs respectively.

Captain Mitchell Santner was not as effective as against Pakistan and remained wicketless in his 10 overs and gave away 62 runs. Michale Bracewell was miserly and conceded only 43 runs and claimed one wicket in the match.

If tri-nation series served as a platform to test teams before the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, New Zealand made the most of it and they look a side to reckon with. Glenn Phillips and Kane Williamson hit centuries while Devon Conway, Daryl Mitchell and Williamson hit fifties and their bowlers got good feel of the pitches in the Gaddafi stadium Lahore. New Zealand have no more matches in Lahore while they may hope to feature in the second semi-final of the CT 25 at Gaddafi stadium.

The action now moves to Karachi where the final of the tri-nation will be played on February 14 and the fixture between Pakistan and South Africa on February 12 (Wednesday) will decide the other finalist of the tri-series.



LAHORE: Kane Williamson and Devon Conway kept New Zealand steady.

FIFA suspension threatens Pakistan's Asian Cup bid

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's participation in the 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifiers final round hangs in the balance as the national football team faces the consequences of a Fifa-imposed suspension since February 6.

The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) was suspended by Fifa after the PFF Congress refused to accept constitutional amendments recommended by Fifa and AFC, leading to the loss of all membership rights.

As a result, the country's football representatives and teams are barred from participating in international competitions until the suspension is lifted. Pakistan is drawn in Group E of the qualifiers alongside Syria, Myanmar, and Afghanistan, with their first match scheduled on March 25.

However, the Asian

Football Confederation (AFC) has warned that if the suspension is not lifted by March 4 — three weeks before the opening match — the Pakistan men's national team will be considered withdrawn from the competition.

In a letter addressed to the PFF's Normalisation Committee, the AFC emphasised the urgency of resolving the suspension issue.

"In order to have sufficient time to prepare for the upcoming first match of AC27QFR on 25 March 2025 with all Competition requirements... the PFF's men's national team will be considered to have withdrawn from the Competition should the suspension on PFF not be lifted by Tuesday, 4 March 2025," the letter stated.

Adding to the crisis, the Pakistan women's national football team has already pulled out of the 2026 AFC

Women's Asian Cup qualifiers, scheduled to begin in late June. The PFF has not yet issued an official response to the AFC's warning, leaving the future of the Pakistan football team in further uncertainty. Fifa extends mandate of PFF NC

Separately, the Fifa has extended the mandate of the PFF Normalisation Committee until July 31, 2025. Saud Azim Hashimi, a member of the existing Fifa-appointed PFF Normalisation Committee, has been appointed as the new chairman by Fifa starting February 16th, 2025.

Saud Hashimi will take charge after existing chairman Haroon Malik's tenure ends on February 15, 2025, while the other two members, Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar and Haris Azmat will continue to serve on the committee.

14th Rashid D. Habib Golf: Ahmad Baig defended his title



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Bank AL Habib's 14th Rashid D. Habib Memorial National Professionals Golf Tournament concluded in grand fashion at the Karachi Golf Club, witnessing stellar performances from some of the finest professional golfers in Pakistan.

Ahmed Baig (PAF) displayed remarkable consistency to clinch the Professional Champion Title, shooting 273 (-15) and taking home Rs 937,676. Muhammad Zubair (KGC) finished as runner-up, posting 275 (-13) and securing Rs 602,787.

The event, held from February 6 to 9, 2025, brought together top senior, junior, and professional golfers, competing for a substantial prize purse across multiple categories.

Muhammad Tariq (ICGC) emerged victorious in the Senior Professionals category, finishing with a total of 140 (-4) over two rounds. Aurangzeb Khan (KGC) closely followed with 141 (-3).

In the Junior Professionals division, Syed Ali Noshairwan Naqvi (LGG) secured the title with a total score of 151 (+7), narrowly edging out Rehan Babar (LGG) at 152 (+8).

The PRO-AM event saw 27 professionals participating, with Muhammad Zubair's team winning the top prize of Rs 50,000. Minhaj Maqsood's team finished as runners-up, while Shahid Javed Khan's team claimed third place.

Kamram Zahoor was the winner in KGC Caddies, Saleem Inayat in KGC Senior Professionals and Abdullah became title holder in KGC Professionals category.

Top five golfers according to PGF criteria, were paid appearance money of PKR200,000 each among Muhammad Shabbir (Islamabad Golf Club), Muhammad Alam

(Garrison), Muhammad Munir (Rawalpindi), Minhaj Masood (Rawalpindi), and Muhammad Zubair (Karachi).

Similarly PKR 75,000 each were paid as appearance money to Senior Pros: Muhammad Akram, Nisar Hussain and Muhammad Tariq. PKR 150,000 were equally distributed among junior professionals Rehan Babar, Muhammad Sahil and Shahbaz Ali.

Amjad Yousuf from Rawalpindi scored a spectacular Hole-in-One at Blue Hole #4, winning a Toyota Altis. Tallat Ijaz achieved second Hole-in-One in the same category and was awarded a Golf Kit.

The Chief Guest Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Mr. Jamil Ahmed said that Bank AL Habib's Rashid D. Habib Memorial Tournament remains a landmark in Pakistan's golf calendar, honoring the legacy of the late Rashid D. Habib. The Chief Guest presented mementos and awards to the winners.

The tournament saw intense competition, incredible talent, and sportsmanship, reinforcing its stature as a key platform for professional golfers in the country.

Indo-Pak match will test both teams under pressure: Naseem Shah



Djokovic says injury 'almost 100 percent healed'



BELGRADE (AFP): Novak Djokovic said Monday his leg injury, which shattered his Australian Open dream, was "almost 100 percent healed" and he was ready to aim for his 100th ATP title in Doha this month.

"There's no longer any muscle tear. The injury is almost 100 percent healed and I'm ready to go for more victories," Djokovic said in an interview with Montenegrin newspaper Vijesti. "I have the green light from the medical team to train, to prepare. "The Doha tournament is in seven days' time, and I'm sticking to my schedule."

Djokovic's bid for a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title at the Australian Open was ended when he was forced to retire injured after dropping the opening set against Alexander Zverev in the semi-finals.

The 37-year-old struggled with the injury during his quarter-final victory over Carlos Alcaraz. But Djokovic is now expecting to be back for the Qatar Open which starts on February 17, where he will be hoping to join Jimmy Connors and Roger Federer by reaching 100 ATP titles.

"I've been chasing it (100th ATP title) for a while, since last October. But we'll see, it'll come when it comes," said the Serb, now ranked seventh in the world.

"Thank God I managed to recover quickly. I've had a few more injuries recently compared to the first 15 years of my career. "It probably comes with age, but my body is still serving me well and I still have the flame and desire." The former world number one had to withdraw before the French Open quarter-finals last year, when he suffered a right knee injury and underwent meniscus surgery. But he returned in time for Wimbledon, where he lost to Alcaraz in the final, before winning his first Olympic gold medal by beating the Spaniard at Roland Garros.

Ireland beat Zimbabwe by 63 runs in one-off Test

BULAWAYO (Agencies): Ireland clinched a 63-run victory on a tense final day in the one-off Test against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo as Matthew Humphreys' seven-wicket match haul proved crucial.

