

Policeman martyred
F.P. Report

KHAR: A policeman deployed for polio vaccination duty was martyred after unidentified assailants opened fire in the Dama Dola Seri area of Mamund Tehsil, Bajaur district. Law enforcement agencies had launched an investigation into the incident. Security forces have cordoned off the area and initiated a search operation to apprehend the attackers.



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ISLAMABAD: Speaker of Council of Representative of Bahrain, Ahmed bin Salman al-Musallam called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Unidentified armed men kill 7 passengers

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Unidentified armed assailants opened fire and killed at least seven passengers in Balochistan's Barkhan district late on Tuesday night.

The attack took place on the National Highway in the Rarkan area, where unidentified armed men stopped a passenger bus and opened fire into the air, AC Khadim Hussain revealed. The gunmen then boarded the bus, checked the passengers' identity cards, and forcibly took seven individuals to a nearby mountain. Shortly after, gunshots were heard.

When local law enforcement agencies, including the Levies force, arrived at the scene, they discovered the bodies of the abducted passengers. The bodies have been transported to a nearby hospital in Rakni, according to the Levies force. The deceased were residents of various cities in Punjab.

According to the bus service office, the bus was travelling from Quetta to Faisalabad and had at least 45 passengers on board. One passenger, Zeeshan Mustafa, a resident of Burewala travelling to Multan, reported that the assailants took his brother away after checking his identity card.

The gunmen numbered between ten and twelve, Zeeshan said, adding that all were

armed with Kalashnikovs. Authorities have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to apprehend the perpetrators. Following the incident, two-way vehicular traffic on the National Highway, which connects Punjab to Balochistan, has been suspended.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday strongly condemned the killing of seven bus passengers in the Barkhan city of Balochistan. In their separately issued statements, the president and the prime minister prayed for peace for the departed souls and strength for the bereaved families to bear the loss.

"The killing of innocent people is a coward and heinous act. The terrorists are the enemies of peace and humanity. They want to mar the peace in Balochistan," the president said and assured that the perpetrators would be taken to the task.

Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the authorities concerned to bring the perpetrators to justice and said that the killers of innocent citizens would have to pay a heavy price for their act. "The sacrifices of innocent citizens will not go in vain. The government and security forces are actively working to eliminate terrorism from the country completely," the prime minister remarked.

President attends opening ceremony of Champions Trophy

F.P. Report

KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari attended the opening ceremony of the Champions Trophy at the National Stadium here on Wednesday.

First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari also accompanied the President. He was received by PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on arrival at the National Stadium. The President and the First Lady, accompanied by former captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, carried the Champions Trophy onto the field.

President Zardari met with the captains of the Pakistan and New Zealand cricket teams. Pakistani cuisine recipes. Later, the President and the First Lady also watched the match between the two teams.

Pakistan obtains \$4.58b in loans

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Affairs Division stated on Wednesday that Pakistan obtained \$4.58 billion in loans from July 2024 to January 2025.

According to the Economic Affairs Division, this includes \$2.32 billion received under agreements, \$329.1 million from bilateral agreements, and \$500 million from foreign commercial loans. Additionally, investments worth \$1.12 billion were made through the Naya Pakistan Certificates. The total estimated financing for the current fiscal year is \$19.39 billion.

Compared to the previous year, Pakistan has seen a 30% decrease in financing during the same period. Last year, the country had borrowed \$6.30 billion during the same time frame.

Govt announces bounty on 14 terrorists in Kurram

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The government has officially announced a bounty on the heads of 14 terrorists in Kurram district, setting a total reward of Rs. 130 million. A notification in this regard has been issued, detailing the names of the wanted individuals and the financial rewards for their capture or elimination.

According to the notification, the highest bounty of Rs. 30 million has been placed on Kazim alias Ahmad, alias Mustafa, son of Gul Badshah, also known as Gulle Mamoo. Amjad Ullah alias Muhammad, son of Taleem Khan, has a bounty of Rs. 20 million, while Mukarram Khan, son of

Abdul Ghafoor Khan, carries a reward of Rs. 15 million. Darwesh Wazir has been listed with a bounty of Rs. 10 million. Additionally, Saif Ullah, Usman alias Shafique, and Noor Ullah alias Darwesh each have a reward of Rs. 10 million placed on them.

The notification further states that Mansoor, Usama, Adam Saaz alias Paraky, Yaseen alias Shaheen son of Noor Akbar, and Wazir Mehmood alias Malang each have a bounty of Rs. 3 million. Meanwhile, Maulana Tayyab, son of Fazal Saeed, has a bounty of Rs. 5 million, and Usman, son of Gul Badin, has a reward of Rs. 8 million on his head.

Authorities have assured that the identities of individu-

als providing information leading to the arrest or elimination of these terrorists will be kept strictly confidential. The government has urged citizens to report any relevant information to the designated law enforcement agencies, emphasizing that such cooperation is crucial in dismantling terrorist networks and restoring peace in the region.

This announcement is part of the government's ongoing efforts to combat terrorism and ensure long-term stability in Kurram. Security forces have been actively pursuing militants involved in acts of violence, and the declaration of financial rewards is expected to encourage public cooperation in identifying and apprehending the wanted individuals.

KP CM includes free OPD services in Sehat Card Plus

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, on the special instructions of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has taken another unique initiative to ensure universal health coverage by including free OPD (Outpatient Department) services in the Sehat Card Plus. The Chief Minister formally inaugurated the free OPD services in a ceremony held here at the Chief Minister's House, on Wednesday. Provincial Cabinet Members, Members of the National and Provincial Assembly and officials from the Health Department attended the ceremony.

According to details, the OPD scheme is being launched as a pilot project in Mardan district, benefiting fifty thousand deserving households. In the second phase, the scheme will be extended to Chitral, Malakand, and Kohat districts. Under this scheme, medications, medical tests, and healthcare services will be provided free of cost. The pilot project is being launched in collaboration with the German organization KfW and will be further expanded in the future. Based on the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) data, approximately one hundred and twenty thousand deserving households from above mentioned four districts will benefit from this facility. Free OPD services will be available not only at hospitals already on the Sehat Card panel but also at all Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centers (RHCs) at the

Union Council level. Notably, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has become the first province to provide free OPD services under the Sehat Card Plus.

Addressing the event, the Chief Minister stated, "I take pride in the fact that my leader's vision is of a welfare state, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is working towards realizing it." He highlighted that the PTI government had expanded the Sehat Card from a limited-scale initiative to a province-wide program. Previously, free treatment under the Sehat Card was only available for admitted patients, but now OPD patients will also receive free healthcare, he added. Regarding the pilot project, he emphasized that the OPD scheme, initially, is being started in four districts, which do not include Dera Ismail Khan, and this is clear proof that he is the Chief Minister of the entire province. He pointed out that in the past, development projects were concentrated in the Chief Minister's home district, but that will no longer happen.

The Chief Minister noted that during the caretaker government's tenure, the Sehat Card program was nearly shut down, but his administration revived it and increased service rates under the program while still achieving monthly savings of one billion rupees due to efficient monitoring and transparency. He further stated that before his government, 70% of Sehat Card treatments were conducted in private hospitals, but they have improved the quality of public hospitals and restored public trust,



and now 70% of treatments take place in government hospitals.

He also announced the establishment of Cardiac Satellite Centers in different regions of the province for heart disease treatment. Additionally, he highlighted new social welfare initiatives, including marriage assistance for four thousand deserving girls, where the government will cover wedding expenses and provide two hundred thousand rupees as dowry. Furthermore, he introduced a Life Insurance Scheme under which, in case of the death of a person under sixty years of age, their heirs will receive one million rupees, whereas if a person over sixty years passes away, their heirs will be provided with Rs. 500,000/-.

The Chief Minister also mentioned that his government had increased the province's revenue by 55%, resulting in a budget surplus of Rs. 176 billion. He emphasized that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the only province to meet the IMF targets assigned to provincial governments and that even the IMF acknowl-

edged the province's achievements, whereas no other province met those targets.

BRT service expanded: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has decided to expand the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service to additional areas in response to increasing public demand and requirement, adding that more buses would be added to the BRT fleet, with new routes covering Ring Road, Bara Road, and Khyber Road. This decision he made, while chairing a meeting held on Tuesday at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Peshawar, focusing on the development of the provincial capital. The meeting was attended by Provincial Cabinet members Rameez Ahmed and Sohail Afridi, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Additional Chief Secretary Ikramullah Khan, Senior Member Board of Revenue Javed Marwat, officials from the Transport Department, Peshawar Development Authority, Commissioner Peshawar, and other relevant authorities.

During the meeting, it was decided that 72 additional diesel-hybrid buses would be procured to address the increasing passenger load on BRT, and a six-month deadline was set for the purchase of these buses and the completion of civil works required for new routes. The progress of under-construction BRT commercial plazas was also reviewed in the meeting. The officials informed that the Mall of Hayatabad and the under-construction plaza in Dabgari would be completed by April this year.

Important decisions were also made to tackle traffic congestion in Peshawar. It was decided that in the first priority, work would be initiated on the construction of missing link of Ring Road, with full funding allocated to ensure its timely completion. Moreover, seven new underpasses will be constructed at various locations on Ring Road and University Road to improve traffic flow, and the concerned authorities have been

4 Pakistani citizens rescued

TEHRAN: The Embassy of Pakistan with the cooperation of Government of Iran on Wednesday successfully rescued four Pakistani citizens and arrested the human smugglers during the operation held in the wake of rising cases of human trafficking. The Pakistanis came to Iran legally but afterwards they were kidnapped by a racket of human traffickers, who tortured them and demanded heavy ransom from their families. — Agencies

EAC expresses full confidence in gov't economic policies

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday chaired an important meeting of the Economic Advisory Council, where members of the council expressed their full confidence in the government's economic policies and presented key suggestions aimed at further strengthening Pakistan's economic growth.

PM Shehbaz, welcoming the recommendations, instructed the relevant authorities to collaborate with the council members to form a comprehensive action plan based on these suggestions. He emphasized that economic stability was not the result of an individual effort but the collective efforts of the entire team.

Reiterating his commitment to work for the sustainable development of the economy, he stated that the current potential for regional trade would be fully utilized. The prime minister also highlighted efforts to make local industries capable of competing in international markets with their exports.

"Industry, agriculture, IT development, job creation, and increasing exports are among the government's top priorities," he said adding that the prime minister was focused on establishing green data centres in the country. He said efforts were also underway to improve telecommunication services and provide internet access to remote areas, which will help boost the number of freelancers and IT exports.

The prime minister pointed out that consultations were also ongoing regarding the regulation of digital currencies. He also stressed the need to turn the meeting's constructive discussions into actionable plans. Participants of the meeting acknowledged that Pakistan's economy was stable and progressing towards growth, saying that price stability had led to an increase in

PM meets CJP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday met with Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi at the Chief Justice House and informed him about tax-related cases which had been pending for adjudication, for long, in different courts of the country.

He requested the CJP for expeditious disposal of such tax matters on merit. The prime minister congratulated the CJP on assuming his responsibilities and also expressed good wishes for him. He appreciated the CJP for undertaking visits to the far-flung areas of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, South Punjab and interior Sindh and his consultations with all the stakeholders for the provision of effective and speedy justice. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The meeting was attended by Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan, Registrar Supreme Court Muhammad Saleem Khan and Secretary Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan Tanzeela Sabhat. During the meeting, the prime minister also discussed the country's economic situation and the economic and security challenges. The CJP sought proposals for bringing further reforms in the justice system and welcomed the prime minister's discussion over the subject.

production.

They said the government's economic team had proved all projections and analyses wrong and for the first time, global economic institutions, the business community, and investors were united in acknowledging the government's action plan. The participants also commended the prime minister for his serious commitment to implementing institutional reforms, which had not been seen in Pakistan's history before.

The participants were of the view that the improvement in the country's tax system, ease of regulations, and the creation of a business and investor-friendly environment had contributed to the growth in all major sectors. They noted that for the first time in history, there was easy access for the business community to the government's economic team, and regular consultations are taking place.

The reduction of smuggling has also contributed to the increase in exports, which is a positive development, they

said. The meeting was attended by Jehangir Khan Tareen, Saqib Shirazi, Shehzad Saleem, Musaddiq Zulkarnain, Dr. Ejaz Nabi, Asif Peer, Zaid Bashir, and Salman Ahmed, as well as Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Jam Kamal Khan, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Mohammad Aurangzeb, Minister of State Ali Pervaz Malik, the Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal, and other senior officials.

PM invites Bahrain's businessmen to invest in Pakistan: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif invited the businessmen of Bahrain to tap the huge potential of business activities in Pakistan and invest in various sectors.

He also stressed to further increase the trade volume of the two countries. The prime minister was talking to a delegation of Parliamentary delegation of Bahrain led by Speaker of Council of Representatives of Bahrain, Ahmed bin Salman Al-Musallam which called on him here at the PM House.

COAS on an official visit to UK to participate in 7th RSC

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), is on an official visit to the United Kingdom to participate in the 7th Regional Stabilization Conference at the esteemed Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where he will deliver the keynote address on "The Emerging World Order and Pakistan's Future Outlook."

The Stabilization Conference serves as the premier platform for Army-to-Army dialogue between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, held annually to foster collaboration. The event brings together a balanced representation of policymakers, both civil and military, as well as members of prominent think tanks from both nations. This year's conference holds particular significance in light of the rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, providing an invaluable opportunity to exchange perspectives and explore pathways for enhanced bilateral cooperation.

On the inaugural day of his visit,



General Syed Asim Munir was accorded a warm and dignified welcome, including a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the historic Royal Horse Guards Parade Ground, presented by an impeccably turned-out contingent.

During his visit, the COAS will engage with key members of the UK's civil and military leadership to discuss matters of mutual interest. His engagements will include meetings with Mr Adm Toney Radikon, Chief of Defence Staff UK, General Sir Roland Walker, Chief of the General Staff of the British Army,

and Mr. Jonathan Nicholas Powell, the UK National Security Advisor. Furthermore, the COAS will hold discussions with Ms. Yvette Cooper, Home Secretary, to address shared challenges and underscore the importance of fostering deeper collaboration.

Pakistan and the United Kingdom share a long-standing relationship rooted in strong diplomatic, economic, and security ties. Over the years, the two countries' militaries have maintained robust cooperation, particularly in the domains of counterterrorism and professional training.

As part of his itinerary, COAS will also visit prominent units of the British Army, including the Land Warfare Centre and the 1st Strike Brigade, where he will receive briefings on the UK Army's modernization initiatives and operational strategies. The visit underscores the enduring partnership between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, reaffirming their shared commitment to regional stability and global peace.

directed to complete the feasibility studies for these underpasses within two months. It was also decided to remove all obstacles disrupting traffic flow on University Road within one month and to construct a direct road link between the Industrial Estate and the Northern Bypass in the next Annual Development Program (ADP).

Addressing the participants, the Chief Minister stated that Peshawar is the face of the province, and its development is a top priority. He emphasized that modern urban facilities would be provided, and financial constraints would not hinder progress. He further highlighted that the BRT project is not only a high-quality transport initiative but also significantly helps in reducing air pollution. "The BRT service will be further improved for the convenience of the public," he added.

It was also decided in the meeting to introduce BRT-style bus services in the divisional headquarters of the province. Initially, a feasibility study will be conducted for four cities: Mardan, Swat, Abbottabad and D.I Khan, deciding that these feasibility studies will be completed within one month. The Chief Minister stressed the need for sustainable public transport solutions to address the growing challenges of traffic congestion and air pollution caused by rapid urbanization. He emphasized that modern and eco-friendly transport initiatives are essential for efficient urban mobility and environmental protection.

CM inaugurates first electric bus service in Lahore



UNICEF, govt emphasized role of youth in protection of children's rights

Rehmas shared her first hand experience as an adolescent leader in the CB-CPC Khyber, discussing the awareness raising initiatives she has conducted in local communities, including sensitization campaigns on child rights, child labor, and early marriages, and access to education. Dr Basharat Hussain spoke about the critical role of

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is published through this Notice That I Jameela Mukhtiar Wife of Mukhtiar Ud Din R/o Malang Abad Jungle Khel District Kohat is The owner of Plot no. 160, Sector C-3 Size 10 Marla Phase 2.KDA Kohat Has Appointed is Mr Ghulam Hussain Son of Sikandar Khan R/o Sada Kurram Agency Through (Special) Deed no 63 Bahi.no.04 Volume no.137 Page no.57 Dated 13/02/1999 which is Registered in the office Kohat of Tehsildar/Sub Registrar The Attorney Holder now wants to Transfer The Above Said Plot If Any Bank/ Institution/ Firm/Person Has Any objection About The Transfer He Should Contact The Housing officer UADA Within 15 Days in Writing with Proofs otherwise Plot will be Transfer and no objection will be Accepted (Director Urban Area KDA Kohat)

**GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION
BARIKOT (SWAT)**

TENDER NOTICE

Date & Time of Tenders Form Submission	03-03-2025	12:00 PM
Date & Time of Tenders Form Opening	03-03-2025	02:00 PM

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES (SWAT) FOR THE YEAR 2024-25
ADP # 930/240309

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES (SWAT) FOR THE YEAR 2024-25
ADP # 930/240309

S.No.	Name of Scheme	E/Cost (In Million)	Earnest Money @02%	Completion Period
1.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Chungai	3.00	60000	As Per Work Order
2.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Kota (Gharbi)	6.00	120000	-do-
3.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Kota (Sharqi)	5.00	100000	-do-
4.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Aboha	8.00	160000	-do-
5.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Dadahara	3.00	60000	-do-
6.	Construction of PCC Road at NC Barikot (Gharbi)	4.00	80000	-do-
7.	Construction of PCC Road at NC Barikot (Sharqi)	4.00	80000	-do-
8.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Ghaligey	5.00	100000	-do-
9.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Manyar	3.00	60000	-do-
10.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Qambar-I	10.00	200000	-do-
11.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Qambar-II	5.00	100000	-do-
12.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Terang Ded awar	5.00	100000	-do-
13.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Gogdara	5.00	100000	-do-
14.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Karakar Amlook Dara	5.00	100000	-do-
15.	Construction of PCC Road at VC Shingardar	4.00	80000	-do-
16.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Zarakhela	5.00	100000	-do-
17.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Garhai	5.00	100000	-do-
18.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Qambar	7.00	140000	-do-
19.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Tindodag Panjigram	7.00	140000	-do-
20.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Terang (Kohai)	6.00	120000	-do-
21.	Rehabilitaion of Roads (PCC) at VC Kota Gharbi	10.00	200000	-do-
22.	Rehabilitaion of Roads (PCC) at VC Jawanr	10.00	200000	-do-
23.	Rehabilitaion of Roads (PCC) at VC Qambar-II	10.00	200000	-do-
24.	Rehabilitaion of Roads (PCC) at VC Tindodag	5.00	100000	-do-
25.	Rehabilitaion of Roads (PCC) at VC Najigram (Samsaro)	5.00	100000	-do-
26.	Rehabilitaion of Roads (PCC) at VC Shingardar	5.00	100000	-do-

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- 01) The award of contract shall be on the basis of above/below engineer estimate on MRS-2024 (1st BI Annual) Instead of item rate.
- 02) A complete set of Bid Solicitation Documents (Tender Form/ BOQ) can be obtained by an interested eligible bidder on submission of a written application on bidder official letter head from an authorized person. In case of any further information/ clarification, the bidders may visit the office on any working day before the closing of the bid or may contact on Phone No. (0946-752010) or through email: (tmabarikotswat@gmail.com).
- 03) Tender Form & BOQ shall be obtained from the office of TMA, Barikot after publishing of NIT in Newspaper.
- 04) The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security @2% only of Engineer Estimate.
- 05) The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security, then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- 06) Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an Additional Security on Engineer's estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- 07) In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof.
- 08) The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.
- 09) The Additional Security shall be released to the contractor in four installments i.e., 1st installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project, 2nd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project, 3rd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project and the 4th installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project.
- 10) Sealed bids shall reach on or before 03-03-2025 up to 12:00 PM and shall be opened on the same date at 02:00 PM, in the presence of bidders by the Tender Committee.
- 11) These documents are compulsory with tender form:
i. Fresh Registration of LCB. ii. Fresh Registration of KP Revenue Authority. iii. BOQ. iv. Owner CNIC.
- 12) Issuance of work orders/ commencement of work on the above schemes shall be subject to availability of funds.
- 13) According to the Government Rules, all the taxes will be deducted.
- 14) In case of receiving equal offers, the award of contract shall be decided through a free toss which shall be final.
- 15) Any cutting/ over-writing on the Tender Form/ BOQ shall be liable to rejection of the tender and will be declared non-responsive.
- 16) The rules and regulation/ instructions in future if issued by Provincial Govt. of KP will be applicable.

Advertised by:
Tehsil Officer (I&S),
TMA Barikot, Swat

By the Order of: **INF**
Tehsil Municipal Officer,
TMA Barkikot, Swat

INF(P) 689/25

INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MANSEHRA-SFU	INCHARGE
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PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC NOTICE
<p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Muhammad Kaleem Khan with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Alam Khan citizen number 1560270989285 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs</p>	<p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Razia Khan with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Badshah Khan citizen number 143011989285 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs</p>

<p>as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Aisla Iqbal (Daughter) 2. Norin (Spouse) 3. Muhammad Naeem Khan (Son) 4. Muhammad Fahim (Son) 5. Muhammad Kaleem Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p>	<p>as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Safia (Daughter) 2. Norin (Spouse) 3. Muhammad Naeem Khan (Son) 4. Muhammad Fahim (Son) 5. Muhammad Kaleem Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p>
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INCHARGE SFU, NADRA SWAT. SFU	INCH
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PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC NOTICE
<p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Habib Ullah Khan with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Naik Muhammad Khan citizen number 154028941065 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <p>1. Sabiha Bibi (Daughter) 2. Azmat (Daughter) 3. Bushra Bibi (Daughter) 4. Salima Bibi (Spouse) 5. Habib Ullah Khan</p>	<p>Application for issuance of Letter of Succession Certificate by Mr. Tilawat Khan citizen number 154028941065 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <p>1. Maryam (Daughter) 2. Jaahida (Daughter) 3. Khan (Daughter) 5. Muneeb (Daughter)</p>

On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this

notice.	notice.
INCHARGE SFU, NADRA	INCH

GE SFU, NADRA RING ROAD-DSFU	INCHARGE SFU, KARAK-SFU
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PUBLIC NOTICE
Application for issuance of Certificate of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Gul Raiz with regards to the movable & immovable assets deceased Mr. Seed citizen number 170641 has been Following are declared heirs

Daughter)2.Razia Bibi
Abid Shah (Son)
3.Syed (Son)5.Mujahid
6.Zahid Shah (Son)

CHARGE SFU, NADRA KOHAT-SFU	INCHARGE SFU, NA ROAD-DSF
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PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC NOTICE
<p>Application for issuance of Letter to Administation Certificate by Mr. Farooq Ahmad Khan with regards to 1/1 and 2/2 immovable assets received. Following as legal heirs.</p> <p>Bibi (Daughter) (Spouse). Valayat (Spouse). M. Usman Khan (Son) (Son)</p>	<p>Application for issuance of Letter to Administation Certificate by Mr. Farooq Ahmad Khan with regards to 1/1 and 2/2 immovable assets received. Following as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. M. Usman Khan (Son) (Son)</p> <p>2. M. Usman Khan (Son) (Son)</p> <p>3. M. Usman Khan (Son) (Son)</p> <p>4. M. Usman Khan (Son) (Son)</p> <p>5. M. Usman Khan (Son) (Son)</p>

above application the
of public at large are
any aggrieved person
approach in person the
for submission of
(if any) within fourteen
after publication of this

INCHARGE SFU, NADRA	(14) days after public notice.
INCHARGE SFU,	

Expressing deep grief and sorrow, she extended her heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved families, calling the incident a tragic and inhumane act.

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GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUKHWA
URBAN AREAS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, ABBOTTABAD
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

S.#	Name of Work	Required Category of PEC	Estimated Cost (Rs. In Million)	Bid Security/ Earnest Money	Bidding documents Fee	Submission up to Date & time	Date& time of Opening	Time Limit
MAJOR HEAD: STRENGTHENING OF DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA. ADP No. 2048/210563								
01	Sub Head: Resurfacing of Deteriorated Roads in Abbottabad Township Scheme	C-6 & Above (CE-01 & CE-10)	19.68	2% of the Estimated Cost	6000/-	11/03/2025 11:00 AM	11/03/2025 11:30 AM	As per work order

TERMS & CONDITIONS

01. A Complete set of Bid Solicitation Documents can be obtained by an interested eligible bidder on submission of a written application on bidder's official letter head from an authorized person upon provision of a non-refundable fee of Rs.6000/- (Printing/Reproduction Cost) in shape of call deposit prepared in the name of Director Urban Areas Development Authority, Abbottabad. In case of any further information /clarification, the bidders may visit the office on any working day before closing of the bid or contact on **0319-3485212**.
02. 2% (two percent) earnest money / bid security of the Engineer Cost Estimate must be accompanied in the shape of Call Deposit in name of the Director, Urban Areas Development Authority Abbottabad, from scheduled banks in accordance with the Rule 20(2) of KPRA Rules 2014 and subsequent amendments (if any).
03. The Contractors / Bidders who quote their Bids / Rates up to a limit of 10% Below the Engineer's Estimate shall submit Bid Security @ 2% of Engineer Estimate only as per KPRA vide Notification No. S.R.O(14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated May 10, 2022/6058-71.
 - i) The Contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineer Estimate shall submit along with then- bids 8% additional security of Engineer Estimated bid cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount additional security than it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
 - ii) Similarly a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer Estimated Cost equal to differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive all the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
 - iii) The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.
04. The Bidders shall submit their Bids with requisite documents i.e. Active NTN / Income Tax Certificate and Enlistment with KPRA (Active), to the office of the undersigned through **Registered Courier Service**. The bids received by hand, not Registered Courier Service and late shall not be entertained.
05. Tender Proposals / Bids will be opened in the office of the Director Urban Areas Development Authority Abbottabad in the presence of Procurement Committee & Contractors / their representatives on the day and time mentioned above. In case, if Bids / Proposals are not opened on the above mentioned date due to unforeseen reasons these shall be opened on the next working day at the same place & time.
06. A certificate to the effect that there is no dispute of the firm with any department involved litigation / arbitration on the left over / incomplete projects and blacklisting on Stamp paper duly attested by Oath Commissioner.
07. Only up to two decimal digits (0.00) will be considered for evaluation of the quoted bid. If any document submitted along with bid documents found false / bogus, the registration of the contractor / firm shall stands cancelled / blacklisted.
08. If the Bid becomes tie, it will be decided through open draw.
09. Any item not reflected in the BOQ and required at site, shall be paid in accordance with MRS-2022 / prevailing market rates with the approval of the competent authority.
10. All the Government taxes (Federal, Provincial & any other) will be deducted at source as per prevailing Government policy.
11. The procuring entity has rights to reject all bids or any proposal / Bid at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposals. The procuring entity shall upon request communicate to any contractor who submitted a bid or proposal the grounds for rejection or of all bids or proposals as per Section 47(1) of KPRA Rules 2014.
12. All the bidders must be registered and in the active Tax Payer list of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 2013(KP Act No. XXI of 2013).

BY, DIRECTOR

INF(P) 706/25

Urban Areas Development Authority Abbottabad
Abbottabad Township Scheme Nawanshehr
Phone No. 0319-3485212

Theater drama highlights impacts of domestic violence, drug addiction



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Dosti Welfare Foundation and the Commissioner Peshawar jointly organised the fourth Dosti Peshawar Literary Festival 2025 at Nishtar Hall on Wednesday.

The festival was part of the provincial govern-

ment's drug-free Peshawar campaign where a theater play was performed on the occasion. Art exhibition at the Nishtar Hall Gallery featuring various artistic displays, including Kathak Katha Sufi dance, musical performance by a youth band, and an in-depth discussion on the increasing drug addiction among youth and its impact on society were also part of

the event.

The theater play, titled "Sannata" or silence, was written and directed by Nisar Khan Tanoli and performed by Hazarawal Theater. The play highlighted issues such as domestic violence against women, the challenges faced by families due to drug addiction and other social problems.

The theater play depict-

ed the life of a girl who marries into a family where, in the absence of her husband working abroad, she faces oppression from her mother-in-law and other family members, eventually leading her to become mentally distressed.

During the event, Khanzada Asfandiyar Khattak performed the Kathak Katha Sufi dance, which was well received by the audience, earning thunderous applause. The Zwand Parast band also presented musical performance.

Students of Fine Arts exhibited various artworks and fashion design pieces at Nishtar Hall, showcasing their creativity.

A panel discussion was also held where Dr Khalid Mufti, Dr Abida Nazir, Aslam Mir, and other experts thoroughly discussed the growing issue of drug addiction among youth and its detrimental effects on society.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah presiding over a meeting of deputy commissioners via video link.

'Privatization of DISCOs not to be allowed'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Central Vice President and Provincial Chairman of the All Pakistan WAPDA Hydro Electric Workers Union, Haji Muhammad Iqbal, has stated that the privatization of WAPDA DISCOs at throwaway prices will not be allowed at any cost. He accused the country's incompetent rulers of trying to deprive government employees' children of their livelihood under IMF pressure. However, thousands of workers across the country are ready to resist this move.

He expressed these views while addressing union representatives from various circles at Iqbal Labor Complex, Peshawar, yesterday. On this occasion, Provincial Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Haiderzai, Central Chairman Gohar Taj, Provincial Vice Chairman Yasir Kamran, Deputy Chairman Shafiullah, Secretary Information Gohar Ali Gohar, Joint Secretary Tariq Khan, Secretary Finance and Welfare Nasir Khan, Deputy Chairman Naseerullah Mohmand, and others were also present.

Speaking at the event, Provincial Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Haiderzai emphasized that WAPDA was once a profitable organization playing a significant role in national development. However, former governments, under IMF directives, divided WAPDA into multiple companies, destabilizing it financially and causing irreparable damage to the nation. Additionally, they signed highly expensive power agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), pushing the economy towards collapse. As a result, the public is now burdened with exorbitant electricity costs and severe load shedding.

He further stated that the ruling elite has significantly increased the salaries and perks of parliamentarians and ministers, further sinking the nation into debt. He urged the government to secure the country's future and free the public from load shedding by prioritizing the construction of new hydropower stations. He also demanded the reversal of privatization plans and the restoration of WAPDA to its previous structure.

Moreover, he called for the immediate reversal of the unjust decisions to end leave encashment and introduce pension reforms. He emphasized the need to fill thousands of vacant positions in WAPDA, regularize contract workers, and increase the salaries of part-time employees.

In conclusion, he strongly condemned PESCO's misinterpretation of the Supreme Court's October 18, 2024, ruling and warned the PESCO and TESCO administrations to reconsider their stance. Otherwise, the union would not hesitate to launch a province-wide protest.

It is noteworthy that on December 23, 2024, Lahore Electric Supply Company issued 16 recruitment orders for the children of deceased and martyred employees.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Charities Act 2019

Meeting held on amends to Section 12

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting was held in the committee room of the Civil Secretariat Peshawar under the auspices of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Law Department regarding the proposed amendments to Section 12 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Charities Act 2019, which pertains to the registration of charities.

The Law Minister chaired by Provincial Minister for Law, Aftab Alam Advocate, and was attended by senior officials from the Charity

Commission, Board of Revenue, Home Department and Law Department.

During the meeting, a detailed discussion took place on the proposed amendments to Section 12 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Charities Act 2019, which pertains to the registration of charities.

The Law Minister directed that the registration process should be further strengthened and made more effective to ensure transparency in the financial resources of non-gov-

ernmental organizations (NGOs) and to prevent the financing of terrorism.

All relevant institutions presented their recommendations during the meeting, and it was unanimously agreed that effective measures would be taken to enhance transparency and strengthen the legal framework of the charity sector. Minister for Law, Aftab Alam Advocate, instructed all concerned departments to finalize the proposed amendments and ensure their prompt implementation.

Regi Model Town residents demand removal of dumping site

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The residents of Peshawar's Regi Model Town, Zone Three, Sector D, have appealed to the provincial government to take notice of the harassment and unnecessary littering caused by certain elements in the area.

Yesterday, the residents of Sector D, Zone Three, told the media at the

Peshawar High Court that despite the provincial government's claims to beautify Regi Model Town, Sector D still faces severe problems due to the presence of weeds and unnecessary plants.

They have filed multiple complaints with the PDA and other relevant authorities but have not received any response. Furthermore, certain

elements are harassing the residents, and the area is plagued by garbage dumps, causing a foul smell.

The residents have appealed to the provincial government and the provincial minister for local government to take notice of the situation, as the PDA has failed to take action despite repeated complaints.

RTI crucial for achieving SDGs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The "Right to Information" is considered a crucial element for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as it empowers citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes, hold governments accountable, and monitor progress on issues like poverty reduction, environmental protection, and social equality, ultimately contributing to a better future for all by enabling informed action and transparency.

This was stated by

Chief Information Commissioner, KP, Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan while addressing to the participants of the 9th international Conference on Sustainable Development Goals for a better Future (ICSDGBF-2025) at the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COM-STECH) in Islamabad.

Chief Commissioner also took onboard the participants on an access to information approach to gender equality and

women's empowerment.

She added that women are able to access information to make informed choices on elements of their lives, push their governments and other power holders to guarantee their rights, have greater agency and control over their lives, and more meaningfully engage in public life.

Farah Hamid Khan stressed upon the achievement of the SDGs through exercising Right to Information and ultimately leading to a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Child Protection Unit established in Charsadda

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Child Protection Unit has been established in Charsadda. In this regard, a grand ceremony was held at Begum Naseem Wali Khan Social Welfare Complex, attended by Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Provincial Minister for Labour Fazal Shakoor Khan, UNICEF representative Roderick France,

Deputy Commissioner for Child Protection Relief and Welfare Ejaz Khan, Deputy Commissioner Charsadda Qaiser Khan, Child Protection Unit representative Dr. Sohail, District Child Protection Officer Charsadda Zaitoon Bibi, District Social Welfare Officer Syed Younas Bacha, along with officials from the Education, Health, Police, Prosecution, and Social Welfare departments, as well as Zakat officials, civil society members, religious scholars, and others.

Students from Azam Khan Special Education

Center, Government Girls Primary School Bahadur Kali, and Aspire School presented recitations, hymns, and skits. On this occasion, Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah inaugurated the Child Protection Unit office in Charsadda.

Addressing the ceremony, Syed Qasim Ali Shah stated that investment in people is the government's top priority, in line with its vision. He emphasized that protecting children's rights and ensuring their welfare is a shared responsibility of both the government and society. He announced plans to provide education and vocational training to children engaged in child labor so they can lead a dignified life. He further stated that Child Protection Units have already been established in 21 districts of the province, with plans to expand their reach across the entire province next year.

The minister affirmed that, following the Chief Minister's directives, no

compromise would be made on children's rights and protection. He highlighted efforts to raise awareness and introduce relevant legislation. He stated that children are the future and the center of our hopes, requiring special attention, proper education, training, and guidance. Protecting their rights and addressing their issues is a shared responsibility of the government and society.

He also mentioned that Pakistan has signed various international conventions and agreements regarding children's rights and protection, and the country's constitution includes provisions for their welfare. He praised

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for its exemplary legislation and initiatives in this regard, making it a model for other provinces. The minister acknowledged UNICEF's valuable support in child protection efforts and confirmed that Child Protection Units are operational in 21 districts, including the newly merged districts.

Peshawar Zone wins Inter-College Sports Gala 2025

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Zone once again proving its dominant position with a remarkable victory in the Inter-College Sports Gala 2025, claiming the general trophy. Under the auspices of Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in the men's competitions, the players of Government College Peshawar demonstrated exceptional performance, while in the women's contest, the students of Government City Girls College Gulbahar proved outstanding skills, playing a significant role in

Peshawar Zone's success.

In the men's competitions, Government College Peshawar got top position with a total of 42 points, securing another historic victory and achieved top positions in 9 out of 12 games, including basketball, volleyball, throwball, squash, kabaddi, and football, where they got first position and secured second in handball and table tennis, and third in chukball respectively.

Similarly, in women's sports competitions, the students of Government City Girls College Gulbahar performed their talent and skills, contribut-

ing significantly to Peshawar Zone's success.

The Peshawar zone in female games got a total of 42 points, with the college earning the in which City Girls College contributed to 30 points and won the Inter-Zonal Provincial Champion Trophy.

City Girls college Gulbahar clinched in basketball, netball, cricket, throwball, and hockey, winning multiple trophies with dominance.

The Principal of City Girls College, Professor Rabia Sikander, congratulated and praised all the players for their outstanding performance in the

Sports Gala. She said that the success of the college's players in the Sports Gala is credited to the hard work and dedication of Sports Incharge Najma Naz Qazi and Coach Abdul Aleem, whose efforts played a vital role in the extraordinary performance of the players. Dr. Nader Khan Bettini, Principal of Government College Peshawar, also lauded the performance of the college's players in the Sports Gala and emphasized that the success in the Provincial Sports Gala was largely due to the dedication and hard work of the experienced teachers, coaches and players.

First-ever MS Conference held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: For the first time in the province's history, a Medical Superintendents (MS) Conference was held under the chairmanship of Health Advisor Ihtesham Ali. The conference aimed to assess the performance of all MS officers, discuss the challenges they face, and devise effective strategies to improve healthcare services.

The conference was attended by Secretary Health Shahidullah Khan, Director General Health Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Director IMU, Chief HSRU, and MS officers from all district hospitals. Director IMU, Dr. Ejaz, briefed the forum on the performance of the MS officers.

Addressing the conference, Health Advisor

Ihtesham Ali stated that the department is well aware of the challenges faced by MS officers. He emphasized that their performance is being evaluated based on a pre-provided checklist issued by the Health Department. "Ensuring the timely provision of medicines and quality healthcare services to the public is our top priority. Overhauling the healthcare sector is essential for sustainable improvements," he added.

The Health Advisor assured hospital administrators that as long as they perform their duties diligently, they will not face undue pressure or transfers. "As long as you are working with dedication, I, along with Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, guarantee that no one will remove you from your position. If you

stand with me, the health department will deliver results. You have been given an opportunity to serve the public—make the most of it," he said.

He instructed MS officers to establish an effective grievance redressal system and ensure its proper implementation. He also announced that Regional Director Generals (RDGs) would visit hospitals for inspections, and he would personally seek reports on hospital performance from them. He urged MS officers to cooperate with RDGs and communicate their challenges effectively.

Ihtesham Ali further clarified that "I will not tolerate any interference in my department. No one will call you for my personal work. Your only focus should be your job

and serving the public."

Speaking at the conference, Secretary Health Shahidullah Khan stated that a system of "reward and accountability" has been initiated. "Those who perform well will be rewarded, while those who fail to deliver will face disciplinary action. Improve your key performance indicators (KPIs) and report absent doctors so that appropriate action can be taken," he added.

The Secretary also emphasized the importance of patient care, stating that a satisfied patient is the best advocate for a hospital's reputation. "The way you treat patients reflects the quality of your institution. Ensure that every patient leaves with a positive experience and spreads good words about your hospital," he advised.

NUML commemorates International French Teachers Day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The French Department of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) organized a special event to commemorate International French Teachers Day. His Excellency Nicolas Galey, the Ambassador of France to Pakistan, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The event was also attended by the Ambassador of Romania, H.E. Dan Stoenescu, and senior officials from NUML.

Earlier in the day, the French and Romanian Ambassadors H.E. Nicolas Galey and Dan Stoenescu, respectively, met with Rector NUML, Major General (Retd.) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI(M), in his office. Director General NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir, and other senior officials were also present in the meeting. The Call-on focused on strengthening academic collaboration, promoting cultural exchange programs, and enhancing educational excellence.

Following the meeting, both the Ambassadors, along



with the Rector and DG NUML, joined the celebrations of International French Teachers Day.

The event commenced with a welcome address by Dean Faculty of Languages, Dr Jamil Asghar Jami, followed by a speech from Rector NUML, Maj Gen (Retd.) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI(M).

The Rector paid tribute to French teachers, recognizing their invaluable contribution to language education. He emphasized that French, spoken by over 321 million people across five continents, thrives due to the dedication of its educators. He highlighted that French teachers serve as ambassa-

dors of language, culture, and traditions, playing a crucial role in fostering inclusivity and equality in education. "Teaching is not just a profession—it is a passion and a mission," the Rector remarked. He lauded modern teaching methodologies for bringing innovation and creativity to language learning.

He further noted that educators inspire future generations, nurturing values of diversity, solidarity, and peace. "Like athletes, language educators are champions of linguistic and cultural excellence," he added, encouraging students to see French not only as a communication tool but also as a

symbol of personal and academic achievement.

Addressing the gathering, H.E. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France, expressed gratitude to NUML for its unwavering support in promoting the teaching of foreign languages, particularly French. He acknowledged the efforts of French teachers and the university in organizing the event.

Commending NUML's role in fostering foreign language education, he emphasized that learning French opens doors to global opportunities and personal growth. He reiterated the importance of cultural exchanges and academic collaboration in strengthening bilateral ties.

During the ceremony, certificates were awarded to French language students who successfully qualified their DELF exams. Souvenirs were also presented to the French and Romanian Ambassadors as a token of appreciation. The event concluded with the screening of a French movie, which was enjoyed by students, faculty members, and distinguished guests.



In brief

Kohat police kill terrorist F.P. Report

KOHAT: A terrorist has been killed in an operation conducted by the Kohat police in the suburbs of Shadipur village of the district. The police spokesman said the terrorists fired on the police mobile team and attacked with hand grenades. A police officer was also injured in the attack and had been shifted to a local hospital, he said, adding the terrorist was killed in the retaliatory action. Hand grenades and weapons were also recovered from the possession of the terrorists, he added. The police are conducting search operation in the area.

Mir condemns fake news F.P. Report

HUB: Provincial Minister for Agriculture and Co-operative Balochistan Mir Ali Hassan Zehri have strongly denied the false news named on social media. In his denying, he said that the opponents are confused by our public aspiration development works. Opponents have been running the news based on false and negative propaganda through social media and is still going on. The last days the past practices by opponents done again in which false and unconscious news was carried out, which we have nothing to do with and which we strongly deny and warn such elements once again to refrain from their tactics otherwise they will be strictly dealt with and legal action will also be implemented. He said that the PPP is a public and ideological party while I am a common political activist and follow party policy in every way and from platform of PPP will continue to work for the rights of the people under the guidance of President Asif Ali Zardari.

Man kills sister, brother-in-law F.P. Report

QUETTA: A man shot dead his sister and brother-in-law at their residence in the Sariab Road area of Quetta before fleeing the scene, police said today. According to police, the assailant forced entry into the house and opened fire, killing his sister, Safia, and her husband, Muneer Ahmed. Law enforcement officials reached the location, collected evidence, and shifted the bodies to Sandeman Provincial Hospital for medico-legal formalities. The bodies were later handed over to the heirs. Authorities at Police Station New Sariab have initiated an investigation into the case and searching for the suspect.

Police recover two hostages

KANDHKOT (INP): Police in a raid in Ghouspur katcha area recovered two hostages kidnapped from Jamal police station jurisdiction, officials said. A gang of bandits had abducted two persons Muhammad Nawaz and Amanullah from Jamal police station remit, police sources said. The Katcha area has been notorious for its lawlessness, as bandits armed with sophisticated weapons posing a challenge to law enforcement agencies. The area remains a formidable task for law enforcement authorities despite numerous operations to combat crime.

Three died

ALI PUR (INP): An accident in Alipur claimed three lives, leaving more than 10 others critically injured when a motorcycle and a passenger van collided on Wednesday.



QUETTA: A view of accumulated rainwater at Saryab Road.

Teachers demand probe into UoM issue

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Tanzeem-e-Asatza Pakistan, Shangla argued the government promptly investigate the recent incident at Malakand University and punish the culprit accordingly. He termed the incident as a "great tragedy, a thought-provoking moment, and a shameful incident" in an Islamic society, particularly within an educational institution. Haji Nawab demanded that the government establish separate educational institutions for girls and provide them with female staff to eliminate the co-education system. He also emphasized the need to reform the semester system, which grants excessive authority to teachers, leading to sexual harassment and other forms of exploitation. He stressed that an alternative system should be implemented or a check and balance system should be established to ensure that students are protected from all forms of exploitation. Haji Nawab noted that this incident is not an isolated one, and several similar incidents have occurred in the past. However, those in power have failed to take concrete disciplinary actions or implement measures to prevent such incidents. He warned that if the situation remains unchanged, they will raise their voices on every platform to ensure that their children receive education in a peaceful environment.

Shangla, Nasrullah Khan Gandapur, convicted murderer Muhammad Aziz, for life imprisonment and imposed Rs 6 lakh fine, on Tuesday. District and Sessions Court Shangla announced the verdict in the murder case of Riyazullah, son of Noorul Haq, a resident of Ranizai, Chakiser. The accused was charged with brutally murdering the victim. The court also ordered the accused to pay a fine of Rs 6 lakh. Additionally, the accused was sentenced to four years imprisonment and fined under Section 15AA. The locals expressed satisfaction over the court's verdict and praised it. Legal experts also commented on the case, saying that such verdicts will increase public trust in the judicial system.

Murderer convicted to life imprisonment: District and Sessions Judge

Provision of public services at doorsteps directed

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat has under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda" held a follow-up Kuli Katchahry for the Minorities at Bacha Khan Library Kohat. The Katchahry besides others, was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (G) Hamid Iqbal, Assistant Commissioner Kohat Nimra Owais, officers of the district administration and line departments, local representatives of the minority communities, elders of Christian, Hindu and Sikh communities and minority citizens from different areas of Kohat.

While presenting the progress of the previous Kuli Katchahry, the ADC(G) informed that total 28 complaints were registered in the previous Katchahry out of which

more than half have been resolved, while the remaining are in the process and will be resolved very soon.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law, Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate has formally inaugurated the Tree Plantation campaign of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government "Billion Trees Plus" at Government Degree College Gumbat Kohat by planting a sailing in the lawn of the College.

Besides others, Mayor Tehsil Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, Principal of the College Prof. Dr. Wazir Shadan, Divisional Forest Officer Kohat, faculty members and students also planted saplings on this occasion.

A grand function was held in this regard which was well attended by faculty members, students and other staff of the college. The Law Minister said that "Billion Trees Plus" is a

revolutionary Program of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government under which billions of trees have been planted across the province during the last 10 years. The success and transparency of this program has been acknowledged globally. He added that the importance of forests for environmental sustainability is admitted.

Highlighting the importance of youth participation in nation building and environmental protection, Aftab Alam appealed the people particularly youth that every member of the society must plant at least one plant and ensure its protection also.

On this occasion the Principal of the college apprised the Minister and the Mayor about the problems being faced by the college including lack of class IV employees, faculty members and staff, non-availability of playground.

Operation against encroachments

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: In the light of the Orders of Chief Minister Punjab, an operation against the encroachments has been launched in the villages of District Toba Tek Singh.

The purpose of this operation is to eliminate illegal encroachments on public lands. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sandhu is overseeing the operation across the district, while Assistant Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Ali Sameer and Chief Officer District Council Anwar Baig Sial led by the operation, is underway. Assistant Commissioner Ali Sameer reached the spot in Chak No. 320 and removed the encroachments.

Local People has been requested to automatically remove the encroachments on public lands, especially in front of the house, otherwise strict action will be taken against them. The beauty and development of the city has been done to further promote the proper use of public lands.

Cleanliness of irrigation channels launched: Sub Divisional Officer irrigation Department said that the irrigation department was doing cleaning of the canals which caused water closure in the canals.

He further said that due to the cleaning of the canals, people were caught stealing sand from the canals, against which we have done actions. We are trying not to steal sand from the canals, yet people do not refrain from stealing sand.

Because of this, we have to take action against such people. Farmers are facing problems due to lack of water due to cleanliness. Therefore, it is our endeavor to complete the cleanliness soon so that water can be provided to the farmer's crops.

Police recovers two hostages safely

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Police has recovered two hostages from the clutches of robbers. Police carried out a joint intelligence-based operation in the Kashmore area, successfully recovering the two hostages Muhammad Nawaz Phor son of Ghulam Muhammad Phor and Amanullah son of Muhammad Nawaz Phor.

It is clear that both recovered hostages were kidnapped for ransom by a gang of robbers on December 15, 2024, from Link Road Tangwani and were recovered during an intelligence-based operation within the limits of Ghauspur Police Station.

Meanwhile, an oath-taking ceremony and training workshop for all branches of Jamaat-e-Islahul Muslimen District Larkana was organized in two phases for the Dinpur Zone and Larkana Zone at Dinpur Mosque and the Spiritual Mosque Larkana.

The program began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, Naat, and Manqabats. On this occasion, the district president of the Jamaat, Malik Zamiruddin Malik Tahiri, Fageer Abdul Ghaffar Baghio Tahiri, Noor Ahmad Hasbani Tahiri, Khalifa Abdul Aziz Abbasi, Muhammad Riaz Sheikh, and other leaders collectively addressed and stated that the organization is organized, and maintaining order and discipline is the skill and the true beauty and necessity of the organization.

Prize distribution ceremony held Govt Degree College

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) Iftikhar Ali Mashwani attended the prize distribution and scholarship cheque ceremony at Government Degree College for Boys as the chief guest. While addressing the ceremony, MPA Iftikhar Ali Mashwani stated that extracurricular activities in educational institutions are a positive initiative.

Personality development and character building hold significant importance in the life of an individual, especially students. From birth to becoming a good human being, one has to go through various stages. Three elements play a crucial role in shaping a child's personality: society, education, and parents. These three factors influence a child in varying proportions, with education having the most significant impact.

However, the role of parents in education is undeniable. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's primary agenda is to provide educational facilities to 100% of the

province's population and significantly increase the literacy rate.

The party leadership firmly believes that education is a fundamental right of every citizen. To establish a developed and prosperous society, it is essential to provide quality and equal educational opportunities. MPA Iftikhar Ali Mashwani further stated that PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has always prioritized reforms in the education sector.

To achieve this, special attention has been given to establishing new schools and colleges, recruiting teaching staff, improving basic facilities in educational institutions, and promoting modern technology. A comprehensive strategy has been adopted, especially for the promotion of education in underprivileged and rural areas, ensuring that no child is deprived of education. The government's policies aim not only to increase the literacy rate but also to enhance the quality of education. PTI's educational agenda includes updating the curriculum to meet modern demands, professional training of teachers, and implementing policies

of transparency and merit in educational institutions.

Meanwhile, district police officer held crime meeting in which all police officers participated. In view of the arrival of Ramadan, security arrangements, prevention of crime, improvement of traffic system, and solution of public problems were discussed in detail. The DPO directed officers to tighten security during Ramadan, increase police patrolling at mosques, markets and sensitive places, while holding special meetings with clerics and businessmen to provide a safe environment for the public.

He ordered to adopt zero tolerance policy on aerial firing and take strict legal action against the perpetrators. On this occasion, the DPO made it clear that no recommendation will be accepted and no concession will be given to anyone for violating the law.

Directing strict action against street crime, the DPO Mardan said that criminal elements should be closely monitored, history sheets and personnel files should be updated, and immediate action should be taken against registered accused.

Dir resident seeks action against police officer

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: One Iftikhar Ali, has accused Islamabad police of misconduct and illegal detention of his 10-year-old son, Jawad Ali. Speaking to journalists in Samarbagh here the other day, he urged the Interior Minister and Inspector General of Police (IGP) to take immediate action against Sub-Inspector Tanveer Kiani of Shehzad Police Station.

Ali explained that after a minor dispute with neighbors, his family filed a formal complaint. Instead of addressing their concerns, Kiani allegedly detained Jawad unlawfully, subjecting him to mental torture. The trauma has severely affected Jawad, leaving him unable to prepare for his exams.

Ali further alleged that instead of investigating the dispute, Kiani harassed and intimidated their family while favoring the opposing party. He called upon the Prime Minister, Chief Justice, and other authorities to ensure justice for his son and demanded a thorough investigation.

Highlighting police brutality as a systemic issue, Ali stressed the need for

law enforcement reforms to prevent abuse of power and protect vulnerable citizens, especially children.

Utility Stores Corporation employees' protest: Dozens of Utility Stores Corporation (USC) employees staged a protest in Timergara against salary payment delays and mass layoffs. Marching from the Balambat warehouse to Shaheed Chowk, they warned authorities of a larger demonstration in Islamabad if their dismissed colleagues were not reinstated.

USC Regional President Ali Muhammad, alongside Ijaz Khan, Yousaf, and other representatives, condemned the terminations, calling them "financial murder." They reminded the government that the USC was founded in 1971 by Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to support underprivileged communities.

The protesters criticized the government for neglecting their responsibilities and demanded either reinstatement or a fair resolution. They suggested that if the USC were to be shut down, employees should receive a golden handshake and a relief package to safeguard their livelihoods.

PPP press conference on University of Malakand: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Lower Dir chapter held an emergency press conference at Chakdara press club, demanding action against mismanagement at the University of Malakand.

Former NA-7 candidate Alam Zaib Advocate, along with district general secretary Naeemullah Khan, tehsil general secretary Asad Khan, senior vice president Zahid Shah, and PSF University President Wajahat Ullah, raised concerns about mafia influence and favoritism in the university.

They demanded the abolition of the semester system, internal marking by teachers, and an independent investigation into a recent harassment incident. Calling for strict action against those responsible, they emphasized the need for the protection of female students and the prioritization of local youth in recruitment.

Additionally, the PPP leaders urged the government to lift the ban on student unions, allowing students to advocate for their rights and enjoy freedom of expression on campus.

Tribal journalist begging for survival

Shamim Shahid

A young journalist Mehrob Afridi from tribal district Khyber is begging for survival since the murder of his colleague Khalil Jibrani Presidet Landi Kot Press Club who was mysteriously shot dead by unknown militants on June 18th 2024 last. Both were receipts of threats and warning from militants who are active in the region from last two decades.

Talking to this scribe from an unknown location Mehrob Afridi recalled that soon after mysterious death of his colleague Khalil Jibrani, he in according to police high ups had left home and shifted to Islamabad along with fami-

ly. However, after couple of months, he left with no option to leave the federal capital when some mysterious persons, boarding on tented glasses vehicles frequently chasing him and his children.

Mehrob said that after Islamabad he decided to shift to Lahore, Islamabad or any other place but was uncertain about his teenager children. Finally, he decided to timely disintegrate from the family. Now he living in an unknown location and similar is the position of his family members.

In response to a question, Mehrob said that he didn't contacted Human Rights Commission of Pakistan or any other international Human Rights protection for any support and

protection. He, however, confirmed getting help from Islamabad based organization claiming helping needy journalists. He in this respect, praised high ups of District Khyber Police, who prior to Khalil Jibrani targeted murder, suggested them to leave the area due to threats from militant group.

Mehrob said that after targeting murder of his colleague Khalil Jibrani and abandoning his native Landi Kot/Town in Khyber, he lost his journalistic job and now facing severe hardships. Earlier he was associated with a number of media organs but now he is jobless. Mehrob said that now he [passing through severe security, economic and other issues.

Timely completion of under construction flyover directed

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy commissioner directed the officers of highway department and construction company to expedite construction work on project of construction Railway Flyover on dual carriageway Gujranwala-Kot Sarwar Motorway

Interchange bypass being executed with the cost of Rs. 750 million so that better communicational facilities could be available to commuters.

He issued theses directions while visiting under construction project to review pace of work and check quality of material being used by the construction company.

While giving briefing to the DC, Executive Engineer Highways Asjad Ali and Deputy Director Development Tassawur Abbas informed that construction work on this project was underway sharply and 16 feet wide each service road would also be constructed at both sides of two-line Railway Flyover.



GAZA: Palestinians walk on a street among the rubble of buildings destroyed during Israeli offensive.

Burundi troops withdraw in Congo as M23 rebels expand reach

DR CONGO (Reuters): Burundi is withdrawing its forces from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo where they had been fighting against M23 rebels, four sources said, in a further blow to Congo's army as it struggles to halt a rebel advance.

But a spokesman for the Burundian military dismissed reports of the ongoing pull-out as "fake", and said in a post on X that his country's soldiers were "continuing to execute their missions in their areas of responsibility" in Congo.

The pull-out came as the United Nations human rights office accused M23 rebels of executing children in eastern Congo during their advance, which has seen the group seize the region's two largest cities. "A number of trucks filled with (Burundian) military arrived in the country since yesterday" through a border post, a Burundian army officer said, confirming movements also described by two UN sources and an African diplomat.

Burundian soldiers fought alongside the Congolese to try to defend Kavumu, home to the airport that services Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province, which fell over the weekend. It was the rebels' most significant prize since they seized Goma, the biggest city in eastern Congo, in late January. Burundi has had soldiers in eastern Congo for years, initially to hunt down Burundian rebels there, but more recently, to aid in the fight against M23.

The well-equipped M23 is the latest in a long line of ethnic Tutsi-led rebel movements to emerge in

Congo's volatile east. In their march south, the rebels entered the town of Kamanyola, some 50 km (31 miles) south of Bukavu, according to two residents and an M23 source. A Congolese army spokesperson did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Fighting between rebels and the Congolese army also took place in Lubero territory, north of Goma, local official Kambale Vighuliro and army colonel Alain Kiwewa told Reuters. Congo President Felix Tshisekedi met his Angolan counterpart Joao Lourenco in Luanda, the Angolan capital, to discuss the accelerated deterioration of the security situation in eastern Congo, the Angolan presidency said in a statement posted on Facebook. Rwanda rejects allegations from Congo, the United Nations and Western powers that it supports the group with arms and troops. It says it is defending itself against the threat from a Hutu militia, which it says is fighting with the Congolese military.

Congo rejects Rwanda's complaints and says Rwanda has used its proxy militias to loot its minerals. Rwanda said it was suspending development cooperation with Belgium over what it called an aggressive campaign to sabotage Rwanda's access to development finance, including through multilateral institutions. Various militias are vying for control of the region's abundant mineral resources such as tantalum and cobalt, key components of electric vehicles, mobile phones and other technological products used across the world.

Congo is also the top supplier of copper to China.

In Geneva, the UN Rights Office said conditions were deteriorating sharply for civilians caught up in the fighting in eastern Congo, with reported abuses including summary executions and sexual violence. "Our office has confirmed cases of summary execution of children by M23 after they entered the city of Bukavu last week," spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani told a press briefing. Three boys likely no older than 15 were killed during an altercation with rebels after they refused to give up weapons they had taken from an abandoned military camp, she said.

Between 10,000 and 15,000 people have crossed into Burundi from around Bukavu in recent days, straining resources and leading to overcrowding, Matthew Saltmarsh, spokesperson for the UN refugee agency, said. Some have drowned in the Ruzizi River while trying to cross, he said. "Refugees are exhausted and traumatised. Many of them have been separated from their families with little information on their whereabouts," Saltmarsh said.

Boat traffic returned to Lake Kivu as ports re-opened in Goma and Bukavu, which the United Nations said could facilitate access to humanitarian aid after weeks of fighting and looting. However, the airport in Goma, which the UN describes as a lifeline for aid, remains closed. North of Goma, Uganda's army said it had entered the eastern Congolese city of Bunia with approval from local militia authorities to stop militia killings there.

Philippine Coast Guard slams 'dangerous' China helicopter drills

MANILA (AFP): The Philippine Coast Guard condemned "dangerous" manoeuvres by a Chinese Navy helicopter as it flew within three metres (10 feet) of a surveillance flight carrying a group of journalists over the contested Scarborough Shoal.

An AFP photographer on the flight described seeing the helicopter tail the plane before drawing near the left wing, close enough to see personnel aboard filming them. The helicopter had been "as close as three metres" to the fisheries bureau aircraft, the coast guard said in a statement. The plane had been flying about 213 metres above the water on a mission to observe Chinese vessels in the area.

"Around 0839 hours, a People's Liberation Army Navy (PLA-Navy) helicopter ... performed dangerous flight maneuvers towards the BFAR aircraft. This reckless action posed a

serious risk to the safety of the pilots and passengers during the MDA flight," the coast guard statement said. The Scarborough Shoal -- a triangular chain of reefs and rocks in the South China Sea -- has been a flashpoint between the countries since China seized it from the Philippines in 2012.

The incident comes less than a week after Australia rebuked Beijing for "unsafe" military conduct, accusing a Chinese fighter of releasing flares within 30 metres of a surveillance plane patrolling above the South China Sea. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman at the time said the Australian plane had "deliberately intruded into the airspace around China's Xisha Islands", Beijing's name for the Parcel Islands, which Vietnam and Taiwan also claim.

China claims the South China Sea in almost its entirety despite an interna-

tional ruling in 2016 concluding this has no legal basis. The Scarborough Shoal, which lies 240 kilometres west of the Philippines' main island of Luzon and nearly 900 kilometres from the nearest major Chinese land mass of Hainan, has been the site of repeated confrontations as Manila has resupplied Filipino fishermen in the area.

In December, the Philippines said the Chinese coast guard fired water cannon and "side-swiped" a government fisheries department vessel. Manila released a video appearing to show a Chinese coast guard ship firing a torrent of water at the BRP Datu Pagbuaya. Other footage apparently taken from the Philippine ship showed its crew shouting "Collision! Collision!" as the much larger Chinese vessel neared its right-hand side before crashing into it.

Manila and treaty ally Washington have deepened their defense cooperation since Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos took office in 2022 and began pushing back on China's claims to the South China Sea. The Philippines said in December it hoped to acquire the US Typhoon missile system as part of a push to secure its maritime interests.

The mid-range missile system, deployed earlier in 2024 for annual joint military exercises, has a range of 300 miles (480 kilometres), though a longer-range version is in development. Philippine Army Chief Lieutenant-General Roy Galido has said the Typhoon platform "will protect our floating assets", a reference to ships of the Philippine navy, coast guard and other vessels. China has warned that acquiring the system risks triggering an "arms race".

Tens of thousands of Palestinians flee West Bank refugee camps

JERUSALEM (Reuters): Tens of thousands of Palestinians living in refugee camps in the occupied West Bank have left their homes as a weeks-long Israeli offensive has demolished houses and torn up vital infrastructure in the heavily built up townships, Palestinian authorities said.

Israeli forces began their operation in the refugee camp in the northern West Bank city of Jenin on Jan. 21, deploying hundreds of troops and bulldozers that demolished houses and dug up roads, driving almost all of the camp's residents out. "We don't know what's going on in the camp but there is continuous demolition and roads being dug up," said Mohammed al-Sabbagh, head of the Jenin camp services committee. The operation, which

Israel says is aimed at thwarting Iranian-backed militant groups in the West Bank, has since been extended to other camps, notably the Tulkarm refugee camp and the nearby Nur Shams camp, both of which have also been devastated. The camps, built for descendants of Palestinian refugees who fled or were driven from their homes in the 1948 war around the creation of the state of Israel, have long been major centres for armed militant groups.

They have been raided repeatedly by the Israeli military but the current operation, which began as a ceasefire was agreed in Gaza, has been on an unusually large scale. According to figures from the Palestinian Authority, around 17,000 people have

now left Jenin refugee camp, leaving the site almost completely deserted, while in Nur Shams 6,000 people, or about two thirds of the total, have left, with another 10,000 leaving from Tulkarm camp. "The ones who are left are trapped," said Nihad al-Shawish, head of the Nur Shams camp services committee. "The Civil Defence, the Red Crescent and the Palestinian security forces brought them some food yesterday but the army is still bulldozing and destroying the camp."

The Israeli raids have demolished dozens of houses and torn up large stretches of roadway as well as cutting off water and power, but the military has denied forcing residents to leave their homes. "People obviously have the possi-

bility to move or go where they want, if they will. But if they don't, they're allowed to stay," Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani told reporters. The operation began as Israel moved to banish the main UN Palestinian relief organization UNRWA from its headquarters in East Jerusalem and cut it off from any contact with Israeli officials.

The ban, which took effect at the end of January, has hit UNRWA's work in the West Bank and Gaza, where it provides aid for millions of Palestinians in the refugee camps. Israel has accused UNRWA of cooperating with Hamas and said some UNRWA workers even took part in the Hamas-led attack on communities in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023 that set off the 15-month war in Gaza.

Trump directs removal of all Biden-era US attorneys

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump said he has instructed the Justice Department to terminate all remaining Biden-era US attorneys, asserting that the department had been "politicized like never before."

"We must 'clean house' immediately, and restore confidence. America's Golden Age must have a fair Justice System - that begins today," Trump said in a post on Truth Social. The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Last week, the White House sent termination notices to several US Attorneys around the country who had been appointed by Democratic former President Joe Biden. Several US attorneys appointed by Biden announced they were stepping down. Others left the government last week.

While it is customary for US Attorneys to step down after a change in the presidential administration, usually the incoming administration asks for their resignations and does not issue tersely worded termination letters, current and former Justice Department lawyers say. The termination of the US attorneys, who serve as the top federal law enforcement officers in their districts, is the latest in shake-ups at the Justice Department since Trump took office last month.

Career Justice Department officials normally remain in office from one administration to the next. Yet dozens in cities including Washington and New York have been fired or quit since Trump took office. Trump campaigned on a vow to end the "weaponization" at the Justice Department that he says was used against him during his years out of power.

Kremlin says joining EU Ukraine's sovereign right

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Kremlin said that it was Ukraine's sovereign right to decide whether it wanted to join the European Union and that Moscow did not intend to dictate to Kyiv how it should approach the question.

Asked if Ukraine could one day join the European Union, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "This is the sovereign right of any country." "We are talking about integration and economic integration processes. And here, of course, no one can dictate anything to any country, and we are not going to do that," Peskov said.

Peskov added, though, that Russia's position was different when it came to Ukraine joining military alliances. "There is a completely different position, of course, on security-related issues related to defence or military alliances," Peskov said. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian forces have struck and knocked out a North Korean self-propelled howitzer on the eastern front of the nearly three-year-old war with Russia, Ukraine's military said. A statement by the Khortytzia, or East, group of forces said it was the first time since the start of the conflict that a North Korean ?-1978 Koksan howitzer had been hit by a Ukrainian drone.

"In Luhansk region, fighters of the 412th separate regiment of Nemesis drones struck a very rare M-1978 North Korean self-propelled artillery vehicle with a gun caliber of 170 mm," the statement posted on Telegram said. The post was accompanied by a video showing a military target being blown up, and said the Koksan had first been observed in the war in October 2024. Reuters could not independently confirm the report.

North Korea's military aid to Russia has included about 200 long-range artillery pieces and a significant amount of ammunition, South Korea's defence ministry told a parliament committee last week.

Luhansk region, mostly occupied by Russian forces, is one of four that Russia formally annexed in 2022, moves that Ukraine and its allies have not recognised.

Russia says NATO states can't enforce Ukraine peace

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia demanded NATO scrap its 2008 promise to one day give Ukraine membership of the US-led NATO military alliance and dismissed the idea that NATO member forces could be keepers of the peace under some sort of ceasefire deal.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said talks in Saudi Arabia, where he met Secretary of State Marco Rubio, US national security adviser Mike Waltz and Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, had been useful and that both sides had listened to each other.

But as the meeting was under way, Russia's foreign ministry said Moscow's long-standing objection to NATO membership for Ukraine required more than just not letting Ukraine join the alliance for now. "A refusal to accept Kyiv into NATO is not enough now," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in response to a question from Reuters.

"The alliance must disavow the Bucharest promises of 2008," she said in Moscow, referring to a NATO summit that year where both Ukraine and Georgia were told they could join the alliance, but

without a timetable or any path for how to get there. After talks with the US delegation in Riyadh, Lavrov told reporters that he and Kremlin foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov had underscored that NATO membership for Ukraine was unacceptable to Russia. "We explained to our colleagues today what President (Vladimir) Putin has repeatedly stressed: that the expansion of NATO, the absorption of Ukraine by the North Atlantic alliance, is a direct threat to the interests of the Russian Federation, a direct threat to our sovereignty," Lavrov said.

He also dismissed the essence of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's proposal to send British and potentially other NATO member forces to Ukraine as peacekeepers, in response to US President Donald Trump's demands that Europe stop depending on the US for its defence needs. "We explained today that the appearance of armed forces from the same NATO countries, but under a false flag, under the flag of the European Union or under national flags, does not change anything in this regard," Lavrov said. "Of course this is unacceptable to us." The 2008 Bucharest

declaration was a compromise that papered over cracks between the United States, which wanted to admit both countries, and France and Germany, which feared antagonising Russia. Russia has repeatedly cited the post-Soviet enlargement of NATO, and specifically Ukraine's membership ambitions, as a reason for the war in Ukraine.

NATO says it is a defensive alliance with no expansionist ambitions, and that it has not been a party to the war, although many of its members have individually supported Kyiv's resistance to Russia's invasion with money and weaponry. Zakharova said Ukraine needed to return to the position of its 1990 declaration of sovereignty as the Soviet Union was collapsing, in which it said it would become a permanently neutral state, not participate in military blocs, and remain nuclear-free. Ukraine became fully independent in 1991 and, three years later, agreed to give up its Soviet-era nuclear weapons in exchange for assurances of independence and sovereignty within its existing borders from Russia, the US and Britain.

Washington not to reduce its troop presence in Poland

WARSAW (AP): Poland's President Andrzej Duda said that he has received US assurances that Washington will not reduce its troop presence in Poland and elsewhere along NATO's eastern flank.

A conservative who has long had good ties with US President Donald Trump, Duda also returned to an idea he proposed years ago to create a US military based called "Fort Trump" in his country. The Trump administration has not announced any plans to pull forces out of the region, but has said Europe must do more to provide for its own security. His administration's stance has raised questions in the region about whether Washington will maintain its longstanding commitments to NATO partners.

"There are no concerns that the US would reduce the level of its presence in our country, that the US would in any way withdraw from its responsibility or co-responsibility for the security of this part of Europe," Duda told reporters in Warsaw after a meeting with Gen. Keith Kellogg, the US special envoy for Ukraine and Russia. "On the contrary, I

hope that thanks to the efforts that President Trump is currently making, the war in Ukraine will end." "I will say that in my personal opinion, America has entered the game very strongly when it comes to ending the war in Ukraine. I know President Donald Trump, I know that he is an extremely decisive man and when he acts, he acts in a very determined and usually effective way," Duda said.

The US deployed troops to Poland after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, but increased the deployment and created a long-term presence there after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. There are now about 10,000 US troops based in Poland. Duda said his assessment was based on conversations he had in recent days, both with Kellogg and with US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, whom he hosted in Warsaw last week.

Duda said Hegseth told him "that we can rather expect a strengthening of the American presence here. We even talked about the fact that I hope that Fort Trump, which we talked about during the first term of President

Donald Trump, will really be established." Fort Trump was a Polish proposal for a permanent US base in Poland, which Duda spoke of publicly during a visit to the White House in 2018. The base was never created.

Polish officials hope to preserve the US commitment to NATO and its longstanding commitment to security in the region, with fears of Russia growing. They are convinced that Warsaw's strong alliance with the US and its high level of spending on defense will help its cause. They also hope that their position will allow it to advocate for Ukraine. "We have told both the Secretary of Defense and General Kellogg clearly and distinctly that it is obvious to us that this war cannot end in a victory for Russia," Duda said.

He also sought to allay growing concerns in the population in light of shifting priorities under Trump. "Please don't be alarmed, the situation is under control," Duda said, words he said he was directing to Polish society. "Let me assure you that everything is being done in a way that favors the building of peace in our region."

Europe talks up more defence spending

PARIS/RIYADH (Reuters): European leaders meeting in Paris for emergency talks called for higher spending to ramp up the continent's defence capabilities but remained split on the idea of deploying peacekeepers to Ukraine to back up any peace deal.

The leaders also agreed it would be dangerous to conclude a Ukraine ceasefire without a peace agreement at the same time, and that they were ready to provide security guarantees to Ukraine "depending on the level of American support," a European official said.

"We agree with President Trump on a 'peace through strength' approach," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Paris meeting was called by French President Emmanuel Macron after US President Donald Trump arranged bilateral peace talks with Russia, excluding European allies and Ukraine from negotiations to end the war that are scheduled to begin in Saudi Arabia. Macron spoke with Trump ahead of the meetings, officials from both countries said. A White House official called it "a friendly call" in which they talked about the Paris meeting and the talks in Saudi Arabia. Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelenskiy also said he had a "long" call with Macron on security guarantees. "We share a common vision: security guarantees must be robust and reliable," Zelenskiy said on X, adding: "Any other decision without such guarantees - such as a fragile ceasefire - would only serve as another deception by Russia and a prelude to a new Russian war against Ukraine or other European nations."

Trump stunned Ukraine and European allies last week when he announced he had called Russian President Vladimir Putin, long ostracised by the West, to discuss ending the war without consulting them, and they must now confront the reality of a future with less US protection. The US decision has sparked a realisation among European nations that they will have to do more to ensure Ukraine's security.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who before the meeting said he was willing to send peacekeeping troops to Ukraine, said there must be a US security commitment for European countries to put boots on the ground. He said it was too early to say how many British troops he would be willing to deploy. A peace-

keeping force would not only raise the risk of a direct confrontation with Russia, which launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, but also stretch European armies, whose arsenals have been depleted by supplying Ukraine and decades of relative peace.

There are also difficult questions about how some European nations, whose public finances are groaning, will pay for such expanded military commitments. Keith Kellogg, Trump's Ukraine envoy, said he would visit Ukraine and was asked if the US would provide a security guarantee for any European peacekeepers.

"I've been with President Trump, and the policy has always been: You take no options off the table," he said. Starmer's push for peacekeepers appeared to draw a dividing line between participants in Paris, who included German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and Georgia Meloni, Donald Tusk and Pedro Sanchez, the prime ministers of Italy, Poland and Spain. Scholz said there could be no peace deal without Ukraine's consent, but said talk of a German peacekeeping mission in Ukraine was "highly inappropriate" without a peace deal in hand.

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Tariffs not a magic wand for MAGA

THE US president seems obsessed with tariffs, as though wielding a magic wand, a single wave of which is all it takes to realize his dream to "make America great again".

In his latest act of wizardry, the US leader announced his intention to impose a tariff hike on all imported cars, pharmaceuticals and semiconductors, in a bid to reshore jobs and factories from overseas.

During a news conference at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida on Tuesday, the US president said that he is planning to enact auto tariffs in the "neighborhood of 25 percent" to encourage companies to shift production from overseas, adding that while a full announcement would come on April 2, the import duties would likely start at 25 percent. He said he would charge the same amount for pharmaceuticals and semiconductors and gradually increase the tariffs over time.

"It will be 25 percent and higher, and it will go very substantially higher over the course of a year," Trump said. "But we want to give them time to come in because, as you know, when they come into the United States, and they have their plant or factory here, there is no tariff, so we want to give them a little bit of a chance."

That Trump didn't specify whether countries such as Mexico and Canada, which have a free trade agreement with the US, will be exempt from the new tariffs has put all major car exporters to the US on pins and needles. Mexico, Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea and Germany will bear the brunt of the new duties on cars as major car exporters to the US.

The problem is when it comes to choosing sites for new plants tariffs are just only one factor that the companies take into consideration, they also have to take into account labor costs, distance from suppliers, market demand and logistics, etc. That explains why Mexico, thanks to it being a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement and its low-cost labor, about 10-20 percent of that in the US, has become the largest springboard for Japanese and German automakers to enter the US market, which together accounted for about 15 percent of the cars sold in the US last year.

So if a tariff hike is not high enough to offset, say, Mexico's advantages in other respects, the carmakers will choose to continue to make cars in the country. But if the tariff hike is high enough to drive them to relocate their plants to the US they will still have to accommodate much higher costs in labor and logistics. In either case, it will be the US consumers that will pay for the additional tariffs.

Experts warn that auto parts usually cross borders between the US and Canada and Mexico about seven or eight times before final assembly, and if the additional tariffs are levied on each border crossing, the final costs will escalate dramatically. It is estimated that if a 25 percent tariff is imposed on cars and parts imported from Mexico and Canada, the cost of buying a new car for US consumers will increase by about \$5,790 on average. This is expected to increase the average cost of a new car in the US to more than \$54,500 per vehicle, nearly 12 percent higher than in 2024.

Considering that the European Union, the ROK and Japanese trade officials are all scheduled to meet with their counterparts in the Trump administration for talks, the revealing of the US move at this juncture is undoubtedly intended to give the US more bargaining chips in the forthcoming negotiations.

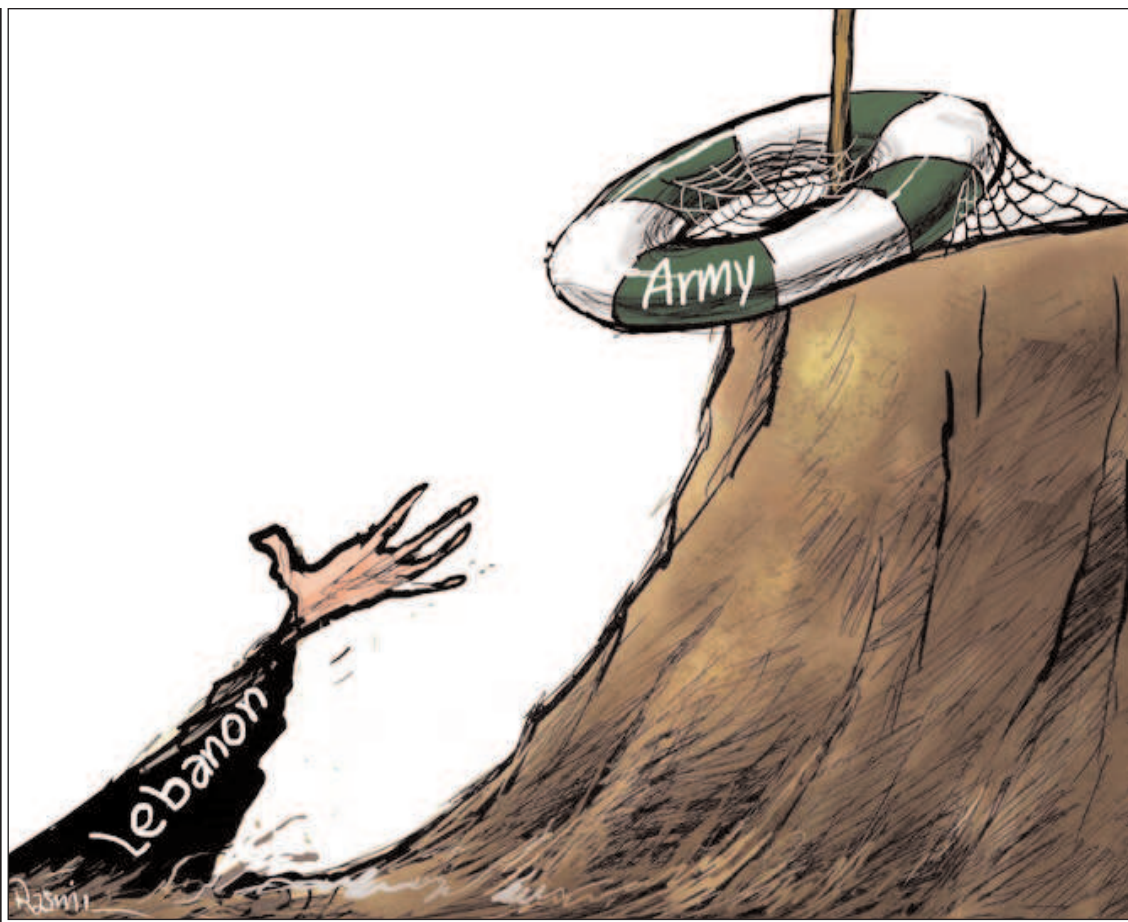
However, the Trump administration should give due consideration to the effect the higher tariffs will have at home. The US consumer price index grew 3 percent year-on-year in January, and inflation expectations have strengthened. It is also likely that the fiscal deficit will continue to expand on the basis of the tariffs. Investors will be concerned about the sustainability of US finances under this situation, and a lack of market confidence will lead to a sell-off of US bonds, further pushing up yields.

Trump's solution to the inherent conflict in his policy is to ask the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates. However, if the Federal Reserve loses its independence, it may further weaken the dollar's position as the world's reserve currency, leading investors to sell US assets.

As such, weaponizing tariffs is by no means a quick fix for the US' problems and will likely only cause more problems in the future.

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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.



Pakistan and Hungary: History, challenges and opportunities

Syed Ali Nawaz Gillani

PAKISTAN and Hungary have extended their cooperation far beyond the diplomatic realms of the two countries. This bond is unique due to the two hundred years of history, cultural blending, and goodwill that preceded it. While Hungary has always been fond of the Indus region, Pakistan's contribution toward maintaining peace in the region has fostered this relationship further. This relationship is not merely based on political good will but on belief and understanding, which manifests the power of multicultural participation. With increasing globalization, the changing nature of Hungary-Pakistani relations suggest and economic and investment opportunities. The relations that were established in 1965 bear a staggering amount of history with it and are built on mutual respect and understanding.

MOL hopes to lead new investment in Hungary and is willing to strengthen the economic link between the two countries by purchasing shares of Pakistani businesses, facilitating venture partnerships, and supporting the export of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to the South and East. The bond of these countries is strengthened and built on trust, cultural relations, and shared objectives. While these countries seek to further diplomatic relations, these are but the formal steps towards a deeply rooted ancestral relationship.

The links between Hungary and the Indus region allows traces of their connection all the way to the ancient eras. To this day, Hungarian scholars pay a significant amount of attention to South Asia's history as well as its languages and traditions. One of the most remarkable Hungarian scholars, Aurél Stein, focused on this region and further connected the two cultures through his extensive work. These initial link-

ages sculptured a solid collaboration between Pakistan and Hungary, owing to the confluence of respect and intellectual traffic that existed between the two nations.

Pakistan and Hungary's official diplomatic relations were formed in 1965, but as with most countries, interactions of some type existed before this time. Over the years, the two countries have deepened their relations through trade, cultural relations, commerce, as well as political relations. Hungary has also never forgotten Pakistan's efforts for achieving balance in the region and rendered assistance to Pakistan in various international issues.

Hungary has gradually expanded her economic operations in Pakistan, particularly with regards to areas that overlap in mutual interests. MOL, a leading Hungarian oil and gas company, is one of the strongest examples of bilateral economic collaboration. These investments go beyond addressing one aspect of Pakistan's energy deficit, as they also foster an environment of employment which impacts the economy positively.

In addition to energy, Hungary is keener on co-operating with Pakistan in its agriculture, food processing, machine tools, electronics, water sanitation, environmental technology, and medicine. There is a healthy trade relationship between the two states, but there are problems of a regulatory nature, security, and a rather business unfriendly environment which makes it complicated.

These circumstances have at times retarded the pace of economic cooperation, but the two governments endeavor to work together to remove these hurdles and make doing business easier.

Despite obstacles, Hungary is inclined to increase trade with Pakistan, recognizing significant collaboration opportunities.

Hungary seeks new markets while aiding

Pakistani businesses in Europe. Aspects of the cultural exchange programs offered by the embassy only serve to enhance Hungary-Pakistan relations. These relations are also strengthened by the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship of 400 per year, which improves educational relations with Pakistan and from whose returning students the country benefits in friendly bilateral relations.

Hungary has also come forward in supporting Pakistan during its tough times like providing humanitarian aid support during natural disasters. A well-known case is the earthquake of 2005 when Hungary came forward to assist victims by sponsoring mobile hospitals and other resources. MOL also aid in \$500,000 to assist in the relief. Such benevolent acts have increased trust and friendship between the two nations.

Hungary also considers Pakistan as a significant player of the regional and has supported the country's action against terrorism. With the global magnitude of concerns regarding extremism and instability, South Asia requires the guidance of Hungary which aids in maintaining control of the regions.

This big issue for both nations helps ensure activeness further increasing their partnerships. Some of the concern areas that still affect the relations between Pakistan and Hungary despite the strong ties existing is the lack of transparency in business and a mix of complex regulations that slow down progress. A significant portion of Hungarian people do wish to invest in the country but the issue of the security makes them skeptical.

There are some trade exchanges between the two countries but not at a reliable frequency. Even though both nations appreciate the value of their trade relations, factors like red tape, vague regulations, and ineffi-

cient logistics have made the expansion of trade very difficult. Solving these issues would motivate more investors from Hungary to come into Pakistan and the other way around.

Public perception is another aspect that requires attention. A lot of Pakistanis do not know much about the economic possibilities and the cultural nuances Hungary has to offer. On the other hand, the knowledge about the possibilities that Hungary has regarding limited within Hungary. Increased collaboration between the media and more student exchange programs would be effective in narrowing the gap and increasing interaction opportunities.

Nonetheless, these problems exist, but the outlook of the Pakistan-Hungary relations appears bright. Both countries are focusing on deepening these relations in energy, agriculture, information technology, health, and education.

The expertise that Hungary possesses concerning agriculture and food processing should be beneficial for developing agribusinesses in Pakistan. At the same time, there is considerable potential for collaboration in food production and exports using Hungary's farming systems with Pakistan's agricultural potential. As countries, Hungary and Pakistan have had an understanding of each other's economies and respect for sustained bilateral relations.

They continuously work towards improving relations despite challenges that either country faces. This long-standing willingness to collaborate is evident in tightening of relationship in terms of increasing scholarships, trade, and cultural events.

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Zero-sum is not the mentality of Beijing

LI YANG

THE two speeches Singaporean Minister for Defense Ng Eng Hen gave last week, at the 61st Munich Security Conference and the 16th Munich Young Leaders Roundtable, respectively, reflect the ambivalent feelings of the Southeast Asian countries toward the China-targeted geopolitical games the United States is playing in the region.

Ng, who has served as Singapore's defense chief since 2011, has firsthand experience of the rising tensions in the region. Unlike some Western politicians pointing a finger at China as the sole cause of the tensions, the veteran Singaporean

politician tried to explain the tensions in a more balanced way.

As he indicated, it is the United States' militarization of the South China Sea with the support of its allies and partners that has prompted China to conduct more frequent coast guard patrols and naval drills in the region.

For instance, as Ng said, the US has negotiated access to 12 new defense sites in the Philippines and Australia, constructed new installations in Japan and Guam, and expanded its military facilities at dozens of other installations across the region since 2011.

The country now has about 140,000 military troops in Guam, Hawaii, Japan and the Republic of Korea, spread across 29 military bases.

Notably Ng said that China's presence in the South China Sea was its rendering of the Monroe Doctrine.

But this is a comparison that doesn't hold any water given their chalk and cheese natures.

It seems to be a notion universally embraced that a country, such as China, in possession of strong national strength, must be seeking hegemony. But as it has unequivocally said, China has no desire for hegemony.

As Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at the Munich Security Conference, China advocates equality among all countries regardless of size, and calls for increasing the representation and say of developing countries in the international system.

This is not the pursuit of "Westlessness" but the means to deliver more positive-sum results to the world.

China does not intend to contend with any other country — it is not interested in doing so. Instead, it hopes to contribute to the world's peace, stability and common development for the good of all.

To that end, it hopes others will join it.

Impact of COVID-19 on Pakistan education system

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE COVID-19 pandemic posed extraordinary challenges to Pakistan, profoundly affecting numerous sectors, with education being among the hardest hit. The first confirmed case surfaced on February 26, 2020, and multiple waves of the virus followed over the ensuing years. By May 2023, Pakistan had reported approximately 1.58 million cases and over 30,000 fatalities, leading to widespread disruptions in daily life. As a containment measure, the government mandated nationwide school closures, severely impacting millions of children. These closures varied across provinces, cumulatively resulting in around 10.5 months of lost in-person learning, affecting nearly 40 million students. Gradual reopening, subject to stringent health protocols, was implemented in phases depending on the severity of the outbreak in each region.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and independent education surveys, approximately 22.8 million children were already out of school before the pandemic. This crisis exacerbated the situation, as many children—particularly from underprivileged backgrounds—failed to return to school post-pandemic.

Punjab experienced extended school closures, and studies indicate that 8% of adolescent girls and 21% of boys did not resume their education after reopening. Economic hardships compelled many boys to seek employment, while traditional societal norms increased household responsibilities for girls. Although 70% of students resumed studies, nearly 1.8 million, especially in rural areas, remained out of school. The situation in Sindh was equally severe, with limited access to digital learning resources aggravating the crisis. Remote learning initiatives were introduced, but many students lacked internet access, devices, or an environment conducive to learning, leading to considerable learning losses.

Over 2 million children in Sindh dropped out due to economic difficulties and their families' inability to afford schooling.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the educational impact was profound. Schools remained closed for prolonged periods, and students struggled with online education due to inadequate digital infrastructure. Reports suggested that many children, particularly in rural areas, found it difficult to resume their studies post-pandemic.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa managed a relatively better return rate of around 75%, yet dropout rates in the tribal districts remained high due to inadequate digital learning facilities and displacement issues.

The scenario in Balochistan was even more dire. The province already had the lowest literacy rates and poorest school attendance before COVID-19, and the pandemic exacerbated these challenges. High dropout rates were observed across all educational levels due to limited access to technology, economic hardships, and insufficient government support. Only about 60% of students resumed schooling, leaving a substantial gap in learning continuity.

Several factors contributed to children not returning to school post-pandemic. The economic downturn resulting from COVID-19 forced many families to prioritize earning livelihoods over education. In lower-income households, children were compelled to contribute to family income.

Girls were disproportionately affected, with many forced into early marriages or household duties. Additionally, the absence of proper reintegr-

ation strategies—such as financial assistance, counseling, and flexible academic calendars—led to permanent dropout rates among thousands of students. Another major issue was the reliance on online education, which left millions of students behind due to the digital divide. Statistics indicate that only 36% of households in Pakistan had internet access during the pandemic.

At the governmental level, various measures were undertaken to mitigate the educational crisis. The Ministry of Education launched the TeleSchool initiative, offering televised lessons to students nationwide. Additionally, provincial governments introduced hybrid learning programs, with Punjab implementing the Taleem Ghar project and Sindh launching online classes through dedicated portals. However, these initiatives had limited success due to infrastructural challenges and low digital literacy among students and teachers. In response to increasing dropout rates, the government-initiated enrollment drives and provided financial incentives such as scholarships and stipends, particularly targeting girls and low-income families. Despite these efforts, the recovery process remains slow, and a significant portion of students have yet to return to formal education.

Education holds a revered status in Islam, recognized as a fundamental right and a crucial tool for personal and societal development. The Quran emphasizes the significance of knowledge in Surah Al-Alaq (96:1-5): "Read in the name of your Lord who created; He created man from a clinging form. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know." This verse underscores the divine command to acquire knowledge.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also stressed education's importance, stating, "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim" (Sunan Ibn Majah, 224). Furthermore, he emphasized continuous learning by declaring, "The best among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5027). Islam promotes both religious and worldly education for the betterment of society.

To recover from the educational setbacks inflicted by COVID-19, a comprehensive strategy is imperative. First, enhancing school infrastructure and digital learning accessibility across all provinces is essential.

The government must invest in expanding internet coverage, providing affordable digital devices, and training teachers in modern pedagogical techniques. A particular emphasis should be placed on girls' education by introducing community-based schools and financial aid programs to prevent further dropouts. Furthermore, policymakers should implement flexible learning models, including evening classes, bridge courses, and accelerated learning programs, to accommodate students who have fallen behind.

Strengthening collaboration between the government, NGOs, and international organizations can further bridge the education gap through targeted interventions for the most affected areas.

Pakistan's education sector has suffered immensely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but with sound policies and unwavering commitment, the country can recuperate from these setbacks.

The focus must now be on ensuring that every child deprived of education during this period is reintegrated into the school system, safeguarding the future of millions of students and the nation as a whole.

Trump’s extremist border policies are part of a global authoritarian moment

Andonea Dickson, Cetta Mainwaring and Thom Tyerman

ON January 29, United States President Donald Trump signed an executive memorandum instructing his government to expand detention capacity at Guantánamo Bay’s Migrant Operations Center. Speaking before the signing, Trump claimed the proposed 30,000 beds were necessary for “eradicating the scourge of migrant crime” and would hold “the worst criminal illegal aliens threatening the American people” whom the US did not “trust” would not seek to return if deported.

This came amid an onslaught of anti-migrant executive orders, including the Laken Riley Act, requiring the Department of Homeland Security to detain non-US nationals arrested, but not necessarily found guilty, for burglary, theft, larceny or shoplifting, thereby denying many migrants access to due process.

As extreme as these policies are, and even as they seem indicative of a present authoritarian moment, they are not unique to Trump nor to the US. Nor are they without historical precedent.

For decades, the US, the United Kingdom, and Australia have been experimenting with offshore detention abroad and increasing criminalisation of migrants at home. Tracing how these policies have evolved together, circulated across all three countries, coming in and out of favour, reveals how the roots of this current authoritarian moment in world politics go deeper than any one state, party, or political perspective. Rather, their roots lie in racialised carceral violence that gets continuously recycled and amplified through nation-state borders.

The US experiment with offshore detention began in the 1980s, with the opening of a detention centre in Fort Allen, Puerto Rico, and the introduction of “interdiction” policies which sought to intercept and return predominantly Haitian asylum seekers at sea to prevent them from reaching the US. In the 1990s, these policies were expanded with the naval base situated on Guantánamo Bay, used to detain 36,000 Haitian and 20,000 Cuban people seeking asylum between 1991 and 1996.

Shortly after, in 2001, the Australian government introduced the so-called Pacific Solution, which saw Nauru and Manus Island in Papua

New Guinea incorporated into an elaborate architecture of offshore detention. These centres became marred by reports of human rights violations and extensive evidence of abuse and cruelty, yet the Pacific Solution persists to this day and was seen as a model to emulate by British governments.

The previous Conservative cabinet drew directly from Australia’s offshore policy to design a plan to deport people seeking asylum to Rwanda. Although the plan was shelved when Keir Starmer’s Labour Party came to power in 2024, he too has looked to Italy’s offshoring in

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Albania as a possible model to emulate. In all these countries, the offshore infrastructure and related deterrent logic persist even when political vicissitudes dictate a shift away from incarcerating people offshore. Thus, in Australia, when the first iteration of the Pacific Solution was terminated in 2007, the physical spaces and legal framework of offshoring remained intact, allowing for this policy to be easily reinvigorated and hardened with the Pacific Solution 2.0 in 2012.

When the Australian government moved the last person out of the Nauru detention centre in 2023, they never terminated their corporate contracts, allowing the centre to be repopulated with people seeking asylum only months later.

One of the major effects of offshore detention is to exclude detainees territorially and therefore legally from ordinary rights and protections, as well as to isolate them from the support of community and advocacy networks.

This is mirrored

domestically by the growing criminalisation of migrants.

By creating new migration-related crimes, mandating the detention and deportation of noncitizens with criminal convictions, and removing avenues for appeal or representation, states have constructed an increasingly illegalised population without rights. At the same time, they have elided migration and criminality in public debate.

This sets the scene for politicians to compete with one another by offering deterrence through ever-expanding detention as the only possible solution, especially during election campaigns.

The US example of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act shows this clearly. Passed in the run-up to a presidential election, IIRIRA expanded the definition of “aggravated felon” and the scope of deportable noncitizens (including retroactively). The Act established close cooperation between immigration enforcement and local police, massively increasing detention and deportation figures and the militarisation of the US-Mexico border.

Today, Trump’s executive orders, and claims of defending against an “invasion” by “criminal illegal aliens”, are an intensification of this existing system and its racialised logics of deterrence.

Like a carceral boomerang, this system of criminalising and incarcerating people who are seeking dignified life ricochets between its onshore and offshore incarnations within countries, as well as between countries. This criminalisation intensifies during

election cycles, when borders become spectacles of political strength, with parties across political divides using tough on migration narratives to evidence their ability to govern the nation and to distract from failures in health services, housing, welfare, employment and more.

The past 12 months have been no exception, with elections in the UK and the US and now an impending election in Australia. Each of these elections has pivoted around a gross expansion of policy proposals for offshoring detention, the deportation of large swaths of people, and the undermining, if not death, of our international

protection regime. As the politicisation of migration continues, the goalposts of what is deemed acceptable move ever towards the right, leading to policies that offer greater restrictions on rights and promise more harms. This spectacle of cruelty also distracts from another failure – the very failure of these restrictive policies and the profound absence of political leadership on migration. What research shows again and again is how these policies do not deter people from arriving, but instead further harm people already marginalised in our societies. Harm and abandonment are fundamental to the international systems of immigration detention, not accidental by-products produced by a lack of monitoring or rogue individuals or corporations. Harm and abandonment are “by design”. They are necessary features of coercive detention and deportation systems fuelled by political and financial profits built on this harm.

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Andrew Mitrovica

White House, Congress and much of a war-giddy press.

The fiction that Saddam Hussein had

The lie at the core of America’s phantom democracy was laid bare by the fabrications concocted and repeated with obdurate certainty by President George W Bush and evangelical company, including the entire US establishment in the White House, Congress and much of a war-giddy press. The fiction that Saddam Hussein had stockpiled and was poised to unleash weapons of mass destruction led to a calamitous invasion in 2003 of Iraq that disfigured a sovereign country and killed countless innocents. Rather than heeding the warnings, the gilded few dismissed the demonstrations of dissent by the enlightened many as the act of quislings who preferred to coddle a tyrant rather than confront him. The so-called “checks and balances” designed, in theory, to thwart Bush’s catastrophic misadventure were, instead, marshalled to quash defiance – big and small – and empower a rogue regime bent on “regime change” elsewhere. Bush and several unrepentant co-architects of this century’s signature geopolitical debacle have prospered or are enjoying comfortable retirements. Meanwhile, the scores of Americans in uniform who did the invading, fighting, maiming, killing and dying have been largely forgotten. Once again, the many were disposed of or destroyed – in mind, body, and spirit – to satisfy the imperial aims of the few.

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Yet, the violences and injustices of detention are constantly resisted.

Around the world, protests, strikes, riots, and jailbreaks by detained people have been met with solidarity by civil rights campaigners, grassroots activists, faith groups, community organisers, lawyers, families and friends.

Conditions, abuses, judgements, and laws have been challenged, raids resisted, bonds posted, sanctuary policies passed, border enforcement agencies defunded, and local networks built to shut down detention sites and support people at risk of detention.

This resistance and solidarity was demonstrated in a 23-day protest led by men incarcerated in the Manus Island detention centre, following the announcement of its closure in 2017, when Papua New Guinea ruled it unconstitutional. Despite intimidation by security forces intensifying and their access to food, water, and electricity being cut off, the men peacefully fought for freedom in place of re-incarceration in new sites, drawing on their ties to local Manusian communities and Australian advocates, while communicating their plight to an international audience.

The documented treatment of those held in offshore sites speaks to an authoritarianism in migration governance, one which promises to affect citizens and noncitizens alike. As Behrouz Boochani, poet, journalist, and former prisoner of Australia’s immigration detention centre in Manus, describes in his book Freedom, Only Freedom: “The refugees have identified and exposed the face of an emerging twenty-first-century dictatorship and fascism, a dictatorship and fascism that will one day creep into Australian society and into people’s homes like a cancer.”

In the US, as elsewhere, grassroots coalitions between people with lived experience of detention and abolitionist organisers built over decades of struggle formed the basis of resistance under Trump 1.0, and they will do so again.

For it is those bearing the brunt of the carceral state’s attacks – and not the corporate liberalism of mainstream “left-wing” parties – that pose the strongest opposition and alternative to our present authoritarian moment.

— Aljazeera

Saudi Arabia’s role in global diplomacy and sustainable peace

SAUDI Arabia’s approach to its political challenges transcends mere problem-solving, it focuses on what I refer to as “zeroing in on severed relations.” The essence of effective politics lies in the art of the possible, which necessitates communication even with adversaries. This principle is at the core of international relations, especially in an increasingly interconnected world where misunderstandings can escalate into conflicts. Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, embodies this philosophy, demonstrating a commitment to dialogue and diplomacy rather than isolationism.

The crown prince has introduced a transformative vision for Saudi Arabia, encapsulated in the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030. This strategic blueprint aims to diversify the economy, reduce dependency on oil and position the Kingdom as a global hub for investment and innovation. By focusing on these goals, Saudi Arabia has altered the dynamics of regional politics through strategic investments, innovative projects and initiatives that position the nation as a reliable ally and a sought-after partner. This shift is not merely about addressing existing challenges, but also about redefining the future landscape of the Middle East and beyond.

One of the most significant aspects of this transformation is the emphasis on building bridges through communication. The notion of zeroing in on severed relations means actively working to restore and improve ties with various nations, including those previously deemed adversaries. The crown prince has taken bold steps to engage with nations across the globe, fostering relationships that were once strained. This proactive approach is crucial in a landscape where geopolitical tensions can threaten regional stability.

Central to this diplomatic strategy is the understanding that politics often involves negotiating with opponents rather than allies. Effective communication is vital for dispelling confusion, averting conflict and mitigating the impacts of crises. This reflects a rational strategy, moving beyond simplistic notions of foreign policy resets or problem elimination. Instead, Saudi Arabia recognizes that the complexities of international relations

Dr. Turki Faisal Al-Rasheed

require a nuanced approach that prioritizes dialogue and compromise.

Through its various initiatives, especially internal reforms and strategic external positioning, Saudi Arabia has achieved notable success, reaping political, economic and social rewards. The Kingdom has invested heavily in sectors such as tourism, entertainment and technology, aiming to create a more vibrant and diversified economy. These efforts have not only attracted foreign investment but also increased the Kingdom’s global visibility and influence. This week’s negotiations involving US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Saudi Arabia further underscore this momentum and the Kingdom’s role as a mediator in international affairs.

In the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, it is crucial to explore diplomatic solutions that prioritize peace over escalation. The proposed summit between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, alongside the crown prince, represents a pivotal moment in reshaping international diplomacy and emphasizes the necessity of dialogue in conflict resolution. This summit will serve as a platform for addressing pressing global issues and fostering collaboration among major world powers.

However, the geopolitical landscape is fraught with challenges. The current US administration has shifted the dynamics of transatlantic relations, creating tensions among European leaders, who feel targeted and undermined. This has led to a growing sense of fragmentation within the West, as the unity that once characterized transatlantic relations seems to be eroding. The absence of sustainable development and the merger of democracy with capitalism often serve only the interests of a privileged few, exacerbating wealth inequality and contributing to global instability.

The issues of wealth distribution and sustainable development are particularly pressing in today’s world. The amalgamation of democracy and capitalism has often resulted in policies that favor the top 1 percent of the population, leading to a concentration of wealth and power. This dynamic not only hampers social progress but also fuels discontent and unrest,

creating fertile ground for conflict. The global community must recognize that addressing these disparities is essential for achieving lasting peace and stability.

Ibn Khaldun’s insights into the decline of states are especially pertinent today, as we observe a weakening of governmental power across Western nations. This decline can be attributed to the intertwining of democracy and capitalism, leading to diminished authority and a reduced military presence. As governments struggle to maintain control and legitimacy, the potential for instability increases, impacting not just individual nations but the global order as a whole.

As the world transitions toward a multipolar order, it is essential to consider three critical dynamics: the existing power structures, often fueled by the US military-industrial complex, which can exacerbate tensions; initiatives aimed at economic sustainability, with Saudi Arabia emerging as a leader; and the rise of new global actors, such as China and Russia, advocating for a world that challenges US hegemony. These dynamics are shaping a new geopolitical reality in which traditional alliances are being redefined and new partnerships are emerging.

The Western world is grappling with a multitude of causes, theories and a common fear of collapse, as it anticipates a world undergoing transformative changes that cannot occur without significant consequences. The rise of populism, growing nationalism and a general distrust of established institutions are all contributing to a climate of uncertainty. In this context, Saudi Arabia’s commitment to diplomacy and sustainable development becomes increasingly vital.

By acknowledging these factors and fostering collaboration, we can strive toward a just and sustainable peace that benefits future generations in the region and beyond.

The path forward will not be easy, but through open dialogue, mutual understanding and a commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict, we can work toward a more stable and prosperous world. Saudi Arabia’s evolving role in global diplomacy is a testament to the power of engagement and the potential for positive change in an increasingly complex international landscape.

The reasons why America has abandoned democracy

THIS is Donald Trump’s latest lie: He is a student of history. A few days ago, an emboldened US president shared this cryptic message with his gullible followers and, by depressing extension, a world already exhausted only weeks after his jarring return to the Oval Office.

“He who saves his Country does not violate any law,” Trump posted on X.

The quote’s provenance is unclear. But it resembles one attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte, by way of actor Rod Steiger who portrayed the messianic, self-appointed emperor of the French in the 1970 film, Waterloo.

Since Trump does not read books and likely avoids watching movies where he hasn’t made a forgettable cameo, I suspect that co-president Elon Musk or some other sycophant whispered the pithy saying into his tin ear.

Napoleon’s admonition would, of course, be attractive to a strutting autocrat like Trump who is convinced that by divine right and intervention he, as president, is immune from prosecution and the law’s restraints.

Still, Trump ought to have reached for French King Louis XIV’s infamous declaration –

“L’État, c’est moi” (The state, it is me) – better to describe his naked effort to erase even the, by now, performative features of America’s atrophied “democracy”.

With his blizzard of chaotic words and deeds, Trump has made it plain that he never intended to abide by the oath to “preserve, protect and defend” the US Constitution or entertain the other two equal branches of government – Congress and the courts – that he treats with derision and contempt.

Trump is governing as he always wanted to govern – more potentate than president – doing as he pleases, when he pleases, free of fear and uninhibited by the damaging consequences.

If public opinion polls are a reliable measure, most Americans appear happy to discard the frayed remnants of the “democratic experiment” in the misguided belief that Trump – the swaggering strongman – will deliver them and their angry, ailing home from real or imagined foreign and domestic enemies.

The persistent question is why so many Americans have thrown in their lot – with a missionary fervour – behind a blustering charlatan who considers the egalitarian ideals that trig-

gered a revolution and the birth of a republic as irritating, anachronistic nuisances.

I believe that most Americans have abandoned democracy because democracy has abandoned most Americans.

The pervasive patriotic symbols – the billowing-in-the-breeze stars and stripes, the hand-on-heart pledge of allegiance, the sometimes-soaring renditions of the Star-Spangled Banner – can no longer sustain the stubborn myth of America that the gilded few serve at the behest and in the interests of the less fortunate many.

By my count there were at least four precipitating events that, combined, exposed finally this calculated pantomime and made, perhaps, Trump’s emergence as America’s defining political, if not cultural, force inevitable by prompting millions of Americans, including a good share of thoughtful citizens, to sour on the supposed profits and promise of democracy.

The lie at the core of America’s phantom democracy was laid bare by the fabrications concocted and repeated with obdurate certainty by President George W Bush and evangelical company, including the entire US establishment in the

who preferred to coddle a tyrant rather than confront him.

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The so-called “checks and balances” designed, in theory, to thwart Bush’s catastrophic misadventure were, instead, marshalled to quash defiance – big and small – and empower a rogue regime bent on “regime change” elsewhere. Bush and several unrepentant co-architects of this century’s signature geopolitical debacle have prospered or are enjoying comfortable retirements. Meanwhile, the scores of Americans in uniform who did the invading, fighting, maiming, killing and dying have been largely forgotten. Once again, the many were disposed of or destroyed – in mind, body, and spirit – to satisfy the imperial aims of the few.

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The strained compact between the governed and the governors buckled further in the wake of a ferocious hurricane that struck vulnerable New Orleans in 2005.

The terrifying scope of Hurricane Katrina overwhelmed a city and the levies that were meant to protect it.

The flooding swallowed homes and the livelihoods of mostly poor people who sought refuge on rooftops. There were more than 1,400 deaths. Amid the epochal destruction, the living were obliged to fend for themselves in desperate search of shelter, food, and water.

President Bush praised his flailing government’s incompetent response as he hovered far above the apocalyptic scenes in a helicopter – an indelible image of a smug, out-of-touch commander-in-chief who had left forlorn Americans stranded, in more ways than one.

By way of instructive contrast, Bush rushed in

2008 to the rescue of the profit-by-any-means-necessary bankers on Wall Street and beyond who engineered, in effect, a nationwide Ponzi scheme that triggered the near-collapse of America’s greed-fuelled economy built on a sandy foundation known as the sub-prime-mortgage (racket) crisis.

When the enormous bill came due, Americans paid in full to staunch the metastasizing contagion that threatened the whole, decrepit house of cards.

All told, besieged taxpayers bankrolled \$7.7 trillion in “emergency loans” to save a host of teetering banks from foreclosure while they struggled to stave off predatory creditors and make meagre ends meet during the “Great Recession” that lasted for two arduous years.

Bush, a lifelong member of the gilded few, confirmed that his job was to protect his dear friends and enablers whatever the burden or cost the many were expected to endure or assume.

That shining, eloquent avatar of the resurgent Democratic Party, Barack Obama, capitalised on his humble roots to convince working- and middle-class Americans from coast to beleaguered coast that, unlike his

craven, silver-spooned predecessor, he was the “everyman” they were yearning for.

Alas, Obama understood that like Bush, his principal task was to ingratiate, not alienate, the prosperous powers-that-be who made him president.

Obama’s trite, self-serving clarion call, “Yes, we can,” was a cynical ruse meant to dupe Americans into believing that he was an ardent ally of the “we” and not the mendacious magnates.

The practised facade dropped when it became apparent that the Obama administration refused to pursue seriously, let alone charge, any of the criminals-in-custom-tailored-suits responsible for the systemic fraud that produced such loss, heartache, and suffering among working- and middle-class Americans.

Obama’s shameful failure was proof of America’s two-tiered “justice system” that condemned the destitute and insulated the rich.

In this contemptuous context, it’s only mildly surprising that milked and manipulated Americans have sought salvation from a demagogue who offers easy, instant answers to hard, ornery problems.

Disappointment is sure to follow.



KP CM launches Islamic Banking at Bank of Khyber



FP Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has launched Islamic banking at the Bank of Khyber, Peshawar. By December 2026, the Bank of Khyber will be fully converted to Islamic banking. In this regard, a ceremony was held on Wednesday at the Bank of Khyber Headquarters in Peshawar,

where Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur attended as the chief guest. Advisor to Chief Minister for Finance Muzammil Aslam, Additional Chief Secretary for Planning and Development, Ikramullah Khan, Secretary Finance, Aamir Sultan Tareen, and others were also present at the event. During the ceremony, a new service called "KorPay" was also launched to facili-

tate overseas Pakistanis in sending remittances through the Bank of Khyber. Additionally, TV commercials were introduced for branding the bank's services. Addressing the event, the Chief Minister congratulated the BoK's administration on the launch of Islamic banking and stated, "I am extremely pleased that the Bank of Khyber is transitioning towards Islamic banking. This bank is an important institution of the province, gaining recognition and making progress." He further added that the introduction of new initiatives at the bank would provide improved services to the public. The Chief Minister emphasized that, in line with the vision of the founding chairman, the province is moving towards financial independence. He stated that strengthening institutions and increasing rev-

enue is a priority for the government. He urged overseas Pakistanis to send money to their families through the Bank of Khyber, highlighting the launch of the "KorPay" service, which aims to provide maximum convenience to expatriates. The Chief Minister also mentioned that the provincial government, in collaboration with the Bank of Khyber, is running multiple initiatives, including the Solar Scheme, Ehsaas Rozgar Program, and Ehsaas Nojawan Program, among others. He directed the bank's management to provide maximum support to industrialists setting up businesses in the province. The provincial government will offer incentives to promote investment, encouraging more investors to contribute to the region's economic growth, he added.

PFC team returns after Oman tour

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) returned Pakistan on Wednesday after concluding a highly successful 10-day business tour of Oman.

Leader of the delegation CEO PFC, Mian Kashif Ashfaq informed here that the visit was aimed to further strengthen bilateral trade ties and explore new opportunities for collaboration in the furniture and interior design sectors.

During their stay, the delegation actively participated in the 11th IDF Oman Exhibition, a prestigious event showcasing the latest trends and innovations in the furniture industry.

The PFC's participation not only highlighted Pakistan's craftsmanship and high-quality furniture but also provided a platform to network with international buyers, investors and industry leaders.

The delegation engaged in numerous business meetings, signed several memorandums of understanding (MoUs), and explored potential joint ventures with Omani counterparts.

He expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the tour, stating that it marked a significant step toward enhancing Pakistan's presence in the global furniture market.

He emphasized the importance of such initiatives in promoting Pakistan's soft image and fostering economic growth through international trade.

Mian Kashif said that Pakistan Ambassador to Oman, Naveed Safdar Bokhari played a key role in arranging meetings with Omani counterparts and facilitated identifying the hidden export markets and collaboration in joint ventures in diversifying fields.

Ambassador also hosted several luncheons and dinners to welcome visiting Pak delegates.

Cement exports increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of cement witnessed an increase of 24.85 percent during the first seven months of the fiscal year 2024-25, as against the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

The cement exports from the country were recorded at US \$188.091 million during July-January (2024-25) against the exports of US \$150.653 million during July-January (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the cement export also rose by 35.34 percent from 3,896,244 metric tons to 5,273,028 metric tons, the data revealed.

Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the cement exports witnessed an increase of 40 percent during the month of January 2025 as compared to the same month of last year.

The exports of cement from the country during January 2025 were recorded at US \$20.619 million against the exports of US \$14.728 million in January 2024.

CEO PSX sees uptick in foreign investments

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) Farrukh H. Sabzwari on Wednesday expressed optimism about Pakistan's economic prospects on Wednesday, predicting a substantial increase in foreign investments in 2025, driven by the government's effective economic policies and the PSX's efforts to enhance market infrastructure.

Sabzwari attributed this positive forecast to the government's effective policies, which have led to a decline in the current account deficit, an increase in remittances and micro-economic stability.

"The government's efforts to stabilize the econ-

omy are paying off, and we are seeing a significant improvement in investor sentiment," he said.

The CEO emphasized that the PSX has taken various initiatives to attract foreign investors, including the introduction of new financial products and the improvement of trading infrastructure.

"We are committed to providing a conducive environment for investors to participate in the Pakistani capital market," Sabzwari added.

Sabzwari also highlighted the potential for investment in various sectors, including technology, renewable energy, and infrastructure development. "Pakistan offers a unique

opportunity for investors to tap into a growing market with a large and young population," he said.

Sabzwari expects this trend to continue in 2025, driven by the government's economic reforms and the PSX's efforts to improve market infrastructure.

Overall, Sabzwari's positive outlook on foreign investments in Pakistan is a welcome development for the country's economy, which has faced significant challenges in recent years.

As the PSX continues to work towards creating a favorable investment environment, Pakistan is likely to attract more foreign investment in the coming year, he concluded.

Meezan Bank, TKBB forge strategic partnership



FP Report

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step towards fostering international collaboration in Islamic finance, Meezan Bank, Pakistan's leading Islamic bank, and the Participation Banks Association of Türkiye, or Türkiye Katılım Bankaları Birliği (TKBB) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to drive innovation, knowledge sharing, and capacity building in the sector.

The MoU was exchanged during the official state visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Pakistan, in a high-level ceremony at the Prime Minister's House in Islamabad. The exchange was witnessed by Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif, President Erdogan and senior delegates from both nations.

The agreement was executed by Ahmed Ali Sid-

diqui - Group Head Shariah Compliance at Meezan Bank, and Ismail Vural - Secretary General of TKBB. This landmark partnership seeks to boost cross-border cooperation in Islamic banking by focusing on three key areas: capacity building, knowledge exchange, and operational excellence. The two organizations agreed to introduce: joint training programs related to Shariah governance, Sukuk Structuring and regulatory compliance, collaborative platforms for sharing expertise in the field of product development, digital transformation and fintech solution, and strategy exchanges to enhance talent and innovation.

The goal is to strengthen Islamic financial institutions, promote regulatory harmonization, and expand financial inclusion through innovative Shariah-compliant solutions.

Ismail Vural - Secretary General, TKBB said, "We are pleased to cooperate under this MoU with Meezan Bank, which has made significant contributions to the development of the Islamic Finance industry on a local and international scale with its long-standing history and prior activities. Collaboration in the areas of training, capacity building and technical expertise is essential for ensuring the healthy and sustainable growth of the sector."

Ahmed Ali Siddiqui - GH Shariah Compliance, Meezan Bank added, "The MoU signing between Meezan Bank and TKBB is a significant milestone in promoting Islamic Finance between both countries. By leveraging their collective expertise, both institutions aim to promote ethical banking practices, drive financial inclusion, and support the global growth of Islamic finance."

POL imports increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of overall petroleum group increased by 1.35 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The total imports of the petroleum group during July-January (2024-25) stood at \$ 9,458.285 million against the imports of \$ 9,332.319 million during the same months of last year.

Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 3.69 percent, from \$ 3,621.418 million last year to \$ 3,487.933

million during the period under review year whereas the import of petroleum crude went up by 4.98 percent from \$ 2,977.671 million to \$ 3,125.918 million.

Similarly, the imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) decreased by 4.17 percent from \$ 2,298.143 million last year to \$ 2,202.415 million while the import of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) went up by 47.54 per cent in the first seven months and stood at \$641.792 million as compared to \$434.991 million in the corresponding period in 2023-24.

The import of all other petroleum products increased from \$0.096 million last year to \$0.227 mil-

lion during the current year, an increase of 136.76 percent.

Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the petroleum group imports witnessed an increase of 3.45 percent during the month of January 2025 as compared to the same month of last year. The imports in January 2025 were recorded at \$1,372.370 compared to imports of million to \$1,326.541 million.

On a month-on-month basis, the petroleum imports into the country however decreased by 12.31 percent during January 2025, as compared to the imports of \$ 1,565.019 million in December 2024.



JORDAN: Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja attending Ministerial gathering of 4th Digital Cooperation Organization General Assembly.

3rd Sundar Industrial Expo 2025 opens

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Industrial Estates Development and Management Company (PIEDMC) Chairman Javed Iqbal inaugurated the 3rd Sundar Industrial Expo 2025 here on Wednesday.

More than 300 national and multinational companies are presenting their products at the Sundar Industrial Expo.

The event was also attended by Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Mian Abuzar Shad, NAB DG Muhammad Ahtaram Dar, Syed Nabeel Hashmi, Mohsin Syed, Shehzad Azam Khan, Sajid Saleem Minhas, Hafiz Mian Muhammad Nauman and a large number of Industrialists. PIEDMC Chairman and other dignitaries planted saplings under the green estate policy; visited different stalls; and encouraged the industrialists who set up the stalls.

On this occasion, the Chairman Javed Iqbal said that companies displaying their products at stalls in the expo would not only get an opportunity to promote their business but also get help in increasing their business networking. He said that next year this expo would be organized according to international standards, while another similar expos would be organized in Quaid-i-Azam Industrial Estate Kot Lakhpat and Multan Industrial Estate.

Global Fintech investments in 2024 down to 7-year low

ISTANBUL (APP): Global fintech investments dipped to a seven-year low of \$95.6 billion in 2024, according to KPMG's Pulse of Fintech report released Wednesday.

Total deals in the fintech sector last year also amounted to 4,639, it said. "Ongoing macroeconomic challenges, geopolitical conflicts and tensions, and a number of high-profile elections in major jurisdictions around the world kept the level of uncertainty very high, leading to a pullback in fintech investment particularly on the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) and private equity (PE) fronts," it said.

The Americas accounted for the largest share of deals with 2,267 totaling \$63.8 billion. Of these investments, the lion's share - \$50.7 billion and 1,836 deals - took place in the US. The Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) region attracted \$20.3 billion with 1,465 deals, and the Asia-Pacific region attracted \$11.4 billion with 896 deals.

Total global investment fell from \$51.7 billion to \$43.9 billion between the first and second halves of the year. M&A deal value and venture capital investment declined from \$28.1 billion to \$21.6 billion and \$22.5 billion to \$20.9 billion, respectively.

On the other hand, global private equity investments, which declined to \$17.2 billion in 2023, rose to \$31 billion in 2024.

The biggest private equity transaction of the year was the \$12.5 billion sale of Worldpay in the first half, while in the second half of 2024, there were notable large transactions in all regions.

Pak-Russia freight train to start soon

LAHORE (APP): Sufiyan Sarfaraz Dogar, Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Railways Freight, said on Wednesday that Pakistan-Russia international freight train service is expected to commence its operations by March 15, 2025. The initiative aims to boost regional trade with Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia.

He also sought containerized cargo commitments from the whole business community in general and members of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) in particular for the upcoming run. He emphasized the significant potential for enhancing trade between Pakistan, Russia and transit countries including Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan.

He shared these details during his visit to APTMA office here. APTMA Chairman Kamran Arshad, former chairman Tariq Mehmood, Secretary General Raza Baqir, and senior APTMA members were also present.

The CEO added that freight service would operate from Qasim International Container Terminal and Pakistan International Container Terminal, offering container capacity options of 22 tonnes (TEU) and 44 tonnes (FEU).

He further explained that

this rail link marks a significant step forward in regional trade infrastructure. The Taftan station in Pakistan would serve as the key entry point for goods moving along this international corridor. The issues related to the deployment of customs officials at the Taftan entry point have been almost resolved.

He also informed APTMA members that Russia would be able to export oil, natural gas, steel and industrial goods directly to Pakistan. In return, Pakistani exporters would gain improved access to Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Russian markets for textiles, food products and agricultural goods, including rice, wheat, and cotton.

He mentioned that Pakistan and Russia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Railways sector during the 27th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) in June 2024.

This agreement laid the groundwork for this ambitious project, which promises to establish a more efficient and cost-effective trade route connecting South Asia with Central Asia and Russia.

Mehmood Lakho, Executive Director of Pakistan Railways Freight,

assured APTMA members of full facilitation regarding logistics, freight and cargo transportation.

In his remarks, APTMA Chairman Kamran Arshad highlighted the strengths and potential of Pakistan's textile industry. He noted that the textile sector is on an upward trajectory, with an ambitious export target of USD 50 billion within five years. He thanked the government for creating an enabling environment for the growth of the textile industry, which has led to increased exports and valuable foreign exchange earnings for the country.

He proposed to develop adequate infrastructure and value-added services to facilitate trade. He recommended the automation of freight handling and cargo delivery to reduce costs and dwell time, the establishment of dry ports along the route to further reduce costs, a Barter Trade Agreement between Pakistan and Russia on the pattern of the Pak-Iran Barter Trade Agreement, and the strengthening of banking channels with Russia.

Kamran Arshad further resolved to extend full cooperation from APTMA to Pakistan Railways Freight for the new rail service that could revolutionize trade dynamics in the region.

HSBC targets \$1.5b in annual cost savings

HONG KONG (APP): Banking giant HSBC said Wednesday that CEO Georges Elhedery's plan since October to simplify the company's structure and geographic setup will yield \$1.5 billion in annual cost savings by the end of 2026.

Elhedery's plan for a "simpler, more dynamic, and agile organisation" has shaken up Europe's largest bank, whose shares in Hong Kong have rallied to an 11-year high.

"Since becoming CEO, I have focused on simplifying how we operate and injected energy and intent into the way we deliver our strategy," Elhedery said in an earnings statement on Wednesday.

"Our strong 2024 performance provides firm financial foundations upon which to build for the future."

The firm said pre-tax profit rose six percent to \$32.3 billion in 2024, while profit attributable to shareholders edged up two percent to \$22.9 billion.

The London-headquartered lender also announced a share buy-back of up to \$2 billion to be completed

by the time it announced this year's first-quarter results.

HSBC generates most of its revenue in Asia and has spent several years pivoting to the region, vowing to develop its wealth business and target fast-growing markets.

Shortly after Elhedery became CEO, the lender said it would simplify its structure and split into four parts: Hong Kong, UK, "corporate and institutional banking" plus "international wealth and premier banking". The bank will also streamline its geographical set-up by bringing together its Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions, while uniting its European and US operations.

The "cost target includes the impact of simplification-related saves associated with our announced reorganisation, which aims to generate approximately \$0.3 billion of cost reductions in 2025, with a commitment to an annualised reduction of \$1.5 billion in our cost base expected by the end of 2026", it said Wednesday.

HSBC added that it plans to incur costs of \$1.8

billion over 2025 and 2026 to deliver the reductions.

Elhedery has moved to trim a layer of senior bankers, with hundreds of managers reportedly told to reapply for their jobs.

Cuts are under way in HSBC's markets division and wider layoffs at its investment bank will start as early as this week, Bloomberg News reported.

The lender said last month it would wind down parts of its investment banking operations in Europe, the United Kingdom and the Americas.

Elhedery said on Wednesday that his initiatives included "a comprehensive transformation of (HSBC) operations, modernising our infrastructure, and investing in technology such as AI, generative AI, data and analytics".

The lender considers both Britain and Hong Kong its "home markets", though the balancing act has come under pressure as relations sour between China and the West.

Elhedery's predecessor Noel Quinn in 2023 fended off a call for HSBC to spin off its Asia assets.

Business team meets with Sri Lankan minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level Pakistani business delegation, led by Consul General of Sri Lanka, Yasin Joyia, met with Sri Lanka's Minister of Trade, Commerce & Food Security, Wasantha Samarasinghe, at the Parliament House in Sri Lanka, information shared by Consul General Lahore office.

The meeting aimed to strengthen trade relations,

explore business opportunities, and enhance investment partnerships between the two nations, particularly in the food and commerce sectors.

The delegation included prominent business leaders, such as Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Anjum, CEO of Six-B Food Industries Pakistan, and Muhammad Gulzar Faisal Sheikh, Director of Six-B Food Industries. Mr. A.M. Jafer, President of

the Chamber of Tourism and Industry, also attended the meeting.

This meeting marks a significant step towards fostering economic collaboration and mutual growth between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The two countries have a long-standing trade relationship, with Pakistan being Sri Lanka's second-largest trading partner in the SAARC region.



In brief

Cycling c'ship begins in capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 9th Al Baraka Bank National Road Cycling Championship kicked off on Wednesday, running from February 20 to 23, 2025 in Capital. According to a press released issued by PCF, this exciting event brought together top cyclists from across Pakistan to compete in a series of road races. Organized by the Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF) in partnership with Al Baraka Bank, the championship aimed to promote competitive cycling and highlight the skills of the nation's best riders. Races would take place along Jinnah Avenue, Iran Avenue and at the Pakistan Sports Board testing grounds, challenging participants' endurance, speed and strategy. Cyclists from various affiliated units of the PCF would participate in different race categories, showcasing their talent on a national stage. The prize distribution ceremony is set to be held at the Pakistan Sports Board. Syed Azhar Ali Shah, President of the PCF, expressed enthusiasm for the event, stating, "This championship is a significant step in promoting road cycling in Pakistan. We are excited to witness the talent and dedication of our cyclists and hope to see more young riders take up the sport in the future."

FJWU athletes receive bronze medals

RAWALPINDI (APP):The talented athletes of Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi, made their mark at the All Pakistan HEC Intervarsity Women Judo Championship 2024-25, held at Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam. According to the details, the FJWU judo team secured three Bronze Medals in their respective weight categories, bringing pride to their university and the city. Khadija Jasim received the Bronze Medal in the 52 kg category, Bakhtawar Umer and Roqiqa Zaheer received Bronze Medals in 70 kg and 44 kg categories respectively. The championship, organized under the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, saw participation from universities across the country, with athletes competing at the highest level of collegiate sports.The athletes' remarkable achievements were further recognized by HEC by awarding them cash prizes. Expressing her pride in the team, Vice Chancellor Dr. Bushra Mirza congratulated the medalists and emphasized the university's commitment to promoting women's participation in sports. She encouraged young athletes to take inspiration from these champions and strive for greater success. The FJWU Sports Department also lauded the players' dedication and assured continued support for the development of sports at the university.

Sabalenko 'all over the place' in Dubai exit

DUBAI (AFP): Aryna Sabalenka blamed a lack of hunger for her last-16 exit in Dubai at the hands of world number 38 Clara Tauson on Wednesday, insisting she was kind of all over the place". The world number one has won just one of the three matches she contested during this Middle East swing, losing her opener in Doha last week and falling to Tauson 6-3, 6-2 in her second match in Dubai. After a strong start to the 2025 season, winning the title in Brisbane and reaching a third consecutive Australian Open final, Sabalenka has lost her momentum with three losses from her last four matches.

Latham and Young hand New Zealand triumph in CT opener

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Tom Latham and Will Young smashed centuries to ensure New Zealand's 60-run triumph over hosts Pakistan in the opening fixture of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 here at the National Stadium, Karachi on Wednesday night.

After being asked bat first, New Zealand posted 320-5 in the allotted 50 overs and restricted Pakistan to 260 all out in 47.2 overs with Will O'Rourke (3-47), Mitchell Santner (3-66) and Matt Henry (2-25) sharing eight wickets among them.

Opening batter Young, hit 12 fours and one six, faced 113 balls for his 107 runs and also shared a valuable 118-run stand for the fourth wicket with fellow centurion Latham. The duo came together when New Zealand had lost three scalps for 73 runs in 16.2 overs.

Player of the match Latham remained unbeaten in his 118-run knock off 104 balls. Batting at No.5, the left hander struck 10 fours and three sixes in his 8th One-Day International century.

Young, who smashed

his fourth ODI century, departed in the 38th over before Glenn Phillips joined forces with Latham for a 125-run fifth-wicket stand. Phillips raced his way to a 39-ball 61 smashing three fours and four sixes before falling in the last over.

New Zealand ransacked 113 runs in the last 10 overs losing one wicket. For Pakistan Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf picked up two wickets each.

In turn, Pakistan lost Saud Shakeel and Mohammad Rizwan early as they finished the first powerplay with 22-2 on the board. Fakhar Zaman, who came in at No.4 due to a muscular sprain sustained earlier while fielding, was castled by Michael Bracewell in the 21st over with 69 runs on the board.

Babar Azam (64, 90b, 6x4s, 1x6) and Salman Ali Agha stitched a 59-ball 58-run stand before New Zealand struck thrice in a space of four over to leave Pakistan reeling at 153-6 in 34 overs.

Khushdil Shah, batting at No.7, fought back with

10 fours and one six in his 49-ball 69 but in vain as O'Rourke removed him 44th over. Haris Rauf (19, 11b, 3x6s), Shaheen Shah Afridi (14, 13b, 1x6) and Naseem Shah (13, 15b, 1x6) contributed with a handful of boundaries but in vain as the hosts fell 60 runs short.

Pakistan will play their next Group A match against India at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday, 23 February. The first ball is expected to be bowled at 2pm PKT.

Scores in brief New Zealand beat Pakistan by 60 runs at the National Stadium, Karachi

New Zealand 320-5, 50 overs (Tom Latham 118 not out, Will Young 107, Glenn Phillips 61; Naseem Shah 2-63, Haris Rauf 2-83)

Pakistan 260 all out, 47.2 overs (Khushdil Shah 69, Babar Azam 64, Salman Ali Agha 42, Fakhar Zaman 24; Will O'Rourke 3-47, Mitchell Santner 3-66, Matt Henry 2-25)

Player of the match – Tom Latham (New Zealand).



KARACHI: Mitchell Santner led from the front with the ball.

PTF to promote tennis from grass root level: Aisam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) was set to promote tennis at the grass root level to strengthen the country's standing in the sport, said the President of PTF Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi on Wednesday.

In an exclusive chat with APP, the former world number eight in doubles emphasised the importance of youth development at the junior level to ensure a steady pipeline of talent for the future. "We've immense potential in tennis in Pakistan, but to produce world-class players we'll have to focus at the grassroots level," Aisam said.

"The PTF, along with key stakeholders has decided to focus on schools, academies and local clubs to identify and train budding players, enabling them to represent the country at the international level."

The tennis ace, who has been an ambassador for tennis in Pakistan for over two decades, revealed that the PTF was working on a structured approach to introduce tennis to children from a young age. "We are planning to hold more junior tournaments and training camps across different cities. The idea is to make tennis more accessible to kids from all backgrounds, not just those who can afford expensive coaching," he added.

According to Aisam, one of the key

strategies includes collaborating with schools to introduce tennis as part of their extracurricular activities.

"We need to take tennis to schools. If cricket, hockey and football can have structured school programmes, why not tennis?" he asked. One of the biggest challenges for young tennis players in Pakistan is the lack of proper facilities and coaching expertise. Aisam acknowledged this gap and said that the PTF was working on improving infrastructure and training local coaches to meet international standards.

"There are very few international-standard tennis academies in Pakistan. We need to build more courts and hire certified coaches who can groom young talent the right way," he explained. "The federation is now committed to upgrading existing facilities and setting up new tennis centres in key cities," said Aisam, who also opened the ACE Tennis Academy in 2023 with a focus on developing performance tennis nationwide.

He also underlined the need for sponsorship and corporate support, saying that without financial backing, tennis players struggle to participate in international tournaments. Aisam lauded the role of Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Yasir Pirzada as supporting tennis development initia-

tives. "We are inviting top foreign coaches to train our players and help sharpen their skills."

"Recently renowned American tennis coach Robert Davis visited us to train our players, while another American tennis expert and trainer Lalovic is in Pakistan, training our players. "We are thankful to DG PSB for encouraging and cooperating with us in this regard. "His efforts to improve sports infrastructure and provide opportunities to young athletes are commendable."

"Players need exposure to international events. We must create funding mechanisms to support young talent so they don't have to rely on personal resources to compete abroad," Aisam added. As one of Pakistan's most accomplished tennis players, the 44-year-old Aisam sees himself playing a key role in mentoring the next generation.

"Talent should never be wasted due to financial constraints. I want to ensure that every child who dreams of playing tennis gets a fair chance," he said. The tennis star also called on the government and private sector to step up and support grassroots initiatives. "Tennis is an Olympic sport and if we invest in it today, we can see Pakistan players competing at the highest level in the future. The time to act is now," he concluded.

Arsenal post £17.7m loss despite record revenues

LONDON (AFP): Arsenal lost £17.7 million in the 2023/24 season despite a return to the Champions League helping to post a club record £616.6 million (\$775 million) revenue.

The Gunners missed out narrowly to finish second to Manchester City in the Premier League and reached the quarter-finals in their first Champions League campaign since 2016/17 before bowing out to Bayern Munich.

A return to Europe's elite club competition contributed towards a £71 million rise in broadcasting revenue and £29 million

more matchday income.

Commercial income also grew significantly to £218.3 million thanks to a renewal of the club's agreement with stadium and shirt sponsor Emirates and selling naming rights to the training ground to Sobha Realty.

However, wages skyrocketed to £327.8 million from £234.8 million. The figures were an improvement on the £52.1 million loss posted in the previous 12 months.

"The club continues to be compliant with all applicable financial sustainability regulations put in place by UEFA and the Premier



League," Arsenal said in a statement. "Consecutive qualifications for the UEFA Champions League for 2024/25 for both men's and women's teams represent a positive continuation of the club's progress and we look

forward to an exciting end to the 2024/25 season."

Arsenal sit second in the Premier League, seven points behind Liverpool, with 13 games remaining and have progressed to the last 16 of the Champions League.

Game, set, hate: WTA stars reveal fears after Raducanu's Dubai shock

DUBAI (AFP): Iga Swiatek on Wednesday praised the WTA's "solid" action after a fearful Emma Raducanu broke down in tears at the sight of a "fixated" fan in Dubai while teenage sensation Mirra Andreeva admitted she regularly receives "hateful messages" whenever she loses.

The WTA said it had banned a man who "exhibited fixated behaviour" towards 2021 US Open champion Raducanu during the Briton's straight-sets defeat to Karolina Muchova on Tuesday.

Raducanu appeared to be crying as she approached the umpire's chair at 2-0 in the first set of their rain-delayed second-round match. The match was halted while the Briton spoke with the umpire, who quickly contacted tournament organisers.

The 22-year-old stood behind the official's chair as the spectator was escorted away, with Muchova rushing to comfort her before play resumed. In a statement released on Wednesday, the tour revealed that the same man who was removed from the stands had approached Raducanu in a public area earlier in the week. The WTA said the man has been "banned from all WTA events pending a threat assessment".

Swiatek, the current



world number two, believes the tour did the right thing, and acknowledges such situations can be hard to avoid, even with strict safety measures in place.

"I know the WTA banned this person from going on-site anywhere on any tournament. So I guess the reaction was pretty solid," said the five-time Grand Slam title winner on Wednesday. "I like that because it's the WTA's responsibility to keep us safe, for that environment to be safe for us. I guess with their help it's fine. But, yeah, it's hard probably to avoid these situations."

'Scary moment'

Swiatek revealed she had a close call with a fan at an event in her native Poland in the past and that players should be on alert in public settings to detect, and report, any threat as early as possible.

"We were able to avoid

one incident that might have been scary back in the day when I was hosting my own event in Poland," said the 23-year-old Swiatek. "There are fans that are kind of, I don't know, everywhere. But I'm pretty sure that they don't have any bad intentions."

"Obviously we are public persons, so we should always keep our eyes open and be ready to react if we feel uncomfortable. I'm sure it must have been tough for Emma."

Swiatek added that there are precautionary measures players can take, like delaying posting photos or videos on social media until after they've left a certain location, so members of the public wouldn't be able to track her down. Russian teenager Andreeva revealed disturbing threats she received online when she was still competing on the ITF circuit.

Hate messages from sports bettors is almost a daily occurrence for tennis players online and it's a problem no one has figured a way to eliminate so far.

Andreeva says she feels safe at tournaments and that she is always surrounded by at least three or four security guards when signing autographs at events, but admits a message she received once on social media has stuck with her.

"After every loss I think every player receives a bunch of hateful messages," revealed the 17-year-old. "I remember once when I was young, when I was 14 years old, I was playing one of my first ITF tournaments and I received a message after my loss that said: 'Look around because I'm going to find you and I'm going to cut your arms'."

"That was still the one that I remember to this day." The problem of women tennis players being harassed by mainly male fans is not new: great champions like Serena Williams, Jennifer Capriati and Martina Hingis all had stalkers while Monica Seles, in 1993, was stabbed on court. More recently, two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova was attacked and badly injured by a man with a knife in her own home in December 2016.

'Classy' Gill key for Champions Trophy: Rohit



DUBAI (AFP): India captain Rohit Sharma on Wednesday said he hopes "classy" batter Shubman Gill carries his blazing form into the Champions Trophy. Tournament favourites India begin their campaign against Bangladesh at the Dubai International Stadium on Thursday fresh from a 3-0 ODI sweep of England at home.

India then play arch-rivals Pakistan in a Sunday blockbuster. Vice-captain Gill was the player of the series against England with 259 runs including one century and two half-tens to return to form after a lean Test series in Australia.

"Gill is a very classy player, there was never a doubt about his ability in this squad," Rohit said of his deputy. "We tend to mix formats and I don't think that's the right way to judge any player. With Gill, we know the numbers are crazy, he has been superb for us in the last three-four years."

He added, "Obviously there is a reason that he has

been elevated to be the vice-captain of the team as well, hopefully he has a great tournament and it eventually will help us achieve the things that we are looking to achieve."

Focus will be on Rohit, who opens the batting with Gill, and star batsman Virat Kohli with the future of the two stalwarts being the talking point ahead of the 50-over tournament.

Both Rohit and Kohli had a poor run with the bat in India's 3-1 Test defeat in Australia but came good in the England ODIs.

The 37-year-old Rohit hit 119 in the second match and Kohli (36), who comes to bat at number three, scored 52 in the third to answer critics. Rohit said India's top-order has enough experience to post big totals.

"The key to have success in this format, your top three-four-five batsmen need to get that big score for you to post a big score eventually," said Rohit.

"So I think our top four batters are quite experienced and we know that once they are set, once they

are in, they like to get those big runs."

Shami and Kuldeep beyond numbers

The return of pace bowler Mohammed Shami has boosted the morale of the team, especially in the absence of ace quick Jasprit Bumrah, who is out with a back injury.

Shami, 34, returned to international cricket in the England white-ball series after more than a year due to a heel injury and claimed five wickets in two T20 and two ODI matches.

"All we wanted with Shami was to get back wearing the Indian colours more than anything else," said Rohit. "Whether he gets wickets or not, that was completely immaterial for us at that point. When you talk about a bowler like Shami who has done the job over the years so many times for us...it's just about getting back to their rhythm."

Indian spinner Kuldeep Yadav also made a comeback from his hernia surgery in the recent ODIs and adds to the spin-heavy bowling attack and Rohit said he "looks confident".

"The two games that he played, the numbers will not show and with certain players you don't have to look at numbers so much," Rohit said of the left-arm wrist spinner.

"And if these two guys are in form, the team looks very, very good," he added. India will play all their matches in Dubai after refusing to visit hosts Pakistan over long-standing political tensions and Rohit said the key to perform at the Dubai stadium will be to assess the pitch "as quickly as possible".



In brief

Man jailed for life for raping

RAWALPINDI (APP): The criminal who raped his 12-year-old niece has been sentenced by the court to life imprisonment. According to the details, the criminal Shoaib had raped his niece in the absence of his family. The case of the incident was registered in November 2023 at Saddar Wah Police Station. In view of the solid evidence and effective prosecution of the case, they sentenced the criminal and also imposed a fine of Rs. 50,000.0 CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani, while appreciating the investigation team for getting the criminal to the punishment has directed to further enhance vigilance on such menace. "Violence against women and children is intolerable, the punishment of the criminal is a victory of justice", said CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani.

Police nab 15 outlaws

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 15 outlaws involved in various criminal activities over the last 24 hours and recovered weapons and drugs from their possession, on Wednesday. A police spokesperson told APP that the Islamabad Police Secretariat, Humak, Nilore, Bhara Kahu, Golra, Khanna, Pulhgran, Shahzad Town, and Bani Gala police teams took legal action against accused involved in possessing illegal weapons, and drug peddling activities. He said the police team also arrested 15 accused and recovered 5596 grams heroin, 5175 grams hashish, 32 grams ice and four pistols with ammunition from their possession. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operation Muhammad Shoaib Khan said that the Islamabad 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.

IGP visits ITP Headquarters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Wednesday visited the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) Headquarters to review its functioning and ongoing operations. An official told APP that Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (retd) Syed Zeeshan Haider and other senior police officers were also present during the visit. CTO Zeeshan briefed IG Rizvi on the ITP's systems and procedures, the ongoing crackdown against traffic law violators, efforts to ensure smooth traffic flow in the federal capital, manpower shortages, and various past and ongoing projects. He also provided details about special checkpoints set up to regulate traffic and reduce accidents. During the visit, IG Rizvi emphasized that action against traffic law violators should be intensified without discrimination. He directed that the ITP force be rationalized, effective measures be implemented during peak traffic hours, and improvements be made in online e-challans, digital licenses, learner permits, and renewals. He further instructed that additional steps be taken to ensure smooth traffic flow in the city and that work on approved projects be expedited. IG Rizvi also recommended new measures to facilitate citizens visiting the traffic office for license issuance. "Our goal is to protect the lives and property of citizens while ensuring smooth traffic flow," he stated. Efforts will continue to uphold the rule of law and maintain uninterrupted traffic movement in the federal capital, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Acting Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan in a meeting with Ambassador Of Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Kistafin at Parliament House. —APP Photo

Pakistan committed to fostering regional peace through APA, SCO, ECO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Wednesday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting regional peace, economic connectivity, and sustainable development through active engagement in multilateral forums such as the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

While addressing the plenary session of the APA in Baku, Azerbaijan, he said that peace, democracy, human rights, and sustainable development are shared ideals. He highlighted that the APA serves as a vital platform for pursuing these common goals, transforming it into a true institutional voice of the Asian Century.

The Chairman said that global landscape continues to evolve and Asia remains at the center of geo-economic transformation, security concerns, and geopolitical realignments. Gilani said that parliamentary diplomacy serves as a bridge that connects diverse nations and political systems in pursuit of common interests. "It enables us to address pressing regional issues and chal-

lenges, including economic integration, trade facilitation, climate change, terrorism and cybercrime" he said.

He observed that enhanced cultural exchanges, educational collaborations, and interfaith dialogues can strengthen understanding, solidarity and regional harmony. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Gilani said, remains central to strengthening regional infrastructure and economic integration. He informed that counterterrorism, intelligence-sharing, and regional peace initiatives are key priorities. "Pakistan leads regional sustainability efforts through afforestation programs, disaster resilience strategies, and transnational energy projects", Leader of Pakistan and Parliamentary delegation observed.

He said that parliamentary cooperation is essential in addressing climate change, water security, and clean energy transitions. He also advocated for robust cybersecurity frameworks to protect regional economies and societies. He said that APA provides us with an invaluable opportunity to establish legal frameworks, build consensus on regional policies, and undertake con-

structive dialogue that transcends political differences.

He called for maximizing the impact of parliamentary engagement and developing structured mechanisms within APA to enhance legislative collaboration and policy alignment, bridge gaps and create consensus on pressing regional issues.

A stronger Asia requires inclusive governance, the Chairman said, adding, "We must actively promote the participation of women and young legislators in diplomatic forums, ensuring diverse perspectives in decision-making. He also extended complete support to the Sultanate of Oman's request for full membership in APA and also endorsed Belarus's request for observer status to foster inclusive parliamentary engagement. He hoped that this 15th APA Plenary meeting would help synthesize mutually agreeable and acceptable solutions to all issues placed on its agenda.

He acknowledged and commended Azerbaijan for remarkable stewardship of APA during its Presidency and extended gratitude to hosts on the exceptional hospitality and excellent arrangements in organizing important gathering.

Romina Alam launches tree plantation drive

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam launched tree plantation drive at the Islamabad Model College for Boys, F-8/4, Islamabad on Wednesday as a part of Pakistan's ongoing efforts to address the growing challenges of climate change and contribute to the creation of a more sustainable future for the country.

The event, which was attended by students, faculty members, environmental activists, and other key stakeholders, aimed to inspire the younger generation to take an active role in environmental conservation. The gathering saw enthusiastic participation, with many individuals passionate about promoting environmental awareness and making meaningful contributions to combat climate change.

In her address, Romina

Khurshid Alam highlighted the crucial role of trees in mitigating climate change and restoring ecosystems. "Our environment is under immense pressure due to rising deforestation, pollution, and the adverse effects of climate change. By planting trees today, we are securing a better tomorrow for future generations," said stated.

She further emphasized the significance of the tree plantation drive as a step towards achieving the government's environmental goals, underlining the importance of instilling a sense of environmental responsibility among the youth. "This plantation drive is not only about planting trees; it's about nurturing a culture of environmental stewardship in the younger generation, encouraging them to actively participate in environmental preservation," she added.

The PM's aide stressed that the tree plantation campaign would play crucial role in addressing climate change impacts. By expanding green cover, reducing carbon emissions, and enhancing air quality, the initiative offers a sustainable solution to some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing the country. "Each tree planted today contributes to the restoration of our natural balance and provides countless benefits to both the environment and the community," she noted.

Romina Alam also emphasized that this initiative is aligned with the broader objectives of the government's climate change programme, which incorporates tree plantation efforts, environmental awareness campaigns, and sustainable development projects across Pakistan aimed at empowering

young people, equipping them with the knowledge and tools necessary to engage in climate action and contribute to a greener future.

The event saw active participation of students and teachers, who eagerly participated in the tree planting efforts. A variety of trees were planted across the college premises, with students displaying keen enthusiasm and commitment to ensuring the success of the plantation campaign. This event represents a significant milestone in Pakistan's ongoing dedication to environmental preservation and sustainability. By emphasizing youth participation and community involvement, the tree plantation initiative is anticipated to create a lasting positive effect on the environment and bolster the country's efforts in addressing climate change.

ADB delegation visits BISP to review social protection projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) visited BISP Headquarters on Wednesday to review the status of the Integrated Social Protection Development Program (ISPDP) and its Additional Financing program.

The delegation included Ms. Xin Long, Mission Leader and Principal Social Sector Specialist, SG-HSD; Lai Tora, Co-Team Lead, ADB; Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, TA Team Leader/National Social

Specialist, SG-HSD; Mr. Dinesh Shiwakoti, PAU Head; and Ms. Huma Ambreen, Project Officer. Additional Secretary BISP, Dr. Tahir Noor, along with all Director Generals, was also present at the meeting.

The delegation was welcomed by the Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Amer Ali Ahmad. Discussions focused on ADB's long-standing collaboration with BISP since 2013 and the progress of various social protection initiatives.

The delegation was informed about the progress of projects. Secretary BISP acknowledged ADB's continued support in strengthening Pakistan's social safety net as well as its instrumental role in creating a positive impact for millions of vulnerable households.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to inclusive growth and expressed readiness to explore further cooperation in advancing social protection efforts across the country.

ANF recovers over 75 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 75 kg drugs worth over Rs 9.4 million and arrested 12 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that 200 grams hashish was recovered from an accused arrested in Hattar Road Haripur. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions.

98 ice-filled capsules were recovered from the

stomach of a passenger going to Doha at Lahore International Airport.

54 kg hashish hidden in the luggage of an accused netted near Super Highway Karachi.

10.8 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near Faisalabad Road, Jhang.

Six kg hashish hidden in a vehicle was intercepted near Khanna Pul Islamabad and two suspects were arrested during the operation and six kg ice drug was recovered from a vehicle checked near Zero Point Pasni in Balochistan while

two suspects were arrested. 2.4 kg hashish and 1 kg ice drug were recovered from two suspects arrested near Jada Road Jhelum.

In 8th operation, 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from a woman going in a passenger bus near M-1 Motorway Islamabad.

In 9th operation, 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a motorcyclist near Kahuta Road Islamabad.

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

Commuters demand more blue line buses

ISLAMABAD (APP): Commuters residing near the Islamabad Expressway Wednesday demanded an increase in the number of Blue Line buses, citing chronic overcrowding that was disrupting their daily routines.

According to them, the Blue Line bus service has become a vital part of the city's public transportation system but the current fleet is insufficient to meet the growing demand.

For years, the Blue Line Bus service has been a vital lifeline for thousands of Islamabad residents, offering affordable transportation to various parts of the city.

However, as Islamabad's population continued to grow at a rapid pace, the demand for Blue Line

Buses significantly surpassed the available supply, creating a pressing need for expansion. A commuter Ayesha Khan said, "We often have to wait for over 30 minutes to get a Blue Line bus, and even then, we're packed like sardines."

She lamented that even if they are lucky enough to get a seat on the bus, it's always jam-packed and overcrowded, causing unbearable suffocation. We urge the relevant authority to increase the number of buses and routes to provide better connectivity to all residents, she stated.

Another commuter Shabana shared her experience of trying to get a seat on the Blue Bus saying,

despite waiting for a long time, every bus that arrived was jam-packed, forcing her to abandon her efforts and take a cab instead." She said that the Blue Line bus service is a great initiative but we urge the authority concerned to increase the number of buses and routes to provide better connectivity to all residents.

She praised the Blue Line service as an outstanding initiative for the middle class, who cannot afford private transportation.

However, she expressed concern that despite its benefits, commuters are forced to wait for an extended period only to board a jam-packed bus, highlighting the need for improvements to the service.

Modern incinerator plant installed in Hospital

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Cantonment General Hospital (CGH) has been equipped with the latest interaction plant which is capable of disposing of hazardous medical waste at the rate of 100Kg per hour.

According to a spokesman Rawalpindi Cantonment Board, the Director General Military Lands and Cantonments (ML&C), Major General Irfan Ahmed Malik HI (M), inaugurated the latest incinerator plant at the hospital during an inaugural ceremony held here today at the hospital.

DG ML&C was given a detailed briefing by the hospital administration, in which it was informed that

the incinerator is the first of its kind, the most modern imported plant, which has become fully functional. The plant can dispose of medical waste, empty blood bags, used syringes and other types of waste in a very effective manner, which will prove useful in the treatment and prevention of various types of diseases.

It was also briefed that other hospitals, whether they are in or outside of the cantonment area can benefit from this facility. The incinerator has the capacity to dispose of hazardous waste at a higher temperature of 1150-1300 degrees Celsius in complete safety. Moreover, It

is capable of disposing of 100 kg of waste per hour.

DG ML&C emphasized that the use of incinerators for the disposal of highly hazardous waste was the need of the hour, the aim of which is to prevent dangerous diseases from spreading in the environment.

Director ML&C Rawalpindi Region, Aamir Masood Khan, Executive Director Major General (R) Qamarul-Haq Noor, President Cantonment Board Brigadier Ahmed Nawaz, CEO RCB, Syed Ali Irfan Rizvi, Additional CEOs Raja Haider Shuja, Naveed Nawaz and other staff were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Gypsy children searching for valuables in heaps of garbage under the bridge on Korang Nullah are creating environmental problems, which require the attention of the concerned authorities. —APP Photo

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) on Tuesday has initiated a massive operation against the encroachments and illegal constructions in various parts of arterial roads to redress the issue of congestion. Citizens lauded the operation seeking continuation of the long awaited action.

The operation was carried out at areas including Androon Bazar Saddar, Koela Center and thickly populated Tench Bhatta Road. Sheds were demolished in front of shops from Chota Bazar, Hathi Chowk and Tench Bhatta.

The marketers have encroached on main roads by constructing extra sheds and ramps which have created a mess for the pedestrians. Some shopkeepers had placed concrete barriers on the road while others have given open-hand to the carts placed on the shops' fronts. During the operation held on late Tuesdays, the pedestrian barriers on the roads were also demolished.

Carts and other equipment installed on the roads were confiscated by RCB raiding teams.

Besides clearing the roads through traditional anti-encroachment operation, heavy machinery was also used for demolishing concrete sheds etc during the action led by Additional CEO Arshad Khan and Deputy CEO Nasir Kamal.

RCB chief, Syed Ali Irfan Rizvi has reiterated that the operation would continue on a daily basis in the cantonment areas in which heavy machinery is being used. He has also cautioned for registering cases against those who set up illegal encroachments.

Rizvi said that traders in the markets were already asked to remove encroachments themselves within the stipulated period of time, persuading to which the notices of termination were also issued to the respective shop owners. He once again intimidated the shopkeepers that the operation against illegal encroachments would continue in phases.

The RCB CEO also informed that footpaths have been cleared during the operation. "Traffic flow was being severely affected due to illegal encroachments", he said adding that pedestrian walkways and footpaths will be completely cleared. The citizens have appreciated the initiative and demanded for continuation of action against the encroachment.

Rubina Tariq expressed her satisfaction over the operation saying 'shopkeepers must not repeat their illegal activities'.

Tauqueer Abid informed APP that one can't visit the bazaars with family due to the congested environment and unnarrayed shops entry paths. He said RCB should lay a strong follow up on the operation while conducting surprise visits. Ajmal Raja, a resident of Tench Bhatta said that RCB has taken important action against encroachment. He demanded the RCB to penetrate in colonies and streets to counter a similar situation facing the residents.

Panjshir soon be connected

PANJSHIR (Ariana News): Panjshir provincial media office said on Wednesday that practical work was to connect the province to fiber optic will begin within the next month. This project covers a 36 km route from Gulbahar to Bazarak and the districts of Shatal, Anaba and Rukha will also benefit from fiber optic services. The project is being implemented by Afghan Wireless, Afghan Telecom and ICG companies as a result of the efforts of the Panjshir provincial administration.

ARCS begins heart surgery

KABUL (BNA): The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) has announced the commencement of treatment and surgery for nine children suffering from congenital heart defects, commonly known as heart holes. According to a report released by the ARCS, the organization will fully cover the costs associated with the treatment and surgeries for these young patients, ensuring they receive the necessary medical care.

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

IE congratulates Syria's new leader

KABUL (BNA): Afghanistan's Prime Minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, has extended his congratulations to Ahmad Al-Shara on his appointment as the head of Syria's transitional government, expressing hope for stability and progress under his leadership.

In an official message, Akhund conveyed his best wishes to Al-Shara, emphasizing the challenges ahead and the importance of strong leadership in guiding Syria through this critical period.

Islamic Emirate Deputy Spokesperson, Mullah Hamdullah Fitrat, said the message not only offered congratulations but also included prayers for success in governance and efforts to bring peace and stability to Syria.

Fitrat added that Prime Minister Akhund reaffirmed Afghanistan's commitment to strengthening ties with Syria, highlighting the need for deeper cooperation between the two brotherly nations.

This statement reflects the Islamic Emirate's ongoing diplomatic engagement as regional dynamics continue to shift in the Middle East.

Taliban hold meeting with media officials



KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban officials, including Hayatullah Muhajir, their deputy minister of information and culture, and Safiullah Raed, Taliban's head of media oversight, met with executives from media outlets in Kabul on Wednesday amid growing restrictions on press freedom.

The meeting comes just days after Taliban banned the broadcast of political talk shows on local media.

According to a statement from the Taliban-run Ministry of Information and Culture, the meeting was part of the Media Violations Review Commission's regular sessions. It also included a report from a Taliban committee tasked with standardizing national and Islamic terminology to reinforce what they describe as Afghanistan's "national and Islamic identity."

The statement provided few details about the discussion but noted that participants addressed broadcasting issues faced by Radio Television Jahan and a local media outlet in Ghor province, along with several other topics.

The Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) reported last week that the Taliban's Ministry of Information and Culture had verbally instructed multiple TV networks in Kabul to halt programming that could challenge Taliban policies. Journalists were warned to comply with the directive.

According to AFJC, the new restrictions extend beyond political coverage, affecting economic discussions and forcing private media outlets to adhere to Taliban-approved narratives.

Several television executives told AFJC that under the new guidelines, they are only permitted to interview official Taliban spokespersons if needed.

The AFJC also stated that the Taliban's Ministry of Information and Culture is expected to issue further decisions on implementing the ban by Monday.

Jawzjan officials reaffirm support for media

JAWZJAN (TOLONews): The Ministry of Information and Culture expressed support for the media and journalists during a media support program in Jawzjan.

The head of Jawzjan's Information and Culture Department stated during the program that no distinction has been made between private and state-run media, and all media outlets have always been present alongside them.

Saifuddin Moatasim, head of Jawzjan's Information and Culture Department, said: "We have not made any distinction between private and state-run media that would lead to the closure or difficulties for private media. They have always participated alongside us in every event and gathering."

The deputy minister of information and culture also stated that every effort will be made to strengthen and support the media and journalists.

Quadratullah Jamal, deputy minister for tourism, finance, and administration at the Ministry of Information and Culture, said: "We have supported and will continue to support the media. The media hold a very important position in the current government."

Meanwhile, local authorities in Jawzjan pledged their support for the media and journalists in the province, stating that there are no restrictions against them.

"We always support you. If you adhere to Islamic values and the principles of the system, as we have supported you in the past, we will continue our cooperation in the future as well," said Gul Haidar Shafaq, the governor of Jawzjan.

"We want timely access to information so that we can prevent the dissemination of propaganda news," stated Qamaruddin Poya, a journalist in the province.

According to the Jawzjan Information and Culture Department, there are currently two television stations, 11 radio stations, and two print media outlets operating in the province.

Afghan youth struggle with unemployment, urge for solutions



KABUL (TOLONews): The lack of job opportunities in Afghanistan, especially for young people, has raised serious concerns. Youth are urging officials in the interim government to make greater efforts to create more employment opportunities than ever before.

Abdullah, a 25-year-old graduate in economics and agricultural development from Parwan University, is one of these young people.

He spent four years studying in hopes of achieving his goals.

Abdullah told TOLONews: "I have made many efforts to find a job, but the current conditions make it impossible to find work."

Several other young people also told TOLONews that the lack of job opportunities has led to problems such as mental health issues and illegal migration among youth.

Abdul Wahab Nabi Zada, a resident of Kabul, said: "Due to unemployment, we are forced to leave the country for the sake of our families. I am the breadwinner of my family, and many others like me are facing severe economic challenges in Afghanistan."

Hafizullah, another Kabul resident, said: "If job opportunities were available in our country, no one would leave. But if unemployment continues, just as I am jobless now, it will force young people to leave the country and even fall into addiction."

Sports club for addiction recovery established in Herat

HERAT (TOLONews): A sports club has been established at a special drug rehabilitation hospital in Herat to aid in the treatment of addicts.

Nearly 500 recovering addicts engage in various sports activities at this club daily.

Mohammad Asif, a 26-year-old undergoing treatment, had been addicted to drugs for three years. However, he has now chosen sports as part of his recovery process for better rehabilitation.

"I want to recover from this illness as soon as possible with the help of sports and improve my health. Sports play a vital role in human well-being, especially for us who have struggled with addiction. Through sports, we can regain our health more rapidly," said Mohammad Asif.

According to several recovering addicts, after years of suffering from addiction, sports have given them hope.

"I was addicted, but thank God, I have been drug-free for three months," said Delawar, a recovering addict.

"Addiction is very painful and devastating; it ruined my life," said Saqib, another recovering addict.

"When we leave this place, we will walk out as athletes, not addicts. We will return to our families and relatives with pride," Maruf, also in recovery.

According to officials, the sports section at the special rehabilitation hospital in Herat has been active for nearly six months.

"We have been training here for about six months. After patients are admitted to the hospital, we assess and identify their interests to determine which sport they are inclined toward," said Behrooz Amani, head of sports at the special drug rehabilitation hospital in Herat.

"These individuals were very weak, and we collected them from the streets of the city. So far, we have rehabilitated about 500 people through sports—individuals who are now present in this hospital and care for other addicts," said Kamaluddin, head of the special drug rehabilitation hospital in Herat.

The special drug rehabilitation hospital in Herat was established about two years ago and treats 4,000 addicts in each phase.

According to officials from the Herat's Counter-Narcotics Department, more than 20,000 addicts have been treated in this hospital and reunited with their families.

China reaffirms support for Afghanistan's healthcare



KABUL (BNA): The Afghanistan's Acting Minister of Public Health, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, met with Chinese Ambassador Zhao Xing in Kabul to discuss ongoing collaboration in the healthcare sector and strengthening bilateral ties.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Public Health, Minister Jalali emphasized the importance of sustained cooperation between Afghanistan and China.

He urged the Chinese government to support the reconstruction of Kandahar's Mirwais Regional Hospital, expand healthcare services, and enhance the skills of Afghan medical professionals in traditional medicine, radiology, and disease control.

He also called for increased assistance in providing essential medical supplies, vaccines, and equipment to combat infectious diseases.

Ambassador Zhao reaffirmed China's commitment to supporting Afghanistan's healthcare system, pledging continued cooperation in hospital reconstruction, medical training, and strengthening healthcare infrastructure.

The meeting highlights the Islamic Emirate's ongoing efforts to improve Afghanistan's healthcare services through international partnerships, with China playing a key role in these initiatives.

Taliban minister defends curriculum changes in meeting with OIC envoy

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban's minister of higher education, Nada Mohammad Nadim, told the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) special envoy for Afghanistan that they had revised the country's academic curriculum, claiming it "did not meet current needs."

According to a statement from the Taliban-controlled Ministry of Higher Education, Nadim made the remarks during a meeting with Tariq Ali Bakhit, the OIC's envoy to Afghanistan.

The statement also noted that the OIC had pledged to cooperate with the ministry, though the organization has not yet commented on the meeting.

Taliban did not release any photos of the meeting.

In past visits, Bakhit and other OIC representatives have repeatedly urged Taliban officials to restore girls' access to education, which remains banned beyond the sixth grade since the group took power in August 2021.

The issue has also been a point of contention among Islamic scholars. At an OIC summit in Islamabad, the head of the International Union of Muslim Scholars stated that the Taliban's ban on girls' education was based on their own interpretation of Islam, rather than religious doctrine.

He also appeared to address the Taliban's supreme leader directly, saying: "Declaring something permissible as forbidden is one of the greatest sins."

Since regaining power in August 2021, Taliban have made significant changes to Afghanistan's education system, including removing certain subjects and imposing severe restrictions on girls' education.

Subjects removed from the curriculum include civic education and patriotism: Taliban have eliminated subjects related to Afghan culture and national identity from the curriculum. These courses previously taught students about Afghanistan's history, traditions, and national values.

Life skills education: Taliban have also removed life skills courses, which were designed to help students develop social skills, personal hygiene awareness, and decision-making abilities.

Gender-based education restrictions: Ban on girls' education: Girls beyond the sixth grade are banned from attending school, leaving millions without access to formal education. Universities have also been closed to women since December 2022.

Impact on boys' education: While boys are still allowed to attend school, the quality of education has declined due to curriculum changes and a shortage of qualified teachers. The Taliban have also increased religious studies in schools, replacing some subjects with Islamic teachings.

These curriculum changes and restrictions have limited educational opportunities for Afghanistan's youth, raising serious concerns about the country's future workforce, economic development, and human rights.

Afghanistan remains one of world's most urgent crises

GENEVA (Amu TV): Afghanistan continues to face severe humanitarian and economic challenges, with human rights abuses, food insecurity, and natural disasters threatening regional stability well into 2025, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warned in a report released Wednesday.

Despite an overall improvement in security and access to previously unreachable areas, the report stated that significant challenges persist, particularly for women and girls. It added that a newly introduced morality law has further entrenched repressive Taliban policies, barring women from schools, universities, workplaces, and public spaces.

The report highlighted the mass displacement of Afghans, noting that Iran and Pakistan together host around 8 million Afghan refugees, making them the largest refugee-hosting nations in the world.

Iran currently hosts at least 3.8 million refugees and refugee-like individuals, including over 1 million who have arrived since 2021, making it the largest refugee-hosting country globally. Despite rising economic hardship, Iran has continued to provide access to health care and education for Afghan refugees through Smart ID Cards, which regularize their documentation and facilitate service access.

Meanwhile, Pakistan is home to approximately 3.2 million Afghan refugees and other Afghan nationals, 76 percent of whom are women and children. However, the report noted that in recent years, the protection environment in Pakistan has become increasingly difficult for Afghans.

In October 2023, Pakistan's Apex Committee approved the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP), ordering the deportation of undocumented foreigners, a move that has disproportionately affected Afghans. Since September 15, 2023, over 500,000 Afghans have been forcibly returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan, the report said.

Environment a human issue, not political: Khalis

KABUL (TOLONews): Matiul Haq Khalis, head of the National Environmental Protection Agency, has called on the international community to support Afghanistan in combating the consequences of climate change and drought.

Speaking at an environmental program in Herat, he emphasized that Afghanistan has suffered severe damage from climate change and drought and urged the global community not to politicize the issue.

"The environment and climate change are purely humanitarian matters and have no connection to politics," said Khalis. "We have discussed this with UNAMA and several organizations, and they have assured us that they share our stance on keeping environmental issues apolitical. In the future, we will work together on these matters."

Meanwhile, local officials in Herat report that, in recent years, tens of thousands of people have been displaced from neighboring provinces due to climate change and drought. They urge the interim government to provide essential living facilities in the original locations of the displaced communities.

Abdul Ali Muttaqi, head of the Environmental Protection Department in Herat, stated: "We call on the government to support those who have been displaced due to climate change, losing their livelihoods and agricultural products. Alternative solutions, such as expanding agriculture and orchards, should be implemented to assist them."

Ahmadullah Muttaqi, head of Herat's Department of Information and Culture, said: "Nearly 100,000 saplings have been planted to expand green spaces. The municipalities, agriculture, and urban development departments are working to enhance greenery and orchards. Our department is also focusing on raising public awareness about environmental conservation."

Participants in the program stressed the need for afforestation, green space expansion, and pollution control to improve the environmental situation. However, they noted that the lack of post-planting tree care remains a serious challenge.

University professor Abdul Wasi Amiri said: "Every year, hundreds of thousands of fruit-bearing and non-fruit-bearing trees are planted in Herat and across Afghanistan, yet no systematic care and maintenance plans are put in place."

The melting of nearly 20% of the country's glaciers, prolonged droughts, devastating floods, and deforestation are cited as major consequences of climate change in Afghanistan. According to environmental protection officials, these changes have also led to the spread of various diseases across the country.

personal hygiene awareness, and decision-making abilities.

Gender-based education restrictions: Ban on girls' education: Girls beyond the sixth grade are banned from attending school, leaving millions without access to formal education. Universities have also been closed to women since December 2022.

Impact on boys' education: While boys are still allowed to attend school, the quality of education has declined due to curriculum changes and a shortage of qualified teachers. The Taliban have also increased religious studies in schools, replacing some subjects with Islamic teachings.

These curriculum changes and restrictions have limited educational opportunities for Afghanistan's youth, raising serious concerns about the country's future workforce, economic development, and human rights.



Clashes erupt in Helmand: Sources

HELMAND (Amu TV): Fierce clashes broke out between Taliban forces and unidentified gunmen on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the capital of the southern province of Helmand, local sources said on Wednesday.

The fighting erupted around midnight on February 19 in the Safiyan area, located in Police District 7, sources added.

Taliban have not commented on the incident or provided details about potential casualties. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The incident comes after an unprecedented increase in security incidents over the past two weeks, including a suicide bombing in Kunduz province on Feb. 11 that killed at least 25 people, and another suicide bombing outside ministry of urban development in Kabul on Feb. 13.



KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari and First Lady, MNA Aseef Bhutto Zardari being presented with Champion Trophy by former captain of Pakistan Cricket Team, Sarfraz Ahmad, at National Stadium.

Films & documentary production Pakistan, Saudi Arabia agree to form joint body

RIYADH (APP): Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday agreed to form a joint committee which would promote collaborations between the two countries for joint production of songs, films and documentaries.

Both sides agreed to this end during a meeting between Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar, and Saudi Arabia's Media Minister Salman bin Youssef Al-Dosari on the sidelines of the Saudi Media Forum. They also agreed on enhancing bilateral cooperation in media fields especially through exchange programme and trainings for journalists. While discussing ways to promote relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the media sectors, and enhance joint cooperation, the two stressed on the importance of working together to combat fake news and propaganda.

On the occasion, Attaullah Tarar congratulated the Saudi Minister for Media on organizing the fourth edition of the Saudi Media Forum. The Federal Minister said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's brotherly relations are transforming into economic partnership. The decades-long brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are getting stronger with each passing day, he added. Saudi Arabia is a second home to Pakistan, he remarked.

He said under the leadership of the King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia had achieved more than the goals of its Vision 2030 that make it hub of commercial activities. Paying tribute to the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for his vision, he said the Crown Prince had played a historic role in the exemplary development of Saudi Arabia. He said that close

cooperation between the two countries would help promote peace and stability in the region. The Federal Minister said that Pakistan is committed to strengthening relations with Saudi Arabia in various fields.

He said that there are ample opportunities for digital investment and technical cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Attaullah Tarar said that the Saudi Media Forum is not just an event but it is an opportunity for the media around the world, including Pakistan, to find new avenues of mutual cooperation. On the occasion, the Saudi Minister of Media said promoting cooperation with Pakistan in all sectors, including information, is our priority.

He said that a large number of Pakistanis are playing an important role in the development of Saudi Arabia. He said that the next meeting of the Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council will be held in Pakistan.

Imran true leader of people: Saif F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, has responded to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's recent statement, saying that she desires Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan to write a letter to her, but this wish will never be fulfilled. Imran Khan is the true leader of the people, while Maryam Nawaz Sharif is known as the leader of Form 47.

Dr. Saif added that Maryam Nawaz Sharif is copying every project of Imran Khan, whether it's the construction of a cancer hospital or other welfare initiatives. Imran Khan is mentioned in her speeches every day, which proves that she is afraid of Imran Khan's political narrative and popularity.

Dr. Saif stated that Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz are unhappy even after coming into power, while Imran Khan is smiling despite being in jail. Imran Khan is free even in jail and is a hero to the people, while those in power are proving to be ineffective.

Dr. Saif advised Maryam Nawaz Sharif to focus on the people instead of criticizing Imran Khan, as they are suffering from inflation, unemployment, and the worst debt in the country's history. He emphasized that mere verbal statements and announcements will not benefit the people without practical actions for their welfare and betterment.

Over 500,000 Afghans return home

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The UN Refugee Agency has unveiled the Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Afghanistan Situation 2024-2025, highlighting Afghanistan as one of the world's most pressing crisis zones. Despite improved security in certain areas, the nation continues to face severe human rights restrictions, particularly against women and girls, alongside economic instability and acute food shortages, projecting continued regional disruptions into 2025.

According to the UN Refugee Agency report, Iran and Pakistan collectively host around 8 million Afghan refugees, the largest such population worldwide. Iran, with 3.8 million Afghan refugees, has maintained inclusive health and education services despite increasing economic challenges and a rise in deportations. The country's inflation rate exceeded 30% in October 2024, impacting the livelihoods of Afghan refugees who are compelled to make difficult economic choices.

In Pakistan, hosting approximately 3.2 million Afghans, new repatriation policies have resulted in over 500,000 returns to Afghanistan since September 2023. The protection landscape remains complex, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable solutions to support both refugees and host communities amidst evolving security and economic conditions.

The Refugee Response Plan calls for USD 622 million in 2025 to sustain these efforts, emphasizing the critical need for predictable funding.

PHC seeks detailed report regarding security of judges, judicial officers

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Waqar Ahmad has adjourned the hearing of the case till March 11, directing the Registrar of the Peshawar High Court to submit a detailed report on the security arrangements for judges, courts, and judicial officers, on Wednesday.

The Registrar of the Peshawar High Court, Barrister Ikhtiar, a representative of the Bar Council, and other officials were present in the court.

According to the petition, the law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not satisfactory, and

this writ petition has been filed to provide security to courts, judges, and judicial officers.

The Chief Justice inquired from the Registrar of the Peshawar High Court, Barrister Ikhtiar, about the findings of the committee meeting held on security arrangements.

The Registrar informed the court that a notification dated December 30 was available, which stated that initially, there was no security arrangement for additional session judges and civil judges, but now it has been provided.

Security arrangements have also been made for judges in the southern districts. A meeting on security arrangements for courts and judges will be held on February 24 in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Justice S M Ateeq Shah asked whether the security arrangements made for the courts were satisfactory. The Registrar replied that the police had provided security to the Bar Association in the southern districts.

The bench inquired from the members of the Bar Council whether they were satisfied with the security arrangements provided. A member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council replied that the security arrangements provided were not satisfactory. The court adjourned the hearing of the case till March 11, directing the Registrar to submit a detailed report on the security arrangements after the meeting scheduled for February 24.

ICC Champions Trophy Spectacular flypast by PAF at opening ceremony

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a powerful demonstration of national pride and unwavering commitment, Pakistan Air Force's aerial display at the opening match of the ICC Champions Trophy served as a resounding tribute to the entire Pakistani nation.

The bravehearts of PAF extended their salute to the entire nation, painting the skies with the vibrant colors of the green crescent flag. The Sherdils team also showcased their exceptional professional prowess through the execution of Spirit Pass & Shaheen Break maneuver. JF-17 Thunder Block-III and F-16 Fighting Falcons



were met with enthusiastic appreciation from the assembled spectators.

The JF-17 Thunder aircraft, a symbol of Pakistani ingenuity and a testament to its proven combat capabilities in various international exercises, was the highlight of the flypast. The inclusion of the Pride of Pakistan, JF-

17 Thunder aircraft, in the air forces of numerous friendly countries is a testament to its combat capabilities. Pakistan Air Force's flypast at the opening match of the ICC Champions Trophy exemplifies its steadfast dedication to standing shoulder to shoulder with the nation at all times.

Putin and Trump could meet before end of Feb

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump could meet as early as this month, although a face-to-face meeting will take time to prepare, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday, according to Russian news agencies.

Peskov said the US-Russia talks held on Tuesday in Riyadh were a "very, very important step" toward reaching a settlement on the Ukraine war,

nearing its third year. "In order to carry out, figuratively speaking, resuscitation measures, diplomats will now begin to work in light of the agreement (Russian Foreign Minister Sergei) Lavrov reached yesterday with (US Secretary of State Marco) Rubio," Peskov was quoted by state media as saying.

"But this is the first step...Naturally, it's impossible to fix everything in one day or a week. There is a long way to go," he

added. The talks in Riyadh were the first time US and Russian officials met to discuss ways to halt the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War Two. No Ukrainian or European officials were invited. Kyiv has said it will not accept any deal imposed without its consent.

Putin thanked the Saudi leadership, King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for creating a good atmosphere for holding the talks.

Pak Navy, Royal Saudi forces exercise concluded

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The bilateral training exercise Affaa Al Sahel VII between the Special Operations Forces (SOFs) of Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) and Special Service Group of Pakistan Navy [SSG (N)] concluded with a high-intensity Final Test Exercise (FTX). Commander Coast, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin, along with senior military officials from both sides, witnessed the exercise.

During the exercise, RSNF SOFs and SSG (N) teams demonstrated advanced tactics and drills, including joint live-fire exercises, precision raid operations, and dynamic rappelling maneuvers in a simulated high-threat environment. The drills focused



on counterterrorism response, hostage rescue scenarios, and coordinated maritime interventions, highlighting their ability to operate seamlessly under high-pressure situations.

The successful conduct of Affaa Al Sahel VII reflects the growing

cooperation between the RSNF and Pakistan Navy. The joint exercise aimed to enhance interoperability and tactical proficiency, further strengthening the capabilities of SOFs in addressing common maritime security challenges.

Senate body addresses financial, trade issues

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue convened Wednesday under the chairmanship of Senator Saleem Mandviwalla here at the Parliament House, addressing critical financial and trade issues, including tax reforms, money bills, and challenges faced by the customs department in managing border trade.

In his opening remarks, Chairman Saleem Mandviwalla highlighted the ongoing debate over bills labeled as "money bills," he said that The law brought so far has been referred to as money bills, and it is a matter of amending the law, to take measures against non filers. He added, "The government informed us that the Speaker has declared it a

money bill, but when I spoke to the Speaker of the National Assembly, he denied labeling anything as such."

The committee also discussed the powers of the Senate in handling money bills, with Mandviwalla emphasizing that while the Senate may consider such bills, it does not have the authority to vote on them. "According to the law, if there is a disagreement in the Senate regarding a bill's status as a money bill, the Speaker of the National Assembly will make the final decision," Mandviwalla explained. Senator Shibli Faraz supported this view, suggesting that the opinion of the Law Ministry should be sought to clarify the matter.

The FBR Chairman also noted that banks had received an additional Rs

70 billion in taxes this year due to their failure to maintain the advance-to-deposit ratio limit by December 31. Senator Shibli Faraz pointed out that in January 2025, Rs 440 billion had been returned to banks. "We are committed to increasing the tax on bank profits to support the government's financial needs," the Finance Minister remarked. "Banks must play their part in helping the government."

The Finance Minister also responded on the issue of truck congestion at the Iran-Pakistan border, revealing that 600 trucks are currently stuck, causing major delays and unemployment in Balochistan. "Thousands of people have become unemployed due to these blockages," Senator Manzoor Kakar said, urging the government to resolve the issue promptly.

Pak-UK exchange views on security

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The 2nd Round of Pakistan-United Kingdom (UK) Counter Terrorism Dialogue took place in London from 17-18 February, 2025.

The Pakistan delegation was led by Abdul Hameed, Director General for Counter-Terrorism, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the United Kingdom's side was headed by Ms Kitty Jenkins, Joint Director for National Security, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, says a statement issued by the Foreign Office here on Wednesday.

Both sides reviewed the global and regional landscape and exchanged views on the security threats posed by terrorist entities. The situation in Afghanistan was discussed in the light of the latest international reports and the assessment of the threat emanating from its territory.

The talks included the exchange of best practices in the areas of law enforcement, security, criminal justice, rule of law, countering financing of terrorism and capacity building to address the emerging trends in terrorism.

The discussion focused on the continued bilateral cooperation and potential new opportunities for collaboration in counterterrorism. It was agreed that the next round of Pakistan-United Kingdom Counter-Terrorism Dialogue would take place in Islamabad in 2026 on mutually convenient dates.

Pak, Saudi Arabia to expand eco cooperation

NEW YORK: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have reiterated their resolve to expand economic cooperation and explore avenues for broad-based collaboration in trade, investment and commercial sectors.

This came at a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Saudi Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Waleed Abdul Karim El-Khereiji in New York. The meeting noted the vast investment opportunities available in Pakistan.

They reaffirmed the shared commitment to deepening their multifaceted partnership for mutual prosperity and regional stability. Ishaq Dar commended the longstanding Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations and reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to further strengthening bilateral economic and security cooperation with the Kingdom.

He lauded the remarkable progress made by the Kingdom under the visionary Saudi leadership and acknowledged Saudi Arabia's pivotal role in promoting regional and international peace and security. The two leaders also discussed the recent developments in the Middle East, including the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank.

They called for the full implementation of the Gaza ceasefire, provision of adequate and unhindered humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza, and early commencement of reconstruction and progress toward the two state solution. They further underscored the critical role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in addressing issues concerning the Muslim Ummah. — Agencies