

Saif congratulates  
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif has extended heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected presidents of both Islamabad and Lahore high courts. He said that this victory was, in reality, a triumph of PTI and Imran Khan's ideology.



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# PM reaches Baku for official visit

BAKU (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif arrived here on Sunday for a two-day official visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Upon arrival at Heydar Aliyev International Airport, the Prime Minister was warmly received by senior Azerbaijani officials, including First Deputy Prime Minister Yaqub Abdulla oglu Eyyubov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yalchin Rafiyev, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Farkhadov, Pakistan's ambassador to Azerbaijan Qasim Mohiuddin and other senior dignitaries.

During the visit, the

Prime Minister will hold high-level meetings with the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and other senior Azerbaijani officials.

The discussions will focus on further strengthening bilateral relations, expanding trade and investment, enhancing cooperation in the energy sector, synergize efforts to deal with climate change, deepening defense collaboration, and fostering cultural exchanges.

Several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements are expected to be signed, further solidifying the partnership between the two countries.

As part of his engage-

ments, the Prime Minister and the Azerbaijani leadership will also address the Pakistan-Azerbaijan Business Forum, scheduled for Monday.

The forum will bring together business leaders from both countries to explore avenues for joint ventures and trade and investment opportunities, emphasizing business-to-business (B2B) collaboration.

Pakistan and Azerbaijan share a long-standing bond of brotherhood, underpinned by shared values and common aspirations. This visit underscores the commitment of both nations to deepening their bilateral ties, enhancing

economic cooperation, and fostering regional collaboration.

The Prime Minister is accompanied by a high-level ministerial delegation, including Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Investment & Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister for Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Minister for Information & Broadcasting Ataullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi.



BAKU: Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Yaqub Abdulla Oglu Eyyubov received Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif upon arrival at Heydar Aliyev International Airport.

## Diamir Bhasha, Dasu dams affectees

## Muqam assures to address problems

CHILAS (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs Engr Amir Muqam on Saturday visited Chilas in Gilgit Baltistan, saying that problems of affectees of Dasu Kohistan and Diamir Bhasha dams would be addressed.

He said the Prime

Minister's Special Committee was analyzing problems of the affected people, reiterating that development of Gilgit Baltistan was the top priority of the Government. He said 30 percent increase in its development budget was made.

Engr Amir Muqam said that inauguration of

Danash Schools would be made after Eid.

He proposed the affectees to constitute their committee for negotiations.

Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Gulbar Khan has appealed the affectees for calling off sit in. The committee of the affectees sought time.

## First locally transmitted M-Pox Case reported in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Health Advisor, Ihtesham Ali, has confirmed another case of Monkeypox (M-Pox) in the province. According to him, this is the first locally transmitted (community) case of M-Pox in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as all previous reported cases were linked to international travel.

The Health Advisor further stated that the infected woman's husband had recently returned from a Gulf country.

While he initially showed no symptoms, he was later confirmed to be infected with M-Pox as well.

According to Director of Public Health, Dr. Fazal Majeed, the female patient was admitted to the hospital on February 18, 2025, after experiencing fever and body aches. On February 19, rashes appeared on her body and inside her mouth, after which Public Health Coordinator Dr. Muhammad Aamir Khan reported the suspected case on February 20.

A team from the Public Health Section collected samples and sent them to the Public Health Reference Laboratory at Khyber Medical University, Peshawar, where Monkeypox was confirmed on February 21, 2025.

Regarding the patient's husband, Dr. Fazal Majeed stated that he had shown no symptoms upon his arrival in Pakistan.

However, on February 5, he developed fever and body aches, followed by the appearance of rashes on his body and inside his mouth on February 6. Despite this, he chose to stay at home for 10-15 days instead of seeking medical treatment.

Under the directives of the Director General of Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a Rapid Response Team was formed, led by Public Health Coordinator Dr. Muhammad Aamir Khan and Dr. Fauzia Afridi. The team conducted a detailed medical history of the infected patient on February 22, 2025.

The patient's husband and close family members were also screened, and necessary preventive measures were implemented, including home isolation for the affected household. Director of Public Health, Dr. Fazal Majeed, urged the public to stay informed about Monkeypox symptoms and to immediately visit the nearest healthcare facility if any suspicious symptoms develop.

Mpox (monkeypox) is an infectious disease caused by the monkeypox virus. It can cause a painful rash, enlarged lymph nodes and fever. Most people fully recover, but some get very sick.

# Security Forces kill 7 Khwarij in DI Khan

RAWALPINDI (APP): Security Forces on Sunday killed seven Khwarij in two separate engagements in Dera Ismail Khan District.

On reported presence of Khwarij, an intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in general area Daraban, during which own troops effectively engaged the khwarijs' location, resultantly, four khwarij were sent to hell, an ISPR news release said. In another encounter that took place in general area Maddi, own troops effectively neutralized three khwarij.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered

from the khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

"Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Kharji found in the area as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country," it added.

**President lauds security forces for operation against Fitna Al-Khawarij in DI Khan**

President Asif Ali Zardari Sunday lauded the security forces for killing seven Khawarij in two different operations in Dera Ismail Khan.

He paid tribute to the security forces for eliminating the terrorists of Fitna Al-Khawarij during the intelligence based operations.

He appreciated the brave forces for their successful operations.

He said the operations of security forces would continue till complete elimination of terrorism.

The successful operations of security forces against terrorism were a good sign, he said adding the government was determined to completely eradicate Fitna Al-Khawarij.

**PM appreciates security forces for killing Khawarij in DI Khan**

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday appreciated the security forces for killing seven Khawarij in areas of Daraban and Maddi in Dera Ismail Khan.

He said the government would continue to foil the nefarious designs of the enemies of humanity. He asserted that sacrifices of lives by the sons of the nation in the war against terrorism would not go in vain. He assured that the government was fully active to root out terrorism from the country.

The war against terrorists would continue till complete eradication of terrorism, he added.

# NDMA sends 100 tons of essential relief to Gaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has sent a 14th humanitarian relief consignment, consisting of 100 tons of essential relief items, to Palestine, reaffirming the nation's steadfast support for the people of Gaza.

The consignment, coordinated in partnership with the Al-Khidmat Foundation, includes around 100 tons of critical relief supplies such as bell tents, winterized tents, tarpaulin sheets, and medical

equipment.

A send-off ceremony was held at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, attended by senior officials from NDMA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Al-Khidmat Foundation.

The aid was shipped via a chartered flight departing from Jinnah International Airport in Karachi to El Arish International Airport in Egypt, from where it will be transported to Gaza.

This initiative was carried out under the direc-

tives of the prime minister, reflecting the government's commitment to providing humanitarian assistance and standing in solidarity with the people of Gaza during their time of need. This shipment is part of Pakistan's ongoing humanitarian efforts and marks the 25th overall relief consignment sent to war-affected people of Middle East.

With this shipment, Pakistan has dispatched a total of 1,478 tons of relief aid exclusively for Palestine, demonstrating

the country's continued commitment to supporting the people of Gaza in these difficult times. Overall, Pakistan has dispatched 1,961 tons of humanitarian aid, including 372 tons for Lebanon and 111 tons for Syria.

The Government of Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to standing with the people of Palestine and will continue to provide humanitarian assistance based on the evolving needs of those affected by the ongoing crisis.

## Reuters/Ipsos poll

# Trump gets middling grades on Americans' top issues

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Americans give President Donald Trump middling marks on his handling of the economy and efforts to shrink the government and are unimpressed by some of the early fights he has picked, such as proposals to take over Gaza, a Reuters/Ipsos poll shows.

The poll, conducted February 13-18, asked more than 4,000 U.S. adults nationwide whether they supported a range of positions staked out by Trump and how much the issues would motivate them to vote in the future. The results point to Trump putting considerable effort into policies that many Americans don't like, or don't consider very important.

A wave of frustration over prolonged inflation helped power Trump to victory in November, and a majority of respondents -- 58% -- said inflation would be a major factor in deciding their vote in future elections. But just 32% approved of the job Trump was doing on inflation.

Views of the economy by households deteriorated this month to the lowest level in over a year, according to a widely followed survey by the University of Michigan.

Just 25% of respondents -- and only half of Republicans -- said they supported Trump's idea of having the U.S. government take over Gaza and resettle Palestinians elsewhere.

"I thought that was a moronic idea because it's infeasible," Willard Moore, a Republican lawyer in

New York City who participated in the poll, referring to the Gaza proposal. "If you did it, it would cost a lot of money, and at the end what would you have, some sort of resort? Like, what good is that for anyone?"

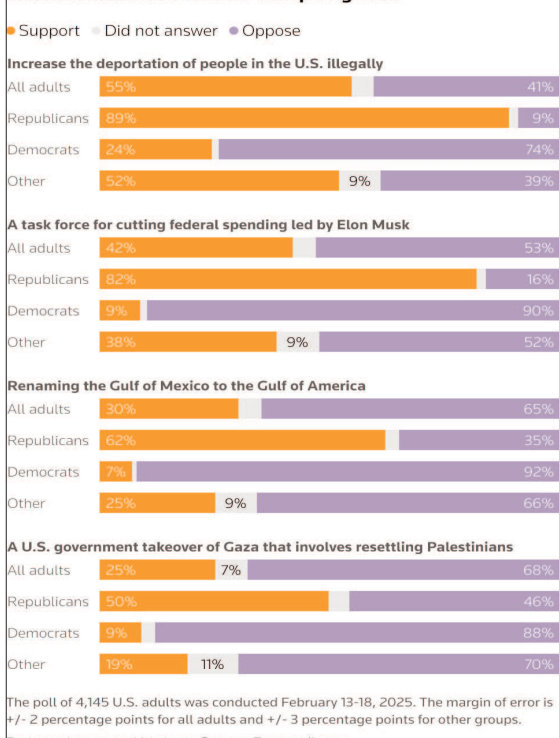
A notable portion of Trump's 2024 voters broke with some of the presi-

dent's early actions and ideas. About a third of Trump voters opposed the proposal to end birthright citizenship and one in five opposed his administration's move to end diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Americans do consider Trump's push to downsize government important, but are divided mostly along party lines on whether they support it. Sixty percent of respondents said the so-called Department of Government Efficiency task force for cutting federal spending, which is led by Elon Musk, would influence their vote in the next federal elections -- 2026, when Democrats will seek to win back control of Congress. But only 42% of the country supports the endeavor and 53% oppose it.

"He's just rushing a little bit. I think the whole thing with the DOGE is being rushed a little bit," said Gerald Dunn, a Republican 66-year-old martial arts instructor from Staatsburg, in New York State's Hudson Valley. "I like what he is doing but I think a lot of what he says is just BS. When he starts talking about annexing Greenland and annexing Canada, you know that's just smoke."

### Where Americans stand on Trump's agenda



DUBAI: India's Virat Kohli in action during a match-winning inning in a match against Pakistan.





KARACHI: Police trying to stop the workers of Resistance Movement who hold a rally for no to canals on Indus River at Sharjah e Faisal. —INP Photo

## CM Punjab transplant programme launched

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has launched the ‘Chief Minister Punjab Transplant Programme’, terming it the most comprehensive transplant initiative in the country’s history. For the first time, five major transplant procedures — liver, kidney, bone marrow, cornea, and cochlear implants — would be conducted free of cost for the deserving patients, said a handout issued here on Sunday. Through this initiative, Punjab residents in need could undergo transplant surgeries at the government’s expense, ensuring access to life-saving treat-

ments. Cochlear implants would also be provided for young children born with hearing impairments, enabling them to lead normal lives. Patients could register with the Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority (PHOTA) to avail these facilities. Additionally, transplants would be available not only at government hospitals but also in selected private hospitals. To facilitate access to information, the Punjab government has set up a toll-free helpline: 09009 0800. CM Maryam Nawaz highlighted the government’s commitment to public welfare, saying “The state recognises

the needs of every citizen, and we will fulfill our responsibility. Organ transplantation is a highly complex and costly procedure that most people cannot afford. Now, the government will take on this responsibility.” She added that with cochlear implants, children born deaf will regain their hearing and live normal lives. Similarly, successful corneal transplants will restore vision for those suffering from blindness. The CM assured the public that the government will bear all expenses for liver and kidney transplants, ensuring that no financial burden falls on patients.

## Police martyr's family gets house

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar’s mission to provide shelter to the families of police martyrs is ongoing. He has given a house to the family of a policeman who was martyred in the line of duty. A house worth Rs13.5 million has been given to the family of martyred Head Constable Muhammad Imran. The Punjab police spokesperson shared that the family of the martyr was provided with a house of their choice in Tehsil Tandlianwala, Faisalabad. Head Constable Muhammad Imran had sacrificed his life while protecting the lives and properties of citizens in 2023. The family of the martyred head constable included his wife, a daughter and two sons. On the special efforts of IG Punjab Dr Usman Anwar, the Punjab government released funds for the house of the martyr’s family. He paid rich tribute to the eternal sacrifice of Head Constable Muhammad Imran and said that he had sacrificed his life while performing his duties without caring for his life.

## Vintage car show held

LAHORE (APP): In celebration of the Horse and Cattle Show 2025, the Vintage Classic Car Club of Pakistan, in collaboration with PHA, organized a Vintage Car Show at the Polo Ground, GOR-I, here on Sunday. Over 100 unique cars, scooters, luxury, and expensive vehicles were displayed at the event. Among the notable entries were rare cars like the 1928 Rolls Royce (used by the Nawab of Bahawalpur), 1930 Packard (USA), and 1930 Cadillac (USA). Car enthusiasts from all over participated in the event, capturing memorable photos with these rare and luxury vehicles. International experts, including Olivia Farnse (France), Mrs. Aini Sofi (France), and Fatimi Nasir, along with Kh. Babar Salman from Pakistan, took on the judging duties for the competition. The event was graced by the presence of Mohsin Ikram, the President of Vintage Classic Car Club of Pakistan, along with families and car lovers from across the country. Owners of the showcased vehicles were awarded trophies and certificates for their meticulous care and maintenance. The stunning collection of rare vehicles captured the attention of attendees, while the combination of classic and modern cars added to the charm of the event.

## Pak-India match live screening arranged

LAHORE (APP): In a commendable initiative by the Punjab government, special arrangements were made to broadcast the highly anticipated Pakistan-India Champions Trophy match live in 44 prisons across the province. Home Department’s spokesperson told media on Sunday that the decision was implemented on the directives of Punjab’s Home Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Mengal, who instructed the IG Prisons to ensure necessary arrange-

ments for the inmates. Live screening of the match was also arranged in juvenile detention centers, where young inmates dressed in Pakistan cricket team uniforms thoroughly enjoyed the match, celebrating with traditional drumbeats and energetic dances. Senior prison officials, including jail superintendents and regional officers, watched the match alongside the inmates, creating an atmosphere of engagement and enthusiasm.

The spokesperson added that this initiative aligns with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif’s Prison Reforms Policy, which aims to promote positive activities among prisoners to help them reintegrate into society as responsible citizens. The spokesperson stated that under the prison reforms, industrial units and libraries have been established in Punjab jails to enhance education and vocational training opportunities for inmates.

## ‘Nawaz Sharif’s era marked by prosperity’

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif’s era is marked by prosperity and unprecedented public service. In a statement, she said Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has lived up to the expectations of Punjab’s people, and the time of those who governed through “magic tricks” is now over. “The people of Pakistan have permanently buried the politics of chaos, anarchy, and instability. Now, the focus across Pakistan will be solely on work, work, and more work,” she added. The Information Minister

added that the Punjab government has completed its first year of setting historic benchmarks in public service. Maryam Nawaz has fulfilled the aspirations of Punjab’s citizens, proving that the PML-N is synonymous with delivering on promises, she added. Azma emphasized that the era of those peddling “imaginary plans” and ruling through deception has ended. Today marks Nawaz Sharif’s era—an era dedicated to public service. Maryam Nawaz has achieved historic milestones in just one year, surpassing the accomplishments of previous govern-

ments, she added. Azma Bokhari remarked that Maryam Nawaz has fundamentally transformed Pakistan’s political landscape. In return for the mandate given by Punjab’s people, Maryam Nawaz is steering Punjab toward progress and development. She has adopted good governance, meritocracy, and transparency as her guiding principles, she maintained. The Punjab Information Minister also challenged spokespersons for other provinces to show courage and publicly present their respective Chief Ministers’ performance before the nation.

## PLA-3 concludes successfully

KARACHI (APP): The closing ceremony of the 3rd Pakistan Labour Academy (PLA-3) was held in Karachi, bringing together key stakeholders, policymakers and labour rights advocates, union leaders and government officials. The event was jointly organized by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Pakistan, Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC), and the National Institute of Labour Administration and Training (NILAT). According to press release issued here by SHRC, over 30 participants from across Pakistan participated in this one-week residential course held from February 16 to February 21. Dr. Rudiger Lotz, German Consul General in Karachi, graced the event as the chief guest. He emphasized that labour rights are fundamental human rights and stressed the need for young labour unions to be well-versed in both employ-

ee and employer rights. He highlighted Germany’s extensive experience with labour unions and their role in strengthening the economy, noting that Germany heavily relies on supply chain due diligence law which makes Pakistan to comply with the labour and human rights in industrial sector. Dr. Lotz also pointed out that 85% of Pakistan’s exports to Germany come from the textile sector. He discussed the importance of women’s participation in the workforce, climate change, and improving the work environment through training and workshops. SHRC Chairperson Iqbal Detho commended FES for its support in empowering workers and urged the leadership of Sindh Labour Department to demonstrate a similar commitment. He congratulated the participants on successfully completing the course and advocated for a dedicated budget for

NILAT’s training programs. He also proposed the establishment of a Sindh Labour Academy to provide specialized education for labour activists and enhance NILAT’s role in collaboration with the Labour and Human Resources Department. He further urged the implementation of Sindh’s minimum wage of Rs 37,000 per month and called for a structured dispute resolution system within the labour department. Muhammad Ali Shaikh, Director General of NILAT, appreciated the efforts of FES-Pakistan and SHRC in organizing a valuable training program for young labour union leaders. Abdullah Dayo from FES provided an overview of the Academy and added that it is Pakistan’s first ever labour academy whose aim is to build the capacity of young workers on industrial relations and the protection of labour rights and sustainable economic growth.

## JI urges govt to fulfil Aafia Siddiqui’s release promises

KARACHI (PPI): Senior Jamaat-e-Islami leader and former Member of National Assembly (MNA), Asadullah Bhutto, today called on the government to honor its promises regarding the release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui, describing her prolonged detention as an injustice. According to a JI statement, he emphasized that the key to Dr Aafia’s liberation lies with the ruling government in Islamabad, urging both the leadership and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take

serious action. While addressing a ceremony in Karachi to mark 8,000 days of Dr Aafia’s unlawful confinement and suffering, Bhutto noted that the Pakistani government had shown competence in securing the release of convicted American Raymond Davis under pressure from the U.S. government. He questioned why the same urgency was not applied in Dr Aafia’s case after she was wrongfully detained and sentenced to 86

years by a US court in 2010. Bhutto reiterated that bringing DrAafia back to her homeland is a national responsibility. “The unjust confinement of Dr Aafia for 8,000 days in the U.S. is a source of embarrassment for the Pakistani government,” Bhutto added. He called on the United Nations and human rights organizations to take notice of the abuse and solitary confinement Dr Aafia has endured. He reiterated the need for accountability and called for action.

## PIMS admin starts full renovation of hospital

ISLAMABAD (INP): The administration of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) has started full renovation of the hospital to ensure provision of better medical services to patients. According to hospital sources, during this large-scale renovation of the hospital, the whole infrastructure of the federal capital’s largest hospital will be improved. It is pertinent to mention here that the federal government had approved a grant of Rs 400 million for the renovation of the hospital and improvement of other facilities, on which a grant of Rs 250 million has been released initially for this purpose. The contract for the completion of the project has been given to the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

Other works including the renovation of the hospital ward will also be completed under the project. They said that the step was taken on special instructions of prime minister to provide best facilities to the patients in this largest government hospital in the federal capital. With the special interest and efforts of the Prime Minister’s Coordinator for Health Dr. Mukhtar and Secretary Ministry of Health Nadeem Mehboob, the renovation work of the hospital has been initiated.

Under the supervision of Executive Director PIMS, Professor Dr. Imran Sikandar, the CDA will complete the renovation project of PIMS hospital in next two months. This largest government hospital in the federal capital, was built in 1985. The hospital treats thousands of patients daily from different parts of the country. Earlier, all other facilities were improved for the hospital, including new stretchers, wheelchairs, and benches for the relatives of patients.

## Lahore Literary Festival concludes

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Literary Festival (LLF) concluded on Sunday, delivering a powerful message to the world about Pakistan’s status as a peaceful and progressive nation. The event, held at Alhamra, featured grand hospitality arrangements for scholars and intellectuals from across the globe, creating an atmosphere of literary enthusiasm and engagement. The vibrant people of Lahore displayed a keen interest in global literature, with international book launches drawing large crowds and highlighting the city’s deep-rooted literary culture. As a UNESCO City of Literature, Lahore gained significant attention, further cementing its reputation as a hub for intellectual and artistic discourse.

One of the festival’s major highlights was a compelling session on human rights, which sparked engaging discussions and facilitated the exchange of diverse thoughts and ideas. Scholars also explored the complexities of the Mughal era, delving into its governance and historical significance. Sessions dedicated to Islamic art, architecture, and historical perspectives enriched the audience with valuable insights. A panel discussion on Pakistan’s cultural dimensions featured renowned figures such as Ifthikhar Arif, Noor-ul-Huda Shah, and Asghar Nadeem Syed, with Sheeba Alam serving as the moderator. Another thought-provoking session revolved around the theme “Istanbul – Three Cities and Three Stories.”

## Punjab Air Ambulance rescues 70 patients

LAHORE (APP): The Air Ambulance Service of the Punjab government successfully shifts 70 critical patients from far-flung areas to specialized hospitals for better treatment. Among them, 38 patients were shifted from Bahawalnagar, 25 from Mianwali, two from Rahim Yar Khan, and one each from Bahawalpur, Parachinar, Karachi, Lahore, and Sialkot. The patients shifted on the Air Ambulance included 54 cardiology, 8 spinal injury, 2 head injury and 6

other ailments. The spokesperson for Punjab Emergency Services Department said that launching the Air Ambulance Service in Punjab was a challenging task. “It was essential to find a reliable air service capable of providing an air ambulance on just 30 minutes’ notice, ensuring the swift transfer of critically ill and injured patients to specialized hospitals equipped with modern medical facilities. Initially, some air agencies failed to meet the essential emergency

response requirements for immediate patient transfers despite several opportunities, making the search for a suitable service provider a challenge,” he added. However, Punjab now has a fully operational Air Ambulance Service that has so far successfully shifted 70 patients and emerged as a beacon of hope for critical patients of far-flung areas, providing them with the access to specialized treatment especially patients from districts of Bahawalnagar and Mianwali, he maintained.

## RUDA leads environmental initiatives

LAHORE (APP): The Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) is driving environmental projects to tackle Lahore’s rising smog and pollution, setting a benchmark for sustainable urban living. During a Ravi Protection Rally on Sunday, RUDA media representatives Sher Afzal Butt and Bilal Shaheen reaffirmed their commitment to restoring nine forests along the River Ravi. Hundreds participated in the rally, which started from Istanbul Square and ended at the old Ravi Bridge, highlighting the significance of Ravi City. RUDA is actively revitalising historic forests, including the 3,071-acre

Rakh Jhoke Forest, with plans to plant millions of trees. Already, 200 acres have been afforested with 100,000 trees to support biodiversity, create wildlife habitats, and reduce carbon emissions. This large-scale effort aims to leave an enduring ecological legacy. Bilal Shaheen highlighted RUDA’s commitment to managing the Ravi River in a climate-friendly way, noting that river training works at the Ravi Siphon have been completed. The 7-kilometre Sapphire Bay project, costing billions, has reshaped the river’s flow, with new embankments under construction to prevent flooding. Work on a barrage and afforesta-

tion of nine forests is in its final stages, while the Sapphire Bay Trade Centre is also progressing rapidly. RUDA has initiated Lahore’s largest 400-acre vegetable market at Kala Khatai Road and prepared feasibility studies for road networks along the riverbanks. Speaking at the rally, journalist and activist Javed Chatha praised RUDA’s vision for urban sustainability, transforming environmental challenges into assets through renewable energy solutions and green spaces. He highlighted how these initiatives not only combat pollution but also create long-term economic opportunities, improving Lahore’s quality of life.

## Japanese envoy opens Ikebana exhibition

LAHORE (APP): The Sogetsu Ikebana Spring Exhibition, themed “Gandhara, Taxila, and Mehrgarh Civilizations,” opened in Lahore on Sunday. The exhibition, organized by the Sogetsu Lahore Study Group, showcases the work of Sogetsu Ikebana artists who have drawn inspiration from the ancient civilizations, capturing their essence in unique and evocative floral arrangements. The chief guest Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, inaugurated the exhibition. It highlights the rich cultural heritage of Pakistan and its connection to Japan through the art of Sogetsu Ikebana flower arrangements. The flower arrangements not only demonstrate the artists’ skill but also tell stories, linking the past with the present, he added. The Ambassador said that this Ikebana exhibition and other cultural events strengthen the bond

and understanding between Japan and Pakistan, promoting peace, harmony, and respect through art. He also expressed his gratitude to Lahore Sogetsu Study Group for their invaluable assistance with the beautiful Ikebana arrangements for the Japan’s National Day celebration in Islamabad on the 18th of February that added a special touch to the occasion. The Ambassador also congratulated the Lahore Sogetsu Study Group for receiving the Japanese Ambassador’s Commendation in 2024, saying this award testifies their significant contributions in promoting Japanese culture in Pakistan especially in Lahore. Neveen Syed, Director of the Sogetsu Lahore Study Group, expressed her gratitude to all participating artists for their contributions to arranging the fascinating exhibition.

TENDER NOTICE

DAILY LP CONTRACT OF MEDICINES FY 2025/26

1.Sealed bids are invited from SECP and preferably DGDP registered well reputed firms duly registered with Ministry of Health, Govt of Pakistan for provn of LPMedicines onDaily Basis for FY 2025/26. All firms must be registered with income tax, sales tax dept and must be on active list of FBR.Interesting parties will intimate max rebate/discount to be offered on retail price of medicines.

2.The invitation to tender docus containing detailed terms and condition are aval at **CMH Landi Kotal** office and the same can be obtained on any working day during office hours.

3.Last date of submission of tenders for daily LP medicines is **20 Mar 2025 by1000 hrs** and must be deposited to Medical Officer In-charge Medical Store **CMH Landi Kotal**

4.The tender shall be opened on same day **20 Mar 2025 by1100 hrs**, in the presence of representatives of bidders. **CMH Landi Kotal** may rejectall bids due to any reason prior to the acceptance of a bid in accordance with PPRA Rules 33 (1).

5.This advertisement is also aval on **PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk**.

6.For any information please contact Medical officer In-charge Medical Store **CMH Landi Kotal** on tel. **0305-5788948**.

7.The sealed tender bids must comprise of a single package containing two separateenvelopes as per PPRA Rules 36b:-

a.The bid shall comprise of a single package containing two separate envelopes,the"Financial Proposal" and the "Technical Proposal"

b.The envelopes shall be marked as **"FINANCIAL PROPOSAL"** and **"TECHNICAL PROPOSAL"** in bold and legible letters to avoid confusion.

Commanding Officer

CMH Landi Kotal





PESHAWAR: Students presenting their painting during Art and Fashion Show organized jointly by KP Cultural and Tourism Authority and Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute.

## Kundi emphasizes need for watering barren lands

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday criticized the provincial government for prioritizing the destruction of already fertile lands, instead of focusing on providing water to barren lands to make them fertile.

He said this in a 'Farmers' Convention' at the Governor House to safeguard the rights of farmers and ensure a brighter future for them.

The convention saw a large gathering of farmers, including representatives from various political parties, agricultural organizations, and a diverse range of farmers, cultivators, and landowners from across the province, stretching from Chitral to Dera Ismail Khan.

The convention focused on the strong criticism by farmers to the provincial government's proposed agricultural income tax, which they labeled as a discriminatory move.

Participants vehemently rejected the tax, deeming it an oppressive action, and voiced their concerns while putting forward various suggestions for the bill's revision. The convention also declared their intention to launch a movement if their recommendations and proposed amendments were not included in the bill.

Farmers and landowners expressed their gratitude towards Governor Faisal Karim Kundi for organizing the convention and acknowledged his commitment to addressing their issues.

Parliamentary leader of PPP Ahmad Karim Kundi, welcomed the farmers and assured them that their suggestions would be compiled into joint recommendations and presented to the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari.

PPP's provincial president, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, also addressed the convention, saying that if the provincial government did not retract the harsh tax and

address the concerns of farmers, a full-fledged movement would be launched. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, while addressing the gathering, warmly welcomed all the participants to the Governor House.

He reaffirmed his commitment to standing by farmers, cultivators, and landowners, saying that he would ensure their suggestions reached the provincial government.

He highlighted the Pakistan Peoples Party's long-standing history of advocating for farmers' rights and pledged to continue this tradition by raising their voices on every platform.

The Governor criticized the provincial government for focusing on destroying already fertile lands instead of providing water to barren lands to make them fertile.

He also condemned the imposition of the agricultural income tax, saying that it would add undue pressure on an already struggling agricultural sector.

He pointed out that the provincial government's incompetence had already caused significant problems for farmers and warned that the implementation of the agricultural tax would have a negative impact on production.

He announced that the Chashma Canal would be inaugurated soon, and if the agricultural tax was not revoked, a massive protest would be staged with farmers after Eid.

Furthermore, the Governor expressed support for the employees who had been dismissed by the provincial government, assuring that the Governor House would always stand with the people of the province, offering support to those who faced injustice.

He said that this historic convention was a vital step toward fostering a dialogue between the government and the farming community, ensuring their voices are heard in the face of policies that could significantly affect their livelihoods.

## SSP Operations holds open court at Matni Police Station

**Syed Adnan**

PESHAWAR: In an effort to address public concerns and strengthen community-police relations, SSP Operations Masood Ahmad conducted an open court at Matni Police Station. The event saw participation from SP Sadder Division Malik Habib Khan, DSP Badhber Circle Zafar Khan, SHOs from various stations, local dignitaries, religious scholars, and community elders.

During the session, attendees highlighted various regional issues, particularly those related to security, law enforcement, and social concerns. Participants also proposed measures to combat drug abuse, illegal arms possession, and other social evils. Addressing the gathering, SSP Operations Masood Ahmad acknowledged the sacrifices made by the residents of Matni in the fight against terrorism, alongside

the security forces and law enforcement agencies. He commended the local police for their dedication in performing their duties despite the challenges posed by the area's proximity to the Khyber district.

Emphasizing the significance of open courts, SSP Operations stated that such sessions play a crucial role in identifying public grievances and providing on-the-spot resolutions.

He reiterated the police department's commitment to bridging the gap between law enforcement and the community, highlighting that divisional-level open courts have been initiated for this purpose.

He further warned against land grabbers, usurers, and those involved in drug trafficking and illegal arms possession, asserting a zero-tolerance policy against such activities.

He assured that strict action would be taken against violators without any leniency.

Recognizing the pivotal role of the public in ensuring a crime-free society, SSP Operations urged the community to cooperate with the police in eradicating drugs, illegal land occupation, and unlawful financial practices. He reassured attendees that resolving public issues remains a top priority for Peshawar Police, with all available resources being utilized for this cause.

The open court was attended by a large number of people, including SP Sadder Division Malik Habib Khan, DSP Badhber Circle Zafar Khan, SHO Matni Police Station Saeed Khan, SHO Hassan Khel Sher Nawaz Khan, and SHO Badhber Rafiq Khan. Local elders and religious scholars also participated in large numbers, voicing their concerns over collective community issues. In response, SSP Operations assured that immediate and

priority-based solutions would be provided for all valid concerns raised.

He further elaborated on the role of liaison committees and community representatives in strengthening police-public cooperation. He stated that the crack-down against drug dealers, land mafias, and illegal moneylenders had been intensified and that a strict zero-tolerance policy was in place.

SSP Operations concluded by reiterating the purpose of the open court: to identify and resolve public grievances efficiently.

He called upon the community to assist law enforcement in identifying and reporting criminal elements to ensure a peaceful and secure society.

At the end of the session, participants expressed their determination to contribute towards maintaining law and order in the region and fully support police efforts against crime.

## Arbab Khizar flays KP govt's plan to rename Arbab Niaz Stadium

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League-N's (PML-N) Additional Secretary for Information, Arbab Khizr Hayat, has strongly criticized the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for approving the renaming of Peshawar's Arbab Niaz Stadium as Imran Khan Stadium. He called this decision dishonest and unethical.

In a statement, Arbab Khizr Hayat stated that the provincial government, despite ruling for 11 years, has failed to initiate any major projects worthy of being named after its leaders. Instead, it has a habit of claiming credit for others' development projects. He recalled that the government had previously changed the name of Nawaz Sharif Kidney Center in Swat, and now it is attempting to rename Arbab Niaz Stadium, which he strongly condemned.

He further remarked that such irrational actions by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government clearly indicate its tendency to take credit for

**Renaming not a justified action: Muqam**

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Re-naming Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium after a national criminal is by no means a justified action, said Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam. He stated that changing the names of historical sites has become a habit of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). "Earlier, the name of Nawaz Sharif Kidney Center in Swat was also changed," he added. The provincial government is committing a crime by placing its plaques on projects initiated by others, Amir Muqam claimed. "The people are not even willing to hear the name of the PTI founder, yet the provincial government is naming historical places after him," he further said.

others' achievements. However, the public is well aware of its true agenda, which, according to him, revolves around anti-people policies.

He warned that renaming historical landmarks would bring nothing but disgrace to the provincial government.

Arbab Khizr Hayat emphasized that Arbab Niaz Stadium is internationally recognized, and renaming it after "a certified thief" like Imran Khan is an insult to the stadium itself. He questioned how an international stadium could be named after a person allegedly involved in corruption and anti-state activities. He vowed to oppose this move at every platform.

Expressing his concerns, Arbab Khizr Hayat sarcastically stated that the incompetent provincial government might even consider renaming the province after Imran Khan or Bushra Bibi in the future.

## Open Day event titled Academia Unlocked held at The City School

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: An impressive open day event titled Academia Unlocked was held at The City School Hayatabad Campus. The purpose of the event was to highlight the academic and extracurricular activities at the school.

The Chief Guest of the event was Director General of PEMRA, Sajad Ali Afridi. On this occasion, former Magistrate of Cantt, Miss Wazir, Director of Sports at Islamia College, Ali Hooti, Dr. Mujeeb Afridi from HBK, and Jamshaid Ali Khan were also present. Parents of students and school staff participated in the event as well.

During the event, students showcased their talents through tableaux, drama, model classrooms, and other creative performances, receiving great appreciation from the attendees.

Addressing the gathering, Director General of PEMRA Sajad Ali Afridi and other speakers stated that such activities play a key role in shaping students' personalities and making them well-rounded citizens. They emphasized that these kinds of activities are essential for the overall development of students.

The speakers further mentioned that alongside promoting education, co-curricular activities should also be given importance to teach young people social interaction skills.

They noted that positive recreational activities instill discipline and a spirit of healthy competition among children, motivating them. The speakers highlighted that the more students engage in extracurricular activities, the more beneficial it will be for their future practical lives.

The speakers encouraged the students to actively participate in both academic and extracurricular activities, thus making themselves, their institutions, and the nation proud. In the end, the participants praised the event, commending the school's modern facilities and the diverse co-curricular activities that contribute to enhancing the academic standards.



## Introducing youth to Modern technology is must: Ghulam Ali

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali emphasized the importance of introducing youth to modern technology, stating that if Pakistan aspires to stand among developed nations, young individuals must be given opportunities to engage with technological advancements. He stressed the need for adopting productive activities instead of mental and physical inactivity.

He expressed these views while addressing the K2X Tech Run (KTR) event at Crescent Park, organized by K2X Tech, where he also spoke to the media. As the chief guest, Haji Ghulam Ali inaugurated the event, which was a result of the hard work of K2X Tech CEO Aamir Saeed and his team. The event aimed to promote technology and fitness, featuring tech exhibitions, a running event, and networking sessions where modern technological solutions were showcased.

The event saw participation from leading companies, educational institutions, government, and private organizations, as well as students. Former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali appreciated the efforts of Aamir Saeed and his team, stating that such initiatives are crucial for the youth of Peshawar to help them benefit from technological advancements.

The K2X Tech Run was not only beneficial for professionals in the technology sector but also played a key role in promoting fitness and a healthy lifestyle. Haji Ghulam Ali remarked that only those nations progress that dedicate their time to work even during leisure hours and remain prepared to meet the demands of a changing era.

The youth present at the event expressed their gratitude for the encouragement and motivation provided by the former governor.



## KP Games: Peshawar dominates women's competitions

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The women's competitions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games 2025 concluded with Peshawar Region emerging victorious. Peshawar's female athletes showcased exceptional performances securing multiple titles.

In the final matches played yesterday Peshawar clinched titles in cricket, netball and basketball while Hazara secured victory in volleyball. In the cricket final held at Secondary Board Ground Peshawar defeated Mardan by eight wickets to claim the championship. The basketball final saw Peshawar triumph over Hazara with a score of 49-8. Meanwhile in the netball final at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex Charsadda, Peshawar edged past Hazara with a close 11-10 victory. In volleyball, Hazara's team defeated Mardan Region 3-1 to secure the title.

Additional Director General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ms. Rasheeda Ghaznavi, distributed cash prizes, trophies and medals among the players. She was accompanied by RSO Peshawar Kashif Farhan, RSO Ahmed Zaman, Reham Bibi, Jafar Shah, Abid Nazim, DSO Charsadda Mishal Malik, Coach Bushra and other notable personalities.

In the cricket final held at Peshawar Board Ground, Mardan batted first and scored 46 runs in the allotted overs, with Tehzeeb (11) and Maria (9) being the standout batters.

For Peshawar Maria took three wickets Fatima secured two, while Seema, Anaya and Tayyiba claimed one wicket each. In response Peshawar chased the target scoring 47 runs for the loss of two wickets. Salma remained unbeaten with 21 runs while Tayyiba contributed 11 runs. Mardan's Anisa took two wickets.

Earlier in the semi-finals Peshawar defeated Hazara while Mardan overcame Dera Ismail Khan to reach the final. The match was supervised by Pervez Khan and Bakhtiar.

**Male's Karate, Handball, and Throwball Competitions Conclude**

Under the supervision of the Director General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the ongoing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games saw Peshawar Region clinch the top spot in karate, securing six gold and two silver medals.

Kohat Region followed in second place with three gold and two silver medals, while Hazara Region finished third with two silver and four bronze medals. In handball Peshawar defeated Mardan by 30-25.

The prize distribution ceremony was conducted by Director of Hadaf College Muhammad Mazhar Rana, accompanied by Director of Operations Naimatullah Marwat, Deputy Director Jamshed Baloch, Syed

Jafar Shah, Shah Faisal, Khalid Noor, Arshad Hussain and other notable figures.

In the handball final held at Peshawar Sports Complex Peshawar emerged victorious against Mardan. Similarly, in throwball, Peshawar claimed the first position by defeating Bannu Region. In basketball the first semifinal saw Peshawar triumph over Kohat while Malakand defeated Bannu in the second semifinal to qualify for the final.

At Hayatabad Sports Complex Peshawar secured victory in the badminton final defeating Bannu 3-0. In football, Peshawar advanced to the final by beating Mardan 3-1 in the first semifinal while Dera Ismail Khan overcame Swat 1-0 in the second semifinal.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games feature a total of 17 male and 12 female sports competitions.







## In brief

### Issues to be addressed F.P. Report

SWAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary Information and Public Relations, Arshad Khan, has said that the provincial government is taking comprehensive measures to address the issues faced by newspaper owners and workers. Speaking to media representatives, Khan stated that the government is well aware of the problems faced by newspaper owners and workers and is launching a robust campaign to eliminate these issues. He announced that the government will ensure the monthly transmission of advertisement funds to address the current difficulties faced by newspapers and their workers. Additionally, checks will be issued for advertisements during Ramadan and Eid. Khan emphasized that the current government is taking prioritized measures to eliminate the problems faced by newspaper owners, modernizing the Information Department to prevent any injustice and ensure all newspapers receive their due rights. He added that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's performance is being showcased as an exemplary model across the country.

### Two women die in accident

SHANGLA (APP): At least two women were killed and three others injured when a Jeep fell into a deep ravine in Shangla district on Sunday. According to police, the accident took place in Liloni Kas Asharo, a village in Alपुरi Tehsil of Shangla. The jeep went out of the driver's control and fell into a deep gorge. As a result, two women lost their lives on the spot, while three people, including a woman and a child, sustained injuries. Police reported that the affected family was on their way to a condolence gathering when the accident occurred. The injured were immediately shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital for medical treatment.

### Two killed in car-truck collision

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): A tragic accident occurred on Qureshi Mor Bypass Road when a car collided with a truck, resulting in the death of two individuals and one other injured. Upon receiving the information, teams of Rescue 1122 and local police reached the spot and shifted the injured and the bodies to a nearby hospital. The injured person, identified as Naveed son of Muhammad Afzal, resident of District Leyyah was immediately shifted to a District Headquarters Hospital for treatment.

### Quality education must

FAISALABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said that education was imperative for national progress and the government was utilizing all available resources to provide quality education at doorsteps of the masses. He expressed these views while addressing the Silver Jubilee ceremony of Chiniot Islamia school and College Faisalabad where he also announced a donation of Rs.1 million for the institution. He said that Pakistan was passing through a crucial stage. "However, the government under dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, dragged the country out of multifaceted crisis and put it on the road to progress and prosperity.



**NOWSHERA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Irrigation Aqib Ullah Khan visiting Jaroba Dam in District Nowshera.**

## 3 bazaars of Kohat made Model Bazaars: Chairman DDAC

### F.P. Report

KOHAT: Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Kohat Shafi Jan MPA has disclosed that 3 Bazaars of Kohat i.e. Main Bazaar, Zargran Bazaar and Bannu Bazaar have been approved as Model Bazaars of the City and practical work on it will be started very soon.

This important project will help in promoting the local economy and business activities.

He made this disclosure while talking to traders on the occasion of his visit to Kohat Bazaars along-with Shehryar Afridi MNA. The local leadership of the party

was also with him on this occasion.

Shafi Jan MPA further disclosed, after the Eid-ul-Fitr, the installation of modern CT Scan and MRI machines will also be done at the Divisional Headquarters Hospital, which will improve the health facilities at the local level.

He added that these modern machines will help in making the evaluation process faster and more efficient. He also announced the activation of Sangherh and Police Hospitals.

Chairman DDAC maintained that the Safe City Project has also been approved to make Kohat a safe city.

He termed the Safe City cameras as an important measure for public safety and said that it will not only help in controlling the crimes but also increase the sense of security among the citizens.

Shafi Jan further said that all these measures are very crucial for the development of Kohat and the welfare of the people.

He added that all the measures taken for the development of Kohat are being decided in mutual consultation with MNA Shehryar Afridi and InshaAllah, under the dynamic leadership of Shehryar Afridi MNA, Kohat will definitely become a model district of the province.

### Officer bearers of Bannu Sarafa and Zagars Association takes oath

### F.P. Report

BANNU: Swearing-in ceremony of the Bannu Sarafa and Zargar Association Shah Wazir Bannu and Arshad Khan Punjab community were elected unopposed as the presidents of Bannu Sarafa and Zargar Association Provincial President Amin Babar Provincial General Secretary Fayyaz Durrani took oath from the newly elected cabinet. Officials associated with the associations of central districts and southern districts attended the ceremony.

Addressing the solemn ceremony held on this occasion, Provincial President Amin Hussain Babar General Secretary Fayyaz Durrani President Shah Wazir Khan Punjab Sarafa Association President Arshad Khan Haji Zahid Khan Amir Saleem and other speakers said that traders are the backbone of the country's development. Without giving rights and tax exemptions to traders, the country's economy cannot be strong.

At present, hundreds of types of taxes are imposed on traders, due to which the trading community is facing problems and difficulties. He said that thanks to the consensus and unity of the community, we will breathe a sigh of relief for traders across the province. He said that we have no choice but to give rights to the trading community of southern districts. We are here He said that the Sarafa Jewelers Association has a key role in saving the economy of the country and the province. Even today, we are ready to sit with everyone to resolve our rights and community issues, but we are not ready to accept any compromise on the honor and dignity of the traders. Bannu police crackdown on sit-in in front of Bannu Central Jail by banned organization

Several people were arrested, sound system and tent were taken into custody. Police raided the houses of Nasir Bangash, Ghulam Qiyaz Khan Jamshed Khan and other leaders, while the three leaders released videos on social media from a safe place. According to the details, a sit-in was held in front of Bannu Central Jail by the banned organization, in which 16-point demands were presented, including the transfer of PTM leader Haji Abdul Samad Khan to Sindh and other nations.

They said that the secret of development of nations lies in their culture and mother tongues.

They continued, all the developed nations that we see today, have made development by promoting their mother tongues, so it is necessary to pay attention to one mother tongue side by side learning of the other languages and set the path for development. They stressed for promotion of curriculum in the mother tongue in early stages.

ures and other important personalities.

The functions beside others, were also addressed by Professor Dr. Muhammad Almar Dilsoz, Malik Jan, Sahir Afridi, Ayub Afridi, Masoom Shah Masoom and highlighted the importance of Mother Tongue in detail.

The speakers said that the mother Tongue is the identity of any nation and any nation disrespect its mother tongue, it will definitely disappear.

## Jaroba Dam to make 930acre land cultivable

### F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Irrigation Minister Aqib Ullah Khan has said that in the light of the instructions of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the completion of ongoing development projects has been given top priority.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Irrigation Department has made it possible to complete 8 dams in this short period. The Jaroba Dam will make

930 acres of barren land cultivable in Nowshera district.

The provincial government is committed to public service. Provincial Irrigation Minister Aqib Ullah Khan expressed these views while talking to the media on the occasion of visiting Jaroba Dam in district Nowshera yesterday.

The Irrigation Minister said that currently, work is underway rapidly on the construction of a total of 36 small dams in the

province, while 8 dams almost completed.

He said that Jaroba Dam will provide 4.65 cusecs of water for irrigation, for which a 6.15 km long canal has been prepared for irrigation of adjacent villages.

Aqib Ullah Khan said that the construction of dams will not only solve water problems but also create new opportunities in agriculture, energy, tourism and employment, which strengthens the economy.

## World Mother Tongue Day observed in Kohat

### F.P. Report

KOHAT: On the eve of the World Mother Tongue Day; the Abasin Adbi Tolana Kohat has under the chairmanship of its president Feroze Sadiq Azim Bagh Kohat while the Qasim Ali Khan Adbi Tolana Dara Adam Khel held function at Ghaffari Mela Sheraki under the chairmanship of its president Muhammad Umar Afridi Khog which were attended by the eminent intellectuals, literary fig-

ures and other important personalities.

The functions beside others, were also addressed by Professor Dr. Muhammad Almar Dilsoz, Malik Jan, Sahir Afridi, Ayub Afridi, Masoom Shah Masoom and highlighted the importance of Mother Tongue in detail.

The speakers said that the mother Tongue is the identity of any nation and any nation disrespect its mother tongue, it will definitely disappear.

## Empowering Winter Festival concludes

### F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: The Directorate of Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) successfully concluded its landmark three-day \*Winter Festival\* today, marking a significant stride in youth empowerment and winter tourism promotion. The event organized by Eventourism and sponsored by Directorate of Youth Affairs, KP held from February 21 to 23, 2025, at the University of Peshawar's Baragali Campus, united 50 outstanding students from KP's newly merged districts, equipping them with leadership skills while celebrating their roles as community changemakers.

Mr. Zubair, Deputy Director Youth Affairs KP, graced the closing ceremony as the chief guest, distributing certificates of participation and commending the students' innovative ideas. In his closing remarks, he lauded the organizers and reaffirmed the Directorate's commitment to nurturing youth potential. "This festival has proven that our young leaders are not just the future-they are the present. Their energy, creativity, and dedication to community development and tourism inspire us to expand such initiatives," he stated. "We are proud to see these students return as ambassadors of progress, ready to transform their communities and showcase KP's cultural and natural treasures." He dedicated the success to the efforts of Dr.

Nouman Mujahid, Director Youth Affairs KP who is leading the way and setting new benchmarks. Dr. Nouman Mujahid is turning every stone to help youth become the leaders of the country by providing them platforms where they can nurture their skills, he added.

The festival blended skill-building, cultural exchange, and tourism advocacy through: - \*Leadership Workshop\*: Dr. Zafar, Lecturer Department of Social Work, University of Peshawar engaged participants in dialogues importance of diversity in promoting tourism, cultural coaching, winter tourism opportunities, sustainable development, and community leadership.

- \*Exposure Visits\*: Exploratory trips to Baragali and Nathiagali snow-covered landscapes highlighted the region's untapped potential as a winter destination. - \*Cultural Showcase\*: A vibrant night of traditional music, attire, and folklore from the merged districts fostered unity and pride.

- \*Games\*: Participants enjoyed playing the snow fight and tug of war games that helped them in creating a bond with each other and learner how individuals when come together make an impact. Mr. Zubair personally appreciated the organizers' efforts, particularly the event Chief Organizer Furad Ali, for their meticulous planning.

"The seamless execution of this festival reflects the power of partnership. Together, we've created a platform where youth voices lead the way," he added. The 50 participants from newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa -gender-balanced and selected for their exceptional community contributions-represented grassroots efforts in education, environmental conservation, and social advocacy. Their active participation underscored the Directorate's focus on inclusivity and grassroots empowerment.

Trainer Dr. Zafar echoed the sentiment, stating, "This festival has bridged divides and ignited hope. We extend our gratitude to Dr. Nouman Mujahid, Mr. Zubair and the Directorate for their unwavering support. These students are now equipped to drive change and position KP as a tourism hub."

Looking Ahead

Building on the festival's success, the Directorate of Youth Affairs KP announced plans to launch similar programs across the province, targeting marginalized youth and expanding partnerships with tourism stakeholders. "Our journey doesn't end here," Mr. Zubair emphasized. "We will continue to empower youth, amplify their voices, and harness KP's beauty for sustainable growth."

The event concluded with a renewed pledge to transform KP's youth into architects of socio-economic progress and champions of the province's cultural and natural heritage.

## Govt to promote and protect forests:Pir Musavir

### F.P. Report

Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Forests, stated that the provincial government is taking concrete measures to promote forests. Under the Spring Plantation Campaign, trees are being planted across the province, which will have a positive impact on the environment.

He expressed these views while speaking at the "Ashar Plantation" tree plantation event organized by the Forest Department in Kot Tehsil Dargai. The event was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Malakand, Assistant Commissioner Dargai, officers and staff of the Forest Department, along with students from government schools and local people.

Under the "Ashar Plantation" Campaign, forest department offi-

cials, in collaboration with the local welfare organization "Naway Sahar," students from government schools, and local residents, planted around two thousand trees of different species. Additionally, the Special Assistant on Forests, Pir Musavir Khan, distributed three thousand plants among the local people.

While addressing the plantation event, SACM Pir Musavir Khan said that under his leadership of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in line with the vision of the founder chairman Imran Khan, the provincial government is striving to promote and protect forests.

He emphasized that it is only through extensive plantation that we can combat climate change. He highlighted the importance of tree plantation and encouraged peo-

ple to plant as many trees as possible to foster a healthy and green environment. Pir Musavir Khan stated that trees absorb harmful carbon gases and help reduce the adverse effects of climate change. Speaking about the plantation efforts in Malakand, he mentioned that the Forest Department will plant a total of one million trees in Malakand.

He also praised the participation of non-governmental organizations in the tree plantation campaign, calling it commendable. He urged people to plant trees not only at their homes but everywhere, as trees are essential for environmental protection and enhance the beauty of the area. Pir Musavir Khan encouraged students and youth to work alongside the government to make the province greener and more prosperous.

## Dir traders reject govt's plans to impose taxes

### F. P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Traders' Association of Timergara has rejected the imposition of taxes in Malakand Division, emphasizing its long-standing status as a tax-free zone. Speaking at an oath-taking ceremony at Gorgori Chowk here on Saturday, the Anjuman Tajiran Timergara President Haji Anwaruddin reminded attendees that Malakand's tax exemption dates back to 1961, when the princely state of Dir was abolished under a 100-year agreement.

He urged the government to prioritize essential facilities and incentives before considering tax implementation, pointing out the region's lag in development, poor healthcare, education, and deteriorating roads. He also highlighted Malakand Division's struggles due to terrorism, floods, and earthquakes.

The ceremony marked the swearing-in of the newly elected office-bearers of the Tajik Market and Malik Market unions, including Chairman Ehtesham-ul-Haq, President Shams Durrani, General Secretary Mian Bakhtiar Zeb, Senior Vice President Salman Sheikh, and Information Secretary Nazir Yousafzai. Assistant Commissioner (AC) Timergara Abdul Aziz Khan, President of Zaib City Center Zahir Shah Khan, and Jamaat-e-Islami Lower Dir's Information Secretary Malik Sher Bahadur Khan were also present. Anwaruddin praised local traders for supporting the government during crises, recalling their role in assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) during counter-terrorism operations. AC Abdul Aziz Khan congratulated the newly elected cabinet and assured them of the administration's full support.

Young Doctors' Function

TIMARGARA: The Young Doctors' Association Lower Dir organized a function to honor Timergara Medical College Principal Professor Dr. Samiullah and newly appointed

District Headquarters Hospital Medical Superintendent (MS) Dr. Bakht Zada Akhunzada. The event was attended by several doctors, including retired specialists Dr. Shoaib Ahmad and Dr. Shahid Hussain.

Addressing the gathering, MS Dr. Bakht Zada discussed hospital challenges and assured that all available resources were being utilized to serve the public. He mentioned the provincial government and local representatives' commitment to improving healthcare facilities.

Principal Dr. Samiullah highlighted progress at Timergara Medical College and improvements at the hospital, expressing hope that doctors and staff would continue their efforts. Other speakers, including Dr. Bakht Sarwar, Dr. Shahid Hussain, and Dr. Najeeb, also addressed the audience.

The Young Doctors' Association presented honorary shields to Dr. Samiullah, Dr. Bakht Zada, and several other doctors in recognition of their contributions.



**CHINIOT: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh inaugurating the 25 years celebration of Islamia College.**





# Musk says US government workers must explain their work week or lose jobs

WASHINGTON (AFP): Elon Musk, the billionaire adviser to Donald Trump, said Saturday that all federal employees must submit an accounting of their work week or else lose their jobs, hours after the president pushed for “more aggressive” moves to slash government spending and waste.

“Consistent with President Trump’s instructions, all federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week. Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation,” said a post on X from Musk, whom Trump tapped to head the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Musk — the world’s richest person and Trump’s biggest donor —

has led the effort to fire swaths of the federal workforce.

His X post did not elaborate on what was required in the work accounting, nor what the deadline would be.

Earlier Saturday, Trump said on his Truth Social platform that Musk was “doing a great job, but I would like to see him get more aggressive.”

“Remember, we have a country to save,” the Republican leader added.

Trump has put the tech entrepreneur in charge of DOGE, tasking him with slashing public spending and tackling waste and alleged corruption.

In the latest cuts announced Friday, the US Defense Department is to reduce its civilian workforce by at least five percent starting next week.

Trump’s administra-

tion has already begun firing many other federal workers who are on probationary status.

DOGE is a free-ranging entity run by Musk, though its cost-cutting spree has been met with pushback on several fronts and mixed court rulings.

A judge on Thursday denied a union bid to temporarily halt the firing of thousands of people.

Musk said this week he would work with Trump for as long as he “can be helpful,” as the pair dismissed concerns over possible conflicts of interest due to the tech tycoon’s government contracts.

Trump showered praise on Musk, the head of SpaceX and Tesla, in a Fox News interview, calling the billionaire “brilliant,” “honest” and a

“very good, solid businessman.”

“If there’s any conflict, he will stop it. But if he didn’t, I’d stop it,” Trump said.

“We’re talking about big stuff, but he’s under a pretty big microscope. I mean, everybody’s watching him.”

Musk said DOGE was publicizing its actions on its website and that the transparency would hold him accountable.

“The possibility of me getting away with something is zero percent,” Musk said. “I’m scrutinized to a ridiculous degree.”

Musk has also waded into the Ukraine conflict this week, attacking President Volodymyr Zelensky and claiming Ukrainians “despised” their president — reinforcing Trump’s criticism of the wartime leader.



BERLIN, GERMANY: Co-leaders of Germany's Green party Felix Banaszak (2nd L) and Franziska Brantner (2nd R) attend the Greens Party election evening gathering to initial results in snap federal parliamentary elections on Sunday in Berlin, Germany.

# Sudan’s RSF, allies sign charter for rival government

NAIROBI (AFP): Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and its allies have agreed to form a parallel government, they said Sunday, despite warnings such a move could further fragment the war-ravaged country.

“The charter has been signed,” Najm al-Din Drisa, spokesman of the United Civil Forces, one of the signatories, told AFP.

The parties to the agreement, inked behind closed doors in Nairobi, said the charter establishes a “government of peace and unity” in rebel-controlled areas of the northeast African country.

The move comes nearly two years into a devastating war with the regular army that has uprooted more than 12 million people and caused what the United Nations calls the world’s largest hunger and displacement crises.

Among those who agreed to it was a faction of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N), led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, which controls parts of the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states in the country’s south.

Abdel Rahim Daglo, deputy and brother of RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo — who was notably absent — also signed.

The charter, seen by AFP, calls for “a secular,

democratic, decentralised state based on freedom, equality, and justice, without bias toward any cultural, ethnic, religious, or regional identity”.

It also outlines plans for a “new, unified, professional, national army” with a new military doctrine that “reflects the diversity and plurality characterising the Sudanese state”.

The proposed government aims to end the war, ensure unhindered humanitarian aid and integrate armed groups into a single, national force.

“Fragmentation” of the war, originally triggered by disputes over integrating the RSF into the military, has killed tens of thousands, with both sides accused of atrocities.

Last month, the US determined the RSF had committed genocide in the western region of Darfur.

The conflict has torn the country in two, with the army controlling the north and east and the RSF holding nearly all of Darfur and swathes of the south.

The army is currently on the verge of recapturing the capital Khartoum, after surging through central Sudan and regaining territory this year.

In its alliance with the SPLM-N, the RSF side now controls more of the south and has border access to Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

A spokesman for UN chief Antonio Guterres warned the move could “increase the fragmentation of the country and risk making this crisis even worse”.

But the charter’s signatories denied any intentions to divide the country.

Alaa El-Din Nuqd, a signatory representing professional unions, said the proposed government would benefit people in RSF-held areas “who have been cut off from essential services”.

Nuqd said the charter was a step toward “protecting the dignity” of war-hit civilians.

**Backlash**

Analysts say the move is aimed at strengthening the RSF after their recent battlefield setbacks.

Sudanese political analyst Kholood Khair said the RSF’s ultimate goals were to acquire an air force, facilitate humanitarian aid to areas under its control and secure a stronger negotiation position.

“They want to go into mediations as a government, not a militia,” she told AFP.

However, any arms sales to the potential government would still be in violation of a Darfur embargo which the United Nations has recommended expanding to cover all of Sudan.

“Ultimately, it is hard to

see this move gaining traction with anyone except the most ardent supporters of the RSF,” said Cameron Hudson, senior fellow at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

The move “looks like an effort to achieve politically that which the RSF cannot achieve on the battlefield”, he told AFP.

In the near term, he added, the new government would “further divide the Sudanese people and perhaps even the wider region as some communities and countries might chose to back this new government”.

Kenya’s hosting of the signing has drawn sharp criticism from Sudan’s army-aligned government which recalled its ambassador from Nairobi on Thursday in protest.

The foreign ministry accused Kenyan President William Ruto of acting on “his commercial and personal interests with the militia’s regional sponsors”.

In mid-January, Kenya and the United Arab Emirates signed an economic agreement, which they called a “historic milestone in economic relations between the two nations”.

The UAE has repeatedly been accused by both the UN and the United States of supplying weapons to the RSF — claims that Abu Dhabi denies.

# German conservatives win election but far-right AfD surges: exit polls

BERLIN (Reuters): Germany’s opposition conservatives won the national election on Sunday, putting leader Friedrich Merz on track to be the next chancellor while the far-right Alternative for Germany came in second, its best ever result, exit polls showed.

Following a campaign roiled by a series of violent attacks, and interventions by U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration, the conservative CDU/CSU bloc won 28.5% of the vote, followed by the AfD with 20%, an exit poll published by ZDF public broadcaster showed.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats (SPD) tumbled to their worst result since World War Two, with 16.5% of the vote share, according to the ZDF exit poll.

The Greens were on 12% while the FDP hovered around the 5% threshold to enter parliament. A late campaign surge by the far left Die Linke party gave it 9% of the vote while breakaway leftist party BSW led by Sahra Wagenknecht squeezed in on 5%.

The results set the stage for protracted coalition talks and likely mean a three-way coalition made up of one or two of the three same parties that were part of Scholz’s unpopular alliance that collapsed in November.

Merz, 69, has no previous government experience but has promised to provide greater leadership than Scholz and to liaise more with key allies, restoring Germany to the heart of Europe.

A brash economic liberal who has shifted the conservatives to the right, he is considered the antithesis of former conservative Chancellor

Angela Merkel, who led Germany for 16 years.

Short of a majority in an increasingly fragmented political landscape, however, his conservatives will have to sound out partners to form a coalition.

Those negotiations are certain to be tricky after a campaign which exposed sharp divisions over migration and how to deal with the AfD in a country where far-right politics carry a particularly strong stigma due to its Nazi past.

That could leave Scholz in a caretaker role for months, delaying urgently needed policies to revive Europe’s largest economy after two consecutive years of contraction and as companies struggle against global rivals.

It would also create a leadership vacuum in the heart of Europe even as it deals with a host of challenges including U.S. President Donald Trump threatening a trade war and attempting to fast-track a ceasefire deal for Ukraine without European involvement.

Germany, which has an export-oriented economy and long relied on the United States for its security, is particularly vulnerable.

Germans are more pessimistic about their living standards now than at any time since the financial crisis in 2008.

Attitudes towards migration have also hardened, a profound shift in German public sentiment since its “Refugees Welcome” culture during Europe’s migrant crisis in 2015, that the AfD has both driven and harnessed.

**MUSK WEIGHS IN**

Sunday’s election came after the

collapse last November of Scholz’s coalition of his SPD, the Greens and pro-market FDP in a row over budget spending.

The election campaign has been dominated by fierce exchanges over the perception that irregular immigration is out of control, fuelled by a series of attacks in which the suspected perpetrators were of migrant origin.

It has also been overshadowed by the unusually forceful show of solidarity by members of the Trump administration - including Vice President JD Vance and tech billionaire Elon Musk - for the anti-migrant AfD, and broadsides against European leaders.

The 12-year old AfD party took second place for the first time in a national election, according to the exit polls.

To be sure, the AfD is unlikely to govern for now as all mainstream parties have ruled out working with it, though some analysts believe its strength could pave the way for an AfD win in 2029.

Support for the AfD, along with a small but significant vote share for the far left and the decline of Germany’s big-ten parties, is increasingly complicating the formation of coalitions and governance.

EU allies are cautiously hopeful the elections might deliver a more coherent government able to help drive forward policy at home and in the bloc.

Some also hope Merz will reform the “debt brake”, a constitutional mechanism to limit government borrowing that critics say has strangled new investment.

# Russia’s top diplomat to visit Turkiye Monday: sources

ISTANBUL (AFP): Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit Turkiye on Monday, which marks the third anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Turkish diplomatic sources said Sunday.

Lavrov will hold talks in Ankara with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan, the source said, adding that the men will discuss

the war in Ukraine, among other things.

Turkiye, a member of NATO, wants to play a leading role in bringing an end to hostilities, as it tried to do in March 2022 by twice hosting direct negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv.

Receiving his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday, Turkish

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan asserted that his country would be an “ideal host” for talks on Ukraine involving Moscow, Kyiv and Washington.

Moscow and Washington have already begun a direct dialogue in recent weeks, against a backdrop of rapprochement between US President Donald Trump and Russia’s

Vladimir Putin.

Russian and American officials met in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to begin rebuilding their relations, a meeting denounced by Zelensky, who fears an agreement on Ukraine reached without him at the table.

Lavrov, who last visited Turkiye in October, is also expected to visit Russian ally Iran.

# Zelenskiy says he is willing to give up presidency if it means peace

KYIV (Reuters): President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Sunday he was willing to give up his position if it meant peace in Ukraine, quipping that he could exchange his departure for Ukraine’s entry into NATO.

“If (it means) peace for Ukraine, if you really need me to leave my post, I am ready,” an irritated-

looking Zelenskiy said when asked during a press conference whether he was ready to leave his post if it meant securing peace.

“I can exchange this for NATO (membership), if that condition is there, immediately,” the president added.

U.S. President Donald Trump has pushed for elections to take place in Ukraine, having branded

Zelenskiy a “dictator”, an apparent reference to the Ukrainian leader’s official five-year term running out in 2024.

Trump’s criticism of Zelenskiy came as relations between the two leaders deteriorated sharply in recent weeks.

Zelenskiy has opposed the idea of elections during a full-scale war, a position supported by his

major domestic political opponents.

The Ukrainian president also said he wanted to see Trump as a partner to Ukraine and more than a simply a mediator between Kyiv and Moscow.

“I really want it to be more than just mediation... that’s not enough,” he told a press conference in Kyiv.



PARIS, FRANCE: Thousands of people gather on the Place de la Bastille to remember the third year of war in the Ukraine after the invasion of the country by Russia in 2022 on Sunday.

# Pope Francis is conscious and receiving supplemental oxygen following a respiratory crisis

ROME (AP): Pope Francis was conscious but still receiving high flows of supplemental oxygen Sunday following a respiratory crisis and blood transfusions, as he remains in critical condition with a complex lung infection, the Vatican said.

“The night passed quietly, the pope rested,” Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said in an early statement.

Further clinical tests were being performed on the 88-year-old pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, and a more detailed medical update was expected later Sunday.

On Saturday, Francis suffered a prolonged asthmatic respiratory crisis that required “high flows” of oxygen to help him breathe through a nasal tube.

He also received blood transfusions after tests showed low counts of

platelets, which are needed for clotting, the Vatican said.

Doctors said Saturday his prognosis was “reserved.”

Doctors have said Francis’ condition is touch-and-go, given his age, fragility and pre-existing lung disease. His condition has revived speculation about what might happen if he becomes unconscious or otherwise incapacitated, and whether he might resign.

Francis was supposed to have celebrated Mass on Sunday morning in St. Peter’s Basilica and ordained deacons as part of the Vatican’s yearlong Holy Year commemoration.

The organizer of the Holy Year, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, celebrated the Mass in his place and offered a special prayer for Francis from the altar before delivering the homi-

ly the pope had prepared.

“Even though he is in a hospital bed, we feel Pope Francis close to us, we feel him present among us,” Fisichella told the hundreds of white-robed deacons.

A pre-written message that Francis had prepared for his Sunday noon prayer but did not deliver said he was “confidently continuing my hospitalization at the Gemelli Hospital, carrying on with the necessary treatment; and rest is also part of the therapy!”

The message noted the upcoming anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, “a painful and shameful occasion for the whole of humanity.”

Doctors have warned that the main threat facing Francis would be the onset of sepsis, a serious infection of the blood that can occur as a complication of pneumonia.

As of Friday, there was

no evidence of any sepsis, and Francis was responding to the various drugs he is taking, the pope’s medical team said in their first in-depth update on the pope’s condition.

Saturday’s blood tests showed that he had developed a low platelet count, a condition called platelopenia or thrombocytopenia. Platelets are cell-like fragments that circulate in the blood that help form blood clots to stop bleeding or help wounds heal. Low platelet counts can be caused by a number of things, including side effects from medicines or infections, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

Francis, who has chronic lung disease and is prone to bronchitis in winter, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14 after a week-long bout of bronchitis worsened.



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## Trump tightens grip on independent agencies

**TESTING** the limits of presidential power, Donald Trump this week tightened his grip on US government agencies that for years have taken pride in their independence overseeing such matters as elections, stock markets and labor unrest.

Trump's order on Tuesday was the latest show of force in a series that has removed critics from office, defunded federal programmes, loosened government oversight and frozen billions of dollars in spending approved by Congress.

The order allows the White House to shift the budget and policies of the Federal Election Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the National Labour Relations Board and other agencies whose day-to-day activities are traditionally kept at arm's length from the president, according to Reuters.

The White House said such oversight provided accountability. Trump has been outspoken in his opposition to what he sees as burdensome regulations, saying they are killing jobs and curtailing Americans' freedom.

Critics called the order another unprecedented power grab, while legal scholars said it would likely be challenged for overstepping the president's constitutional authority.

"What Trump has done is try to push through what are fairly accepted boundaries on presidential authority," said Justin Crowe, a Williams College political science professor.

"Trump's conception of power is one in which the president should be able to do whatever he wants and control whomever he wants. That's how he thinks government should work." Congress and presidents have traditionally supported the independence of these agencies, believing they needed to be insulated from political pressures to carry out their missions. But many of Trump's fellow Republicans see them as unaccountable and overly stringent on the companies and people they oversee. Trump has flexed his presidential muscle on issues big and small since taking office on January 20, saying voters gave him a mandate to pursue sweeping changes. He has fired and sidelined hundreds of civil servants and top officials at agencies, installed himself as chairman of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and called for a return to plastic straws.

On Wednesday night aboard Air Force One, he threw his support behind calls for the federal government to take over the US capital city of Washington, D.C. He also signed an executive order instructing the heads of every agency to undertake a review of all regulations, working with members of billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. The Trump order on Tuesday required the defective-product recall overseers at the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the bank insurers at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the power regulators at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to run any substantive policy changes by the White House. Each must install a political appointee on its staff who consults with the White House.

The order bars executive branch employees from expressing legal opinions at odds with the president as the official view of the government. The White House says this will prevent a range of agencies offering conflicting legal interpretations. "For the Federal Government to be truly accountable to the American people, officials who wield vast executive power must be supervised and controlled by the people's elected President," said the order, which refers to the regulatory agencies as "so-called" independent. Critics accused Trump of overstepping executive authority. "This is a dangerous power grab by an unhinged president willing to put Americans' lives and livelihoods at risk to consolidate his own control," said US Representative Frank Pallone, a New Jersey Democrat. "We are not subservient to a king or anyone else out of Washington," New York Governor Kathy Hochul said.

The executive order gives the president new leverage to intervene in a sector of the government that holds vast powers over industries from finance to energy, the internet and consumer products, and that has on occasion angered the corporations it polices, the Reuters report adds.

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## First step toward a balance between society, technology

Yossi Mekelberg

**T**ensions and feelings of unease between humans and machines are nothing new. There has long been a love-suspicion relationship between the two. Every generation holds some nostalgic sentiment for the time prior to the most recent wave of technological advancements entering our lives, only to realize that there is no reverse button to press.

There is also the fear that machines have the ability to threaten our ways of life, and indeed life itself. The French author, Jules Verne, laid much of the foundations for modern science fiction, and 120 years after his death his books seem all the more profound. He put it quite succinctly when he said: "In consequence of inventing machines, men will be devoured by them."

This is of course very much the case on the battlefield, and even holds true for the cars on our roads. But it is also true that technological innovations in medicine, education, industry, and even entertainment have prolonged, improved, enriched and, in some cases, transformed our lives for the better.

The latest technological development to instill in us both immense expectations and the fear of the unknown, is artificial intelligence, and artificial general intelligence, which is a hypothetical type of AI capable of matching or exceeding human cognitive abilities.

The potential of these new technologies is vast, in every walk of life, as they can improve processing efficiency, nurture innovation, minimize errors, perform risky tasks, and are capable of addressing complex issues more quickly and proficiently.

However, the fear that these technologies — these machines, if you like — are being designed to eventually operate autonomously brings to the minds of many Mary Shelley's fictional tale of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist who dared defy nature's boundaries by creating life from inanimate matter, and whose story ends in tragedy for both the monster and its creator.

The Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris this month convened to prevent similar, real-life tragedies through the regulation of technology, but within a regulatory regime that will not be an encumbrance on the development of this fast-evolving technology.

The aim, as stated at the conclusion of the summit, is to ensure that AI is "open," "inclusive" and "ethical." The meeting and its concluding statement were both very welcome developments, because for the first time there was an international understanding and acknowledgment of the need for global governance to regulate revolutionary technologies capable of changing society as we know it, but also for oversight that stops short of preventing such advances from realizing their full potential, especially when they are employed in the service of

society.

The aim is to move forward at a fast pace, but also to create the necessary breathing space to assess the implications for humanity of each new development along the way; in the case of AI, we might be prompted to ask ourselves what it means to be human, and to ponder the relationship between humanity and such advanced technology.

Some technological developments represent incremental changes that are easier to digest and, if necessary, can be reversed. But AI is not one of them. It already represents a paradigm shift and what we are witnessing now is only the prelude to potentially

**Nevertheless, AI systems lack transparency or accountability, and if and when they become completely autonomous, they could represent a rival "civilization" to that of us humans. Lack of transparency in AI means that we do not have full knowledge of the reasons for its decisions and actions. We require this so that we can ensure these decisions and actions are reliable and ethical and, more importantly, that those who are affected by them have full knowledge of the reasons behind them. Our experience of social media, for instance, was that we believed, at least during the early "age of innocence" of these platforms, that they were all about building social networks, disseminating knowledge, providing entertainment, keeping up with friends and family, and so forth. We discovered, however, that they are really massive data-collection machines that can be misused, in some cases to bombard us with commercial information. Even worse, we realized they can be exploited by others — for example, foreign governments or business interests — to manipulate our opinions, including during election cycles. Increasingly, content on social networks is not moderated. This is defended using the spurious argument of "freedom of speech," while exposing users, including children, to all sorts of unverified claims that could result in people adopting twisted views of the world.**

infinite prowess.

On the one hand, AI can assist with tasks that endanger human safety or health, such as rescue operations, bomb disposal, the management of toxic materials, or complicated surgical procedures in the operating theater that not even the steadiest of surgeon's hands could perform.

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speech," while exposing users, including children, to all sorts of unverified claims that could result in people adopting twisted views of the world.

The big tech companies are not interested in regulation because it can limit their profits. However, the result of unregulated progress, particularly regarding the near-infinite power of AI, might well be to change society beyond all recognition.

Moreover, if AI is able to make autonomous decisions, who is accountable when things go wrong? Is it those who created those machines? Is it those who pushed the power button to switch them on, or maybe their superiors? The data providers? Or is it those who failed to regulate the machines?

In education, especially studies for advanced degrees in which there has been a growing trend of moving away from exams in favor of assignments completed outside of class, the introduction of generative AI puts at risk the trust between students and teachers, and generally harms the learning experience and the development of necessary skills.

In the field of medicine, many ethical questions have been raised, including whether AI can or should be trusted to make autonomous decisions on matters of life and death, and who would be accountable for those decisions.

In addition, there is the issue of the disturbingly high levels of energy consumption by AI technologies; some experts have described this as catastrophic for the continuing efforts to tackle climate change.

Between the extremes of those who are opposed to technological advancements as a matter of principle (and AI is certainly a technological leap of faith) and those who are equally entrenched in their opposition to any form of legislation or regulation, for ideological reasons or out of an obsession with maximizing profits, there lies a third option, suggested by the Paris statement.

Innovation and technological advances will continue and present us with new opportunities and fresh challenges, but this time we should dispense with the fantasy that the industry in which they are happening is sufficiently socially aware or concerned about putting humanity and ethical values above their business interests and pursuit of power.

The Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris, and its conclusions, might therefore have been the first sign of a growing recognition among governments worldwide that they have a role to play in this new industrial revolution that is upon us.

It is a lesson they have learned from previous paradigm shifts about the relationship between humans and machines, one of "respect and suspect," in equal measure, so that we can maximize the benefits of AI without losing our humanity along the way.

## Europe's tears betray its weakness

Khaled Abou Zahr

**T**wo weeks ago, I compared the European defense posture to the "The Ant and the Grasshopper" fable, which ends with the ant stating: "You were singing? I'm glad to hear it. Well then, dance now." I did not think I would see the fable play out so clearly. Yet, after US Vice President J.D. Vance delivered a straightforward speech to European elites at the Munich Security Conference, the tears of the chairman of the conference during his closing speech were indeed those of the grasshopper who had left himself unprepared for the coming winter.

Long before this speech, I had noticed across social media an obsession among European elites, both in politics and business, with the current US administration. It has become the evil that is abandoning Europe. As an example, Elon Musk has become a target of criticism for his innovation in space since he took on the role of reducing waste in

was happening.

No longer can Europe sleepwalk. Vance's speech was truthful and balanced. He did not waste time on the consequences of the illness but focused on the illness itself. Hence, he briefly mentioned Ukraine, Russia and China to focus on the lack of direction from within Europe. Indeed, you cannot fight and defend yourself if you do not know what you stand for or what you need to defend. This is the core of it: the abandonment of Europe's values and their replacement with a powerful bureaucracy that is unrealistic, along with disconnected policies in energy, security and defense. It did not take much time for Europe's enemies inside and outside to take note.

This transformation needs to take place now, but it will of course take time. And when it comes to the transatlantic alliance — which is the bedrock of Europe's security — Europeans need to present a

**No longer can Europe sleepwalk. Vance's speech was truthful and balanced. He did not waste time on the consequences of the illness but focused on the illness itself. Hence, he briefly mentioned Ukraine, Russia and China to focus on the lack of direction from within Europe. Indeed, you cannot fight and defend yourself if you do not know what you stand for or what you need to defend. This is the core of it: the abandonment of Europe's values and their replacement with a powerful bureaucracy that is unrealistic, along with disconnected policies in energy, security and defense. It did not take much time for Europe's enemies inside and outside to take note. This transformation needs to take place now, but it will of course take time. And when it comes to the transatlantic alliance — which is the bedrock of Europe's security — Europeans need to present a strong plan that shows a true commitment.**

the US administration and inviting Europeans to do the same. Now, I am not dissatisfied with the conclusion that calls for greater European responsibility when it comes to key issues such as security, defense and space. Yet, I believe that this obsession is used by some to avoid taking corrective steps and evading accountability for severe past mistakes.

I am sure most Europeans would have cheered Vance's speech. However, this is not the case for the European elites, which are looking to deflect the blame for the flawed defense and security policies of recent decades on to the new White House. The theatrics are clear: "It is not our fault, it is Trump's. Europe did not get lazy, it is the US that is abandoning us. Europe did not underspend on defense, it is once again that the US is abandoning us." Yet, what is most worrying to them is not that Donald Trump may be destroying the transatlantic alliance, but rather that he is attempting to destroy the status quo and end Europe's free ride. Let's face it, Europe's dependency on the US forbade it from being proactive on the geopolitical issues it faced.

This is why the same reality check and transformation that is taking place in the US needs to take place in Europe. It is now key for Europe to act swiftly and take back control. It is a necessity to start rebalancing transatlantic relations. There is no escaping this reality.

Everyone talks about a partnership with the US, but the reality is that when you are dependent there is no partnership. Despite all the reports and conferences analyzing the new geopolitical world order, the Europeans have not once thought they should push for being stronger within the alliance and hence stronger together. We will not cry over spilt milk, but a stronger Europe would have stopped the war in Ukraine.

It would have taken the lead to prevent it in 2022, as well as in 2016 and 2017 to halt the escalation as it

strong plan that shows a true commitment. There is no doubt that Washington will react positively if there is a true will and adherence to this change.

Tears will not defend Europe. Tears invite aggression. It is true that the values of the transatlantic alliance have been flouted. As we say, it takes two to tango and the US has let Europe enjoy a free ride for too long. This is why today there is a historic opportunity for Europe to realign its values and recommit to the alliance as a true partner, not a subordinate. I can hear whispers of the easy way out in European corridors: of waiting for this presidency to end. That four years will not be enough to change policies permanently and that this tension will pass. But this is a dangerous and ostrich-like policy that Europe cannot afford.

Hence, Europe should present a clear strategy focusing on defense and geopolitical realignment. This should start by immediately increasing defense spending to meet NATO targets. Moreover, a clear strategy for strengthening European military capabilities should be put in place. And a unified stance on Russia and China.

Europeans need to take on a bigger role in global stability efforts. This would demonstrate its willingness to share the burden of security and economic leadership, reinforcing the transatlantic alliance. More importantly, Europe needs to gain a voice in the decision-making process and not just acquiesce to incorrect policies. Today, as the Europeans are acting as spongers in terms of defense, this is impossible, but when Europe carries its weight, Washington will listen.

I am optimistic that Europe can and will rise to this challenge, simply because we now know what needs to be done and new leaders are willing to act. This is why Vance's speech should not be met with the weakness of tears, but with the strength of action and change to propel the transatlantic alliance to new heights.



# Allowing racist tropes about Romani people to persist is dangerous

The black tea I sipped in the cafe seemed to curdle as I processed the