Zimbabwe started day five requiring 109 runs for victory as they chased 292 but left-arm spinner Humphreys dismissed Newman Nyamhuri for the addition of only five runs.

Crucially Humphreys then bowled Wesley Madhevere for 84 in a massive blow to the hosts' hopes of chasing down the Ireland tally.

That left Zimbabwe still requiring 73 runs for victory but they only added 10 more before Andy McBryne's dismissal of Richard Ngarava secured a third straight Test win for Ireland.

Humphreys' outstanding second-innings figures of 6-57 saw his Test best for Ireland.

The Irish defeated Zimbabwe in Belfast last July, which came four months after their first Test triumph over Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi in what was their eighth game in the format.

Ireland's latest victory looked unlikely on day one as they slumped to 31-5 but McBryne's unbeaten 90 and 78 from Mark

Adair helped the tourists regroup and they largely controlled the remainder of the contest.

"Humphreys was superb, [Andy] McBryne too. Our bowlers worked hard, taking wickets at key times," said Ireland captain Andy Balbirnie, who hit 66 runs in his team's second innings.

Balbirnie hailed his team's "resilience" in fighting back from their nervous start on day one.

"Back to Belfast [against Zimbabwe last July] when we were five down for not a lot chasing 158. Five down again here in the first innings for not a lot when Blessing [Muzarabani] was really troublesome. It shows a lot of character about our group."

Ireland's spirit was apparent throughout the Bulawayo match and Balbirnie said that the side's relative lack of Test matches means that the few contests they do have must be fully embraced.

"We don't know when our next Test match is going to be so we've got to enjoy it while we can and make sure that we're smiling."

Balbirnie picked out the contribution of Zimbabwe native Peter Moor in setting the tone for Ireland's aggressive approach in the second innings when he scored

a quickfire 30.

"The first ball he played was a back-foot punch off Blessing [Muzarabani] for four. After what Blessing had done in the first innings [with his seven wickets], it really sent a message to the group."

Irish head to Harare for ODIs & T20s

Despite his team's second successive Test triumph over Zimbabwe, Balbirnie said there is very little between the sides, as he sportingly referred to the absence of regular home skipper Craig Irvine, who wife gave birth last week, and injured Sean Williams.

"They were obviously missing key players. Players like him [Irvine] and Williams who are so crucial in that middle order."

Ireland, and their small but noisy band of fans, now head on to Harare for six white-ball contests with the posts which begin with Friday's opening one-day game.

"Harare is as good an atmosphere that I've played in, outside of playing India," added the Irish skipper.

"It's always nice to have travelling supporters. Cricket is not the biggest sport in our country. It's down the list but we're trying to make it as visible as possible and putting our team out there as well as we can."



In brief

CEO directs improvements to mobile application

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pakistan Railways, Aamir Ali Baloch, has directed improvements to the railways' mobile application to make it more user-friendly, ensuring that passengers do not face any difficulties. He gave this direction while responding to the public queries during an e-Kachehri (online public forum). He urged passengers to dispose of food waste and other trash only in designated bins to ensure the cleanliness of the trains and stations, according to a Pakistan Railways' statement issued on Monday. To a query, the CEO of Pakistan Railways said that in collaboration with Pakistan Railways, the Sindh government has launched the Karachi to Thar Desert Safari tourist train. He said the cooperation of the provincial governments is essential for the restoration of more tourist trains, as the required funds for tourism are allocated to the provinces. He said Pakistan Railways is a federal institution, and providing the best travel facilities to passengers is its top priority. However, public cooperation in maintaining cleanliness is also indispensable. Aamir Ali Baloch further explained that launching new trains requires substantial resources. He said as soon as the necessary resources become available, the process of introducing new trains will commence. He said significant work remains on the ML-2 railway line, and suspended train services will also be gradually restored as resources allow.

21 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 21 outlaws involved in various illegal activities, including drug peddling and possession of illegal weapons, recovering a significant quantity of drugs and firearms from their possession, on Monday. A police spokesperson told APP that the Police teams also recovered 3,474 grams heroin, 515 grams ice, 110 hashish and 12 pistols with ammunition from their possession. SSP Operation Muhammad Shoaib Khan said that the Police is actively working to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property in the federal capital, emphasizing that no elements will be allowed to disrupt citizens' peace. Protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens is the Islamabad Police's top priority.

PHA to maintain greenery

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA), Rawalpindi, keeping in view lack of rainfall has undertaken special measures to maintain greenery in public parks in the city. Besides watering the dry grass beds, plantation of trees and cultivation of flowering plants in the city's green belts and parks was being carried out on fast track basis, PHA Rawalpindi Director General PHA Ahmed Hassan Ranjha said in statement on Monday. He said that on the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the work of cleaning parks and green belts was also underway. He said the PHA always played a key role in the beautification of Rawalpindi city. The Authority was fulfilling its responsibilities in providing quality recreational facilities to the public in the parks so that they could enjoy a fresh environment amid the blooming fragrant flowers in the spring, he added. Ranjha said the PHA had the target to complete the work of planting flowery plants in the month of February.

Naqvi orders completion of 'Margalla Enclave' by December 31

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday visited the new joint venture of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), Margalla Enclave and reviewed the ongoing development works.

During the visit, it was decided to complete 50 percent of the development work of Margalla Enclave by August 14 and 100 percent by December 31 and hand over the possession of the plots to the owners.

The Interior Minister directed that the pace of development work should be accelerated and all

resources should be utilized to complete the development work.

He also directed to construct a new road for easy access to Margalla Enclave and said the distance of the alternate route from the Prime Minister's House to Margalla Enclave should be only five minutes.

The Interior Minister directed the immediate removal of encroachments on the road leading to Margalla Enclave. He highlighted that citizens have shown keen interest in this project due to its excellent location.

He added that along with the beautiful location, all standard and modern

facilities will be provided to the citizens in this project. A lake will also be built in the Margalla Enclave.

While giving the briefing, the DHA Project Director apprised that Margalla Enclave is being established on 10,000 kanals in which plots of 5 marla, 10 marla and one kanal are being made available to the public.

The last date for submission of applications is February 14.

Furthermore, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa and DHA Project Director gave a detailed briefing about the development work and sector planning.



RAWALPINDI: People offering Namaz-e-Istisqa" (prayer for rain) at Allama Iqbal Park. —APP Photo

Pirzada acknowledges need for residential schemes for employees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Monday acknowledged the need for residential schemes for federal government employees but confirmed that no such schemes are currently under consideration.

He also provided clarity on the roles and responsibilities of federal and provincial governments in regulating housing societies and addressing the housing needs of federal employees.

During the Question Hour of the National Assembly Session, the minister emphasized that, under the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan, housing is a provincial subject. This means provincial departments are empowered to

handle regulatory functions, including the processing and approval of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for new housing societies. However, in the case of Islamabad, this responsibility falls under the Capital Development Authority (CDA), which operates under the Ministry of Interior.

Responding to a supplementary question, Pirzada explained that, as per the Rules of Business 1973, the Ministry of Housing and Works is not tasked with granting NOCs to housing societies. Instead, two specialized entities—the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) and the Pakistan Housing Foundation (PHA-F)—are mandated to develop housing schemes.

The FGEHA is specifically responsible for planning and developing housing schemes for serving and retired federal government employees, as well as other specified groups. Meanwhile, the PHA-F focuses on constructing apartments and housing schemes for federal employees and low-income groups.

To ensure timely completion of projects, the FGEHA collaborates with joint venture partners under Joint Venture Agreements and Construction Agreements. Similarly, the PHA-F engages reputable national and international engineering consultants and contractors through an open bidding process, adhering to the rules and regulations of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA), he added.

ANF seizes over 107kg drugs in 9 operations

RAWALPINDI (INP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 9 operations across the country managed to recover over 107 kg drugs worth over Rs 110 million and arrested 9 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near the park in F-8 Islamabad.

100 grams ice and 48 intoxicated tablets were recovered from an accused netted near Khanna Pul Expressway Islamabad.

In third operation, 500

grams hashish was recovered from personal possession of an accused rounded up near a college in Islamabad.

70 intoxicated tablets were recovered from the possession of an accused held near a university in Rawalpindi. The arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions.

10,750 kg ice absorbed in 3 ladies' suits was recovered from a parcel booked for Australia through a courier office in Karachi.

2,850 kg ice was recovered from the trolley bag of a passenger going to Jeddah at

Peshawar International Airport. In 7th operation, 63 kg heroin was recovered from an area of Qila Saifullah district in Balochistan.

18 kg hashish hidden in a car cavity near Srinagar Highway Islamabad and two suspects were arrested. 9.6 kg hashish hidden in a car near Sawan Adda Bus Stop Rawalpindi and 2 suspects were arrested during the operation.

Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.



RAWALPINDI: Staffers of Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) marking the dedicated bike lane on Old Airport Road. —APP Photo

Gilani: Parliament-UN partnership essential for Pakistan's policy reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting President Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Monday said that strong institutional collaboration between the Parliament of Pakistan and the UN was crucial to address issues of inclusive governance, economic development, human rights, Afghan refugees and such engagements would serve as a catalyst for policy reforms thus benefiting the most vulnerable segments of the society.

The Acting President was talking to Mohamed Yahya, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan. He welcomed the dignitary and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working closely with UN, a President's Office news release said.

The Acting President appreciated the UN's role in supporting Pakistan's climate change adaptation measures particularly in ensuring access to climate finance, clean energy solutions and sustainable urban development.



The Acting President hoped that Yahya's leadership would be instrumental in mobilizing international support for Pakistan's climate action goals.

He assured the willingness of the Upper House of the Parliament to collaborate on policy level interventions that align with UN global mandate. Issues regarding polio vaccination and Afghan refugees were also discussed during the meeting.

The Acting President

called for more robust support to expand the vaccination circle in the far-flung areas of Pakistan with particular reference to Balochistan. He pointed out that thousands of Afghan refugees still live in Pakistan and UN must support and come up with a solution to address the refugees issue amicably.

The Acting President also highlighted the importance of strong collaboration between Pakistan and UN to achieve the sustainable

development goals by 2030.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani also called for addressing the root causes of extremism and conflict, saying that Pakistan is keen on leveraging UN support in promoting peacebuilding, de-radicalization program and social cohesion efforts to ensure more stable and prospers future.

The Acting President assured his support to Mr. Yahya and expressed his well wishes for him.

Romina for enhanced regional collaboration in tackling climate-related challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, on Monday underscored the importance of regional collaboration in tackling climate-related challenges of disaster management and climate change adaptation.

Romina, as a chief guest, was addressing the inaugural ceremony of International Training Programme on 'Disaster Management and Climate Change Adaptation' held at the National Centre for Rural Development (NCRD).

The training programme was organised by Akhtar Hameed Khan National Centre for Rural Development (AHKN-CD) and African-Asian Journal of Rural Development (AARD).

Romina Khurshid Alam reiterated the importance of supporting member countries through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and fostering innovative solutions to promote sustainable development.

Moreover, she commended the efforts of NCRD for its contribution to the cause of rural development and poverty alleviation in Pakistan and other AARDO member countries through collaboration with AARDO.



Romina Khurshid hoped that the training programme would equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to implement effective disaster management and climate adaptation strategies in their respective countries.

Director General (DG) of NCRD, Israr Mohammad Khan, welcomed the delegates from AARDO member countries, delegates of the diplomatic corps and other dignitaries and commended the efforts of AARDO officials, especially Dr Manoj Nardeosingh, Secretary General AARDO, for organising this event in Pakistan.

Israr Mohammad Khan

highlighted how AARDO member countries, including Pakistan, were increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts, underscoring the urgent need for robust disaster management strategies and collaborative adaptation measures to build resilience.

He also emphasised the importance of equipping stakeholders with knowledge and tools to effectively address the challenges of disaster management and climate change adaptation.

Israr Khan expressed a strong presumption that the training workshop, complemented by in-house sessions and field visits, would provide profound insights

to the participants and experts from the member countries.

He expressed gratitude to AARDO for its support and extended appreciation to the participants from member countries, hoping that they embark to deepen their understanding of disaster management and climate change adaptation.

International participants from 13 AARDO member countries, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Gambia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Namibia, Oman, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Zambia, are attending this training program which will conclude on February 16.

Uzma Kardar inspected NID campaign

RAWALPINDI (APP): CM's Focal Person polio eradication, Uzma Kardar inspected the Transit Polio Team set up in connection with National Immunization Drive (NID) at Jinnah Park, where she appreciated the dedication of team members and commended the efforts of CEO Health Dr Asif Arbab Khan Niazi.

According to the details, Uzma Kardar administered polio drops to a few children from AJK and GB. She reiterated the government's commitment to reaching every child, regardless of their place of origin.

Later, she proceeded to Jhanda Chichi, where she reviewed the Mobile Health Team's efforts in tracking and vaccinating the 'Not Available' children.

Finding the team's work satisfactory, she reaffirmed the vision of CM Maryam Nawaz, ensuring that no child is left unvaccinated. As part of the catch-up activities, the focal person was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner General Dr. Hasan Tariq, WHO Area Coordinator Dr. Shumaila Akbar, Dr. Amir Ehsan provincial Co ordinator WHO and other officials.

She acknowledged and appreciated the tireless efforts of the District Health Authority (DHA), Rawalpindi in executing a successful polio eradication campaign. She urged the health teams to continue their diligent efforts in ensuring that no child is left unvaccinated.

CPO urges citizens not to allow children to fly kites

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi have urged the citizens to ensure that their children do not violate the ban on kite flying imposed by the provincial government otherwise strict action would be taken against the violators in accordance with the law.

According to a police spokesman, Rawalpindi district police were conducting raids to net the kite sellers and flyers. He informed that on the special directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani, police were taking strict action in accordance with the law.

The CPO had requested the parents to stop their children from getting involved in such activities as a crackdown against kite flyers had already been accelerated in the city, he added.

Special squads had been formed to net the violators while deputy superintendents of police and station house officers were also taking part in the operation. He said that the officers concerned had been directed to utilise all available resources to control the kite flying and to net the ban violators and the kite sellers. He said that the violators were being dealt with an iron hand and no one would be allowed to violate the law and indulge in kite flying and selling.

The use of metal string for kite flying results in the loss of human lives there-

fore, all-out efforts are made to stop kite flying, he said adding, a special awareness campaign is also being run to control the ban violation.

He said that the Inspector General of Police, had issued orders to speed up crackdown against kite flying and aerial firing.

The spokesman said Rawalpindi district police had adopted a zero-tolerance policy against kite sellers, flyers, aerial firing and strict action was being taken against the violators. The people had also been requested to report on 15 against kite flying and aerial firing so that such notorious elements could be immediately rounded up, he added.

Police officials have reiterated time and again that flying kites is a potentially dangerous sport that can lead to the loss of life, and those found disregarding its cost to human lives will be prosecuted according to law.

The Rawalpindi police had also launched an awareness campaign about the hazards of the risky sport with the help of religious scholars, who were asked to make announcements on their respective mosques sound systems about the demerits of kite-flying. The police had finalized arrangements for live monitoring of all densely populated areas, while all Station House Officers (SHOs) had been directed

to ensure strict surveillance of kite sellers in their areas.

The police teams were trying to trace and arrest culprits involved in buying and selling killer strings and kites through social media, he said adding that monitoring of courier services and passenger vehicles was also being tightened, so that any kites and chemical strings being brought to the city could be seized.

Police also organized walks in different city areas to sensitize the masses regarding the hazards and prevention of kite flying.

Special awareness pamphlets were also distributed during the walks and awareness banners were also displayed at different points.

A large number of traders, students, citizens and Police Officers participated in the awareness walks.

The aim of the walks was to provide awareness to the citizens about the harms of the kite flying and its prevention.

The kite flying is a dangerous game and it's a crime. After the amendment in the law, kite flying is a non-bailable crime, which could be punished with imprisonment from 03 to 07 years and a fine of Rs 500,000 to 5 million.

SSP Operations, Rawalpindi said that no one would be allowed to violate the ban and strict action as per the law would be taken against kite flyers and sellers.

Explosion in Farah kills 2

FARAH (Amu TV): A mine explosion in Farah, near Abu Nasr Farahi border crossing, killed two people and injured three others, Taliban officials confirmed Monday. According to Mohammad Ismail Zahid, a Taliban border commissioner, the blast occurred Monday afternoon when a vehicle struck a mine in the border region of the southwestern province. Taliban have not provided details on the identities of the victims, and no group has claimed responsibility for the explosion.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shaaban 12, 1446 — Tuesday, February 11, 2025

2,500t of pulses distributed

KABUL (Ariana News): WFP said it distributed 2,500 metric tons of pulses across Afghanistan last year with support from the European Union, Germany, South Korea, the UK and US. The agency noted that pulses — rich in protein, iron, minerals, and vitamin B — served as a key source of nutrition for 700,000 people across the country. The announcement comes as WFP warns that an estimated 15 million people in Afghanistan will struggle with hunger this winter.

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

IEA assesses refugee challenges

KABUL (BNA): The High Commission on Refugee Affairs held its regular meeting late Sunday night, chaired by Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Administrative Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, with commission members in attendance. According to a statement from Arg (the Presidential Palace), the session focused on reviewing the progress, challenges, and policies of

the commission's specialized committees working on refugee issues.

Discussions covered key topics, including the allocation of land for returning refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Zabul Province, distribution of land to refugees in other provinces, relocation of displaced individuals from Kabul to their home regions, and the implementation of decrees concerning aid for

displaced families in Nangarhar. Officials conducted a comprehensive review of these issues and approved necessary measures to improve refugee support, resettlement, and access to essential resources. This meeting highlights the government's ongoing efforts to address the complex challenges facing refugees and IDPs, ensuring their reintegration and long-term stability.

10 tons of expired food products destroyed



LAGHMAN (BNA): The Commission for Preventing the Sale of Expired Food Items in Laghman province has destroyed 10 tons of expired and sub-quality food products.

This operation took place on Monday, following a year-long effort to collect these items from local markets in collaboration with the Mehtarlam Municipality.

Mawlawi Salamat Khan Bilal, head of the

Commission and the Industry and Commerce department in Laghman, reported to Bakhtar News Agency that the destroyed products were gathered through diligent monitoring and cooperation among various stakeholders.

During the event, Mawlawi Akhtar Mohammad Mazmal, the deputy governor of Laghman, emphasized the importance of ongoing reforms across

all sectors in the province. He reassured the public that every effort is being made to monitor local markets closely.

Mazmal also urged shopkeepers to refrain from selling expired and sub-quality food items, highlighting the potential health risks these products pose to the community. "Protecting our people from illness is a shared responsibility," he stated.

IEA slams Netanyahu's suggestion: MoFA

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) on Monday condemned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's suggestion that Saudi Arabia's land be used to establish a Palestinian state.

IEA's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the suggestion is "unrealistic and flagrant violation of internationally recognized facts and Saudi Arabia's sovereignty."

"Such statements by Netanyahu constitute a direct affront to established norms and a clear infringement on the legitimate

rights of the Palestinians," the statement said.

The IEA reiterated that Palestine is "the rightful land of the Palestinian people," adding that "as long as the occupation continues, the inalienable rights of Palestinian people will remain violated, Gaza and the broader region will remain unstable, and such scenario benefits no one."

On Thursday, Netanyahu told Channel 14: "The Saudis can create a Palestinian state in Saudi Arabia; they have a lot of land over there."

President Donald Trump meanwhile has said he is

"committed to buying and owning" the Gaza Strip and relocating the two million Palestinians living there. This comes despite global condemnation of the plan he unveiled last week.

He told reporters that he might allow Middle East countries to be involved in rebuilding parts of the territory and that he would make sure the Palestinian refugees would "live beautifully".

Hamas and Palestinians reiterated that Palestinian land was "not for sale".

But Netanyahu praised Trump's proposal as "revolutionary and creative".

New 120-bed hospital inaugurated

BAMYAN (BNA): A significant development in healthcare has arrived in Bamiyan with the inauguration of a new 120-bed specialized hospital. The facility features departments dedicated to surgery, heart and kidney transplants, gastroenterology, ophthalmology, general internal medicine, obstetrics, and intensive care.

The hospital's construction was made possible through financial support from the Islamic Republic of Iran, totaling 42 million US dollars, which covered both operational costs and medical equipment.

Saboor Farzan Sighani, the spokesperson for the Bamiyan governor, announced the completion of the project, emphasizing its importance for the region.

"This hospital is a crucial step in providing advanced and specialized healthcare services to the residents of Bamiyan and surrounding provinces," Sighani stated.

Local residents are expressing their enthusiasm as they await the official opening and the start of medical services at the hospital. The community looks forward to improved healthcare access, which is expected to significantly enhance the quality of life for many in the region.

152 inmates inmates released

HELMAND (BNA): A total of 152 prisoners have been released from Helmand Central Prison, while the sentences of 102 others have been reduced, following a special decree issued by Amir al-Mu'minin, the Supreme Leader.

Sheikh Mawlawi Mohammad Mohammadi, head of Helmand Province's Appellate Court, confirmed the decision, stating that it aligns with ongoing efforts to facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration for inmates. Those released welcomed the decree, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to rebuild their lives. Many described it as a second chance to correct past mistakes and embrace a more constructive future.

The initiative is part of broader efforts to ease prison overcrowding and promote restorative justice, offering former inmates a path toward contributing positively to society.

Excavation work finished over 87%

KABUL (TOLOnews): The National Development Company (NDC) says that 87% of the excavation work for the second phase of the Qosh Tepa Canal has been completed, and the construction of the canal's headworks has reached 75%.

According to the company's officials, they are carrying out the canal's construction in accordance with global engineering standards.

Nabiullah Arghandiwal, the spokesperson for the National Development Company, stated: "The work on the Qosh Tepa Canal is currently progressing rapidly and in line with global engineering standards in various sections. At present, 87% of the second phase of excavation has been completed, and the construction of the headworks has progressed to 75%."

The Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock considers the construction of this canal a fundamental step toward Afghanistan's self-sufficiency in agriculture.

"The Qosh Tepa Canal has vast fertile lands, and if utilized properly, we can achieve self-sufficiency in wheat and rice production," said Mirwais Haji Zada, deputy of the agriculture and livestock chamber.

Similarly, economic affairs expert Najibullah Siddiqi emphasized the importance of this project for the farmers in surrounding areas, stating: "Farmers around this canal are engaged in work, and they can be highly productive since the Qosh Tepa Canal has been constructed."

Albert discuss issues in meeteing with Muttaqi

KABUL (Amu TV): The Norwegian chargé d'affaires for Afghanistan, Per Albert Ilsaas, met with Taliban ministers of foreign affairs and economy in Kabul on Monday, where they discussed political, economic, and humanitarian issues, according to Taliban statements.

According to a Taliban statement, said that Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban's foreign minister, emphasized the importance of "positive engagement" with the international community during the talks.

Amir Khan Muttaqi urged foreign governments to support Afghanistan's economic growth and development, stating that mutual respect was key to improving diplomatic and economic ties.

The ministry quoted Iljas as saying that Norway remains committed to main-



taining relations and cooperation with Afghanistan.

Separately, Din Mohammad Hanif, the Taliban's minister of economy, also met with Iljas to discuss economic and humanitarian cooperation, according to

the Taliban's Ministry of Economy.

During the meeting, Hanif stressed the importance of self-reliance in addressing Afghanistan's economic challenges.

He also called for the

lifting of international sanctions and the release of Afghanistan's frozen foreign reserves.

Norway's diplomatic mission for Afghanistan has not commented on the meetings.

First phase of New Kabul Project approved, says Ministry

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing said that the development plan for the first section of the initial phase of the New Kabul Project has been approved, and currently, work is ongoing on the first and second sections of this phase.

According to the ministry, construction work on the third section is also set to begin soon.

"It is expected that after the finalization of the development plan, the work on the first phase will accelerate, especially in Parcel A, as the national company has promised to

complete its projects after the plan's approval," said Kamal Afghan, spokesperson for the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing.

Officials of the New Kabul Project emphasize that this plan meets global standards and will be completed within the specified timeframe.

"We are committed to implementing this project in accordance with international standards and under the supervision of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. Dozens of subsidiary companies are involved in this

project, and the proposed plan will be fully implemented," said Sayed Muqaddam Amin, the project head.

Given the growing population and urban challenges in Kabul, some residents urge the government to expedite the implementation of the New Kabul Project.

"Congestion, air pollution, and urban problems are increasing daily. It is truly important that the New Kabul Project is seriously pursued and implemented," said Shah Mohammad Shah, a resident of Kabul.

"Kabul's population has grown significantly. We are optimistic that this project will be completed so people can live in a suitable environment," said Mohammad Reza, another resident of Kabul, added.

The New Kabul Project has been designed by a Japanese company and consists of four phases. Each phase has 15 sections, and according to officials from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, the project will cover an area 1.5 times the current size of Kabul and will have the capacity to accommodate three million people.

Herat's pottery industry struggles to survive

HERAT (TOLOnews): The pottery industry, one of the oldest handicrafts in Herat, has faced serious challenges in recent years and has lost its former prosperity.

Not long ago, clay implements such as dining bowls, water jugs, and vases were an inseparable part of daily life. However, with the introduction of metal and plastic utensils, the market for this traditional art has declined, and its customers have become fewer. Nevertheless, many potters in Herat are striving to save this historic and valuable craft from extinction and keep it alive.

Hekmatullah Gholami, a veteran potter from Herat, has been working in this profession for more than twenty years. By shaping clay on the potter's wheel, he creates beautiful and traditional pottery, showcasing his skills.

However, Gholami is concerned about the future of this industry and says, "The government should support pottery artists. If we receive support, we can progress like other countries. Otherwise, our situation will worsen."

Despite this, some pottery sellers in Herat believe



that the industry still has its niche customers.

Faridun Haidari, a pottery seller, says, "Some people still use clay bowls for eating soup because these dishes offer a unique quality and experience. Also, clay water jugs are a good option in the summer for those who do not have refrigerators."

Morteza Azimi, another pottery seller, said, "Our business is gradually improving, and people are becoming increasingly interested in using clay

utensils."

Pottery in Herat has been passed down from generation to generation and is considered a cultural symbol of the province. The Herat Department of Information and Culture states that it is working to preserve this historic industry.

"The department has always stood by artists and craftsmen of handicrafts and has provided them with facilities as much as possible, continuing its support," said Hamidullah Gheyasi, the Director of Art and

Culture at the Herat Information and Culture Directorate.

Pottery, which has a history of several centuries in Herat, once had dozens of active workshops producing about 70 types of pottery. However, today, only three pottery workshops remain operational in the city.

Potters and craftsmen hope that with government support and increased public awareness of the value of traditional pottery, this industry will regain its former prosperity.

Taliban flog seven in 3 provinces

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban publicly flogged seven people in Kunduz, Uruzgan and Ghazni provinces on charges of extramarital relations and assault, according to Taliban supreme court statements on Monday.

One statement said that the Taliban's primary court in Qala-e-Zal district, Kunduz, two individuals convicted of assault were sentenced to 15 lashes and eight months in prison. The ruling was carried out on Monday, February 10, the statement said.

In a separate statement, the Taliban stated that a primary court in Khas district, Uruzgan, had convicted three individuals of murder, sodomy, and unlawful relationships.

According to the statement, one individual was

sentenced to one year in prison and 39 lashes. A second person received 18 months in prison and 30 lashes. A third defendant was sentenced to six months in prison and 39 lashes.

Additionally, two other individuals in Ghazni province were flogged for extramarital relations and sentenced to three years and six months in prison, along with 39 lashes.

An Amu TV review of Taliban judicial records indicates that in less than three weeks, at least 44 people, including six women, have been publicly flogged across various provinces.

During the same period, the Taliban's morality police, known as Amr bil Maruf, have arrested 18 individuals.

Some Afghans have con-

demned these punishments as inhumane, while human rights organizations and the international community continue to voice concern over the Taliban's use of public corporal punishment.

Hundreds of acres allocated for industrial park

PANJSHIR (BNA): Under a special decree issued by Amir al-Mu'minin, the Supreme Leader, 1,000 Jeribs (nearly 500 acres) of land have been allocated for the development of an industrial park in Panjshir Province.

Mawlawi Aminul Haq Mathuri, head of the province's Industry and Commerce Department, told Bakhtar News Agency that documentation for land designation in Bazarak, the provincial capital, and seven districts has been completed. Construction is set to begin next year.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to boost domestic production and economic growth. In recent months, similar decrees have allocated thousands of Jeribs across various provinces for industrial development, marking a significant step toward strengthening the country's economic infrastructure.

Dozens protest what they call looting of gold mines



TAKHAR (Amu TV): Dozens of residents in Takhar province staged protests against what they call the plundering of gold reserves in the Chah Ab district.

The protests that started Sunday and continued into Monday called for addressing the issue by relevant institutions.

Demonstrators warned that they would escalate their protests if their grievances remained unaddressed.

Residents claim that homes, clinics, grazing lands, and farmland have been damaged by various companies, though they did

not specify which firms were responsible or why the destruction had occurred.

Sources told Amu TV that companies operating in the region appear to be engaged in large-scale gold extraction.

"In recent days, dozens of excavators have arrived in the district. Some have moved toward the mining sites, while others have stopped in the district center due to public protests," one source said. "The exploitation of northern Afghanistan's mineral wealth has reached unprecedented levels in recent months."

Protesters say they have repeatedly urged the Taliban-led local administration in Takhar to take action, but their appeals have gone unanswered.

Meanwhile, other sources reported that dozens of outside companies have moved into the Shehr-e Buzurg district of neighboring Badakhshan province and begun extracting minerals.

Residents of Chah Ab have vowed to continue their protests until authorities respond to their concerns.

Taliban have not publicly commented on the situation.

Operationalization of hydropower project

PHC dispose off writ on govt assurance

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has disposed of a writ petition regarding the Koto Hydropower Project in Timergara, after the provincial government assurance that the project would be operationalized in March 2025, on Monday.

A two-member bench, headed by Justice SM Atique Shah, heard the petition filed by Rahim Shah Akhunzada through his counsel, Malik Muhammad Ajmal Khan advocate. The petitioner stated that the construction work on the Koto Hydropower Project had commenced in February 2015, with a scheduled completion period of 48 months.

The project was initially expected to be completed by 2019, but its completion period was extended by one year. Later, the completion period was further extended.

The petitioner's counsel argued that in 2022, it was claimed that 95% of the work on the project had been completed, but despite the passage of time, the project had not been operationalized. On the other hand, the court was informed that comments had been submitted in the case, and the project would be operationalized in March 2025. The bench, after being assured by the provincial government, disposed of the case.

PHC grants bail to alleged murderer: A single member bench of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah has issued orders for the release on bail of the accused in a case involving

the murder of his wife in the name of honor.

The counsel Amin Khattak Lachi advocate informed the court that the petitioner named Abdur Rashid was accused of murdering his wife, along with his brother, on November 25, 2024, within the jurisdiction of Sherkadra Police Station in Kohat.

The lawyer stated that the deceased (wife of accused) was suspected of having an affair with someone, which led to the murder. However, the complainant had only implicated the accused in the conspiracy, while his co-accused brother was still absconder. He argued that since the co-accused was still at absconder the petitioner could not be detained.

The counsel cited several Supreme Court judgments are available regarding detention under Section 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code. He further stated that the police investigation had revealed that the accused was not directly involved in the murder, but had instead filed a case against his absconding brother. The complainant and the state counsel argued in favor of dismissing the bail application. However, after hearing the arguments, the court issued orders for the release of the accused on bail.

Court seeks response in two enforced disappear jeweler along with gold: The Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim has sought a response from the federal and provincial governments regarding the disappearance of two individuals, including a jeweler, from Charsadda and Tal area of Hangu district, on Monday.

During the hearing of the petition regarding the disappearance of Sikandar Khan from Charsadda, the petitioner informed the court that his son-in-law was taken away from Charsadda several months ago and has not been presented in court yet. The petitioner, is a school teacher, expressed concern that his absence from school has affected his students' studies. He stated that despite his efforts, he has been unable to locate his son-in-law.

The court was informed that an FIR has been registered in the case, but the government has not submitted its report. Additional Attorney General Muhammad Inam Yousafzai suggested that the court dispose of the petition, but Chief Justice directed the governments to submit their reports, stating that the court will issue orders once the reports are received.

In another case, the court heard the petition of a missing person from Tal, Umar Shah. The petitioner's counsel, Abdulah, informed the court that his brother was taken away by unknown individuals who demanded money in exchange for his release.

The brother claimed that 85 crore rupees worth of gold was also seized. He alleged that the kidnappers are demanding money in exchange for his brother's release and are refusing to return the seized gold. Chief Justice Ishtiahaq Ibrahim inquired about the petitioner's occupation, and he replied that he is a jeweler. The court was informed that the government has not submitted its report in this case either.



KARACHI: A group photo of participants on concluding session in Aman Dialogue 2025.

Imran prays for open court trial

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A special court on Monday adjourned Toshakhana-II case till February 17, against former PTI founder and his wife Burshra Bibi pertaining illegally obtaining a Bulgarian jewelry set.

During hearing PTI legal team also prayed the judge to conduct further case trial in an open court. Special Judge Central Shahrukh Arjamand heard the toshakhana-II case at Central Jail Adiala Rawalpindi. PTI founder and his wife Bushra Bibi were produced before the court.

At the outset of hearing, PTI founder's lawyer continued cross examination against prosecution witness Qaiser Mehmood. On the occasion, the lawyer prayed the court to conduct further proceeding in open court and filed a formal application in this regard. He said that PTI founder is facing jail trial for last 20 months. He prayed the court to stop the trial process till judgment in this case.

After this the court adjourned further hearing of the case till February 17. It may be mentioned here that the court has recorded the statements of a total eight witnesses while the defense lawyer is continuing cross-examination against 7th witness.

During hearing, the family members of former PTI founder and Bushra Bibi including Aleema Khan, Uzma Khanum, Noreen Khanum, Qasim Niazi, Mubashira Sheikh, Mehrunisa Ahmed, Advocate Khalid Yousaf Chaudhry and others were also present before court.

Romania's President resigns

BUCHAREST: Romania's outgoing centrist President Klaus Iohannis has resigned amid a concerted push by far-right parliamentary parties to have him impeached in the wake of a contentious election. Iohannis announced his decision on Monday, following mounting pressure from populist opposition groups.

"To spare Romania from this crisis, I am resigning as president of Romania," he said in an emotional address, adding that he will leave office on February 12. His resignation comes two months after a top court annulled a presidential election in the European Union country amid allegations of Russian meddling and after a previously little-known, far-right candidate – Calin Georgescu – won a surprise first-round victory.

Last month, tens of thousands of Romanians took to the streets in several protests called by the far right to protest the vote cancellation, with some demanding for Iohannis to resign. With the two rounds of the election set to be rerun on May 4 and May 18, Romania's top court had said Iohannis, whose second and last term expired on December 21, would stay on until his successor was elected.

But in January, three far-right opposition parties, which control about 35 percent of parliament, filed a motion to impeach Iohannis. MPs on Monday also launched a procedure to suspend Iohannis, following two previous attempts by the opposition to start the process. "In a few days, the Romanian Parliament will vote on my suspension and Romania will go into crisis ... This whole endeavour will have effects internally and unfortunately also externally," Iohannis said.

Several opposition parties, including the far-right Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR), the nationalist SOS party and the Party of Young People – but also some members of the reformist Save Romania Union party – sought Iohannis's removal. — Aljazeera

‘Indian ocean should be bridge of opportunities’

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Mr. Chaudhry Ahsan Iqbal was Chief guest at the concluding session of AMAN Dialogue 2025.

Addressing the gathering, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal congratulated Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Pakistan Navy, NIMA and all stakeholders for organising the insightful partnership building event.

He said that Indian ocean should not be the centre of tensions and strategic contention rather it should be a centre of opportunities and shared

progress. Further, he asserted that, Pakistan prefers Collaboration over confrontation and trade over tensions. AMAN Dialogue is an example of mutual trust and shared prosperity which signifies Pakistan's commitment and resolve towards peaceful maritime sector, he continued.

He said that oceans are facing evolving challenges of illegal fishing, piracy, drug and human trafficking which can be only tackled by embracing the modern technology.

He briefed the audience that Pakistan is determined to pursue the fruits of blue economy which is reflected in Pakistan's Uraan Pakistan program through which we are modernizing

and digitizing the ports, engaging shipping trade routes, enabling AI in trade, and connecting the routes via CPEC corridors.

He hoped that relations built in AMAN Dialogue will turn in long standing partnerships for the betterment of maritime sector and that this Dialogue will yield results in shared progress and peaceful horizons. He pressed the maritime community to embrace Artificial Intelligence and modern technology by developing ethical and legal guidelines in the sector. The Minister expected that the international dignitaries and guests will carry Pakistan's message of peaceful maritime aspirations.

Hamas accuses Israel of ceasefire violations

JERUSALEM (AP): A Hamas spokesman on Monday accused Israel of violating the ceasefire agreement with the group, including targeting Palestinians in Gaza with airstrikes, and said that next Saturday's hostage release would be delayed.

A Hamas spokesperson said Monday that the group will delay the next hostage release after accusing Israel of violating ceasefire agreement. Israel and Hamas are in the midst of a six-week ceasefire during which Hamas is releasing dozens of the hostages captured in its Oct. 7, 2023, attack in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

The sides have carried out five swaps since the ceasefire went into effect last month, freeing 21 hostages and over 730 prisoners. The next exchange was scheduled for Saturday, releasing three Israeli hostages in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. Abu

Obeida, the spokesperson for Hamas' military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, accused Israel on Monday of systematically violating the ceasefire agreement over the past three weeks, and said Saturday's release would be delayed.

"The resistance leadership has closely monitored the enemy's violations and its failure to uphold the terms of the agreement," Abu Ubaida said. "This includes delays in allowing displaced Palestinians to return to northern Gaza, targeting them with airstrikes and gunfire across various areas of the Strip, and failing to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid as agreed."

Meanwhile, Israeli forces demolished on Monday a house, two living units, and two agricultural greenhouses in the Palestinian area of Masafer Yatta, located south of Hebron, which faces eviction orders.

Israeli personnel raided Maghayir Al-Abeed, a

hamlet in Masafer Yatta, and demolished two agricultural rooms belonging to Fayez Ibrahim Makhamra and Osama Fayez Makhamra, the Wafa news agency reported. They also uprooted 10 trees and destroyed crops.

In Jinba village, Israeli authorities demolished two living units belonging to Ibrahim Ahmed Younis Mohammed and uprooted plants and fruit trees. The house of Issa Ahmed Isa Mohammed was demolished by Israeli forces, who also damaged approximately 1,000 square meters of mosquito fern nurseries, which serve as feed for roosters and chickens. Masafer Yatta consists of nearly 15 Palestinian hamlets located in the southern occupied West Bank. Israeli forces regularly invade the area in an effort to evict its population of 1,150 residents, half of whom are children. Since the 1980s, the area has been designated a military zone by Israel.

Iran's Pezeshkian accuses US of fake diplomacy

TEHRAN: Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian has accused the United States of making fake diplomatic overtures while trying to undermine his government. Addressing a crowd in Tehran to mark the 46th anniversary of the Iranian revolution on Monday, Pezeshkian said US President Donald Trump was trying to bring the country "to its knees".

Iran has grown increasingly frustrated at Trump for bringing back the "maximum pressure" campaign he started against the country during his first term. The move seeks to nullify Iran's oil exports and its nuclear activities. Trump has also suggested he wants to reach a deal with Iran over its advancing nuclear programme. "Trump says he wants to negotiate, yet at the same time, he signs off on every possible conspiracy to bring this revolution to its knees," Pezeshkian said at the city's Azadi Square, referring to the US president reimposing sanctions against Tehran earlier

this month. "He claims to be open to dialogue, but while saying so, he accuses Iran of destabilising the region."

"We are not looking for war," said Pezeshkian, adding that Iran "will never bow to foreigners". Iran's 10-day celebrations marking the ouster of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi start each year on January 31, the anniversary of the return of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Tehran from exile in 1979. Iranian officials urged citizens to attend the festivities in large numbers this year after Trump's sanctions announcement. On Monday, hundreds of thousands of people flooded streets across big cities – from Bandar Abbas in the south to Rasht in the north. Many chanted slogans against the US and Israel and carried portraits of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Iranian flag, television broadcasts showed. American flags were also burned.

"If we join hands, we are

capable of resolving all the country's problems," said Pezeshkian, blaming the US for trying to "divide" the country. The Iranian president also singled out the US for backing Israel as it "bombs the innocent people of Gaza, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and anywhere it wants". "The US claims to be working for peace," he said. "Who has truly disrupted peace in the region? Who is responsible for the killings, destruction, and unrest?"

On February 4, Trump said he was hopeful for "a deal" with Iran even as he unveiled new sanctions against the country. Trump also warned on the same day that if Iran tried to assassinate him, the country would be "obliterated". "I've left instructions — if they do it, they get obliterated. There won't be anything left," Trump said. In November 2024, the US Justice Department said it thwarted an Iranian plot to kill Trump. Iranian officials, at the time, dismissed the allegation. — Aljazeera

Palestinians returning to ‘toxic wasteland’ in Gaza

GAZA: Displaced Palestinians returning to northern Gaza have found once-bustling cities reduced to toxic wastelands, according to residents and aid agencies. Shocked by the level of destruction, Gaza City residents are calling for action over a building sanitation crisis in the enclave's largest city, Al Jazeera reported on Monday.

A scene of devastation has met those hoping to rebuild their lives in the northern reaches of the enclave, the focus of the most concentrated Israeli military action dur-

ing the war. The dangers posed by damaged buildings are matched by missing public services and streets filled with heaps of rubbish. Last month's ceasefire deal prompted a rush by displaced people to return to the north. However, Gaza City remains without running water or reliable power.

Towns are lacking basic services like water and healthcare, said Tess Ingram of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). "They've been shocked by what they've returned to," she said from Gaza City.

"They had hoped that their homes, their neighbourhoods, their communities maybe had been spared. And as they come back here and realise that's not the case, the hope they've been holding onto for 15 months crashes."

Mounds of toxic rubbish litter central areas of the city, including the business centre, amplifying the spread of disease. "Accumulation of waste in the vicinity of hospitals gives rise to grave health risks, mainly the outbreak of diseases and epidemics," said Amin al-Alia, a nurse at Ahli Hospital. — Aljazeera

Nine new judges sworn in at LHC

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Nine additional judges took their oath of office at the Lahore High Court (LHC) with Chief Justice Aliya Neelum presiding over the swearing-in ceremony held on the court's lawn.

The newly appointed judges include Justice Hassan Nawaz Makhdoom, Justice Malik Waqar Haider Awan, Justice Sardar Akbar Ali, and Justice Malik Javid Iqbal Wains. Justice Syed Ahsan Raza Kazmi, Justice Muhammad Jawad Zafar, Justice Khalid Ishaq, Justice Malik Muhammad Owais Khalid, and Justice Chaudhry Sultan Mahmood also took their oaths during the ceremony. The appointments have increased the court's strength from 34 to 43 judges. However, the Lahore High Court continues to face a shortage of 17 judges against its sanctioned strength.

The oath-taking ceremony was attended by sitting judges, law officers, and court staff. Bar representatives and family members of the newly appointed judges were also present at the event. This expansion of the judiciary marks a significant step toward addressing the court's capacity needs, though the remaining vacancies indicate ongoing challenges in achieving full judicial strength.

Imran plans to write another letter to COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Aleema Khan, sister of Imran Khan, conveyed his message, stressing that the fight for freedom is far from over. She quoted Khan, saying that history will honour those who remain steadfast in this struggle.

Speaking to the media, Aleema Khan said that the PTI founder lauded the public response to the Swabi rally and expressed gratitude to the people of Punjab, despite the crack-down carried out against his supporters by the provincial government. He also extended his appreciation to the people of Sindh.

She further said that Khan urged Justice Yahya Afridi to uphold the rule of law while also calling on overseas Pakistanis to stand by democracy. "I will face my legal cases and appear before these very judges," Khan asserted. Aleema Khan also stated that Khan ruled out any deal, clarifying that his letter to the army chief was not an attempt to negotiate but rather an effort to bridge the widening gap between the military and the public. "The nation and the army must unite in the fight against terrorism," Khan stressed, adding that he plans to write another letter next week.

Nawaz links country's progress to PML-N's return

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has said that the country's development is linked to the return of the PML-N to power.

Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz discussed public welfare projects and future political strategies during a meeting with Punjab Assembly members from the Lahore division.

Speaking to the assembly members, Nawaz Sharif stated that had the progress of the 1990s continued, Pakistan would have been far ahead in development. He noted that a reduction in inflation had brought some

relief to the people, and the policy rate dropping from 22% to 12% is a sign of economic improvement.

He hoped they could "take off" again, praising Shehbaz Sharif's hard work. He also mentioned that after a long time, happiness and satisfaction are visible among the people of Lahore and Punjab. "I have witnessed many ups and downs in life, but whenever PML-N comes to power, the country progresses. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz have set a new standard for Pakistan's development and public service," Nawaz added.

On this occasion, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz stated that when the names of Nawaz Sharif and

Shehbaz Sharif are mentioned, it symbolizes public service.

Assembly members expressed that under PML-N's governance, the country had always experienced progress, prosperity. They praised Maryam Nawaz for reforming the system, introducing a transparent e-tendering system, and ensuring equal and high-quality development based on merit.

The construction of the Wahga Tourism Corridor was also highlighted as an exceptional initiative. The meeting was attended by senior party leaders, including Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Rana Sanaulлах, Punjab's senior minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, and others.



ISLAMABAD: Lawyers holding a protest against 26th Amendment at D-Chowk.

All nations miss UN deadline for new climate targets

NEW YORK (AFP): Nearly all nations missed a UN deadline on Monday to submit new targets for slashing carbon emissions, including major economies under pressure to show leadership following the US retreat on climate change.

Just 10 of nearly 200 countries required under the Paris Agreement to deliver fresh climate plans by February 10 did so on time, according to a UN database tracking the submissions. Under the climate accord, each country is supposed to provide a steeper headline figure for cutting heat-trapping emissions by 2035, and a detailed blueprint for how to achieve this.

Global emissions have been rising but need to almost halve by the end of the decade to limit global warming to safer levels agreed under the Paris deal. UN climate chief Simon Stiell has called this latest round of national pledges "the most important policy documents of this century". Yet just a handful of major polluters handed in upgraded targets on time, with China, India and the European Union the biggest names on a lengthy absentee list.

Most G20 economies were missing in action with the United States, Britain and Brazil — which is hosting this year's UN climate summit — the only exceptions. The US pledge is

largely symbolic, made before President Donald Trump ordered Washington out of the Paris deal. There is no penalty for submitting late targets, formally titled nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

They are not legally binding but act as an accountability measure to ensure countries are taking climate change seriously and doing their fair share toward achieving the Paris goals. The sluggish response will not ease fears of a possible backslide on climate action as leaders juggle Trump's return and other competing priorities from budget and security crises to electoral pressure.

Ebony Holland from the International Institute for Environment and Development said the US retreat was "clearly a setback" but there were many reasons for the tepid turnout. "It's clear there are some broad geopolitical shifts underway that are proving to be a challenge when it comes to international cooperation, especially on big issues like climate change," said Holland, a policy lead at the London-based think tank.

The EU, historically a leader on climate policy, has been delayed by elections and internal processes and is bracing for fresh polls in Germany and Poland. An EU spokeswoman said a collective tar-

get for the 27-nation bloc would be unveiled "well ahead" of the UN COP30 climate conference in November. "We will continue to be a leading voice for international climate action," she said.

Analysts say China — both the world's biggest polluter and its largest renewable energy investor — was also expected to release its much-anticipated NDC in the second half of 2025. The United Arab Emirates, Ecuador, Saint Lucia, New Zealand, Andorra, Switzerland and Uruguay rounded out the list of countries that made Monday's cut-off.

Evans Njewa, a Malawian diplomat and chair of the Least Developed Countries group, said many poorer nations lacked the financial resources and technical expertise to compile such complex, economy-wide policies. "Big emitters, whose historical and ongoing pollution has driven the climate crisis, must take responsibility and lead by example," he told AFP.

Countries have been consistently late in filing periodic updates to their NDCs since the Paris accord was signed in 2015. Last week, Stiell asked that countries turn in "first-rate" submissions by September so they could be properly assessed before the UN climate summit in Belem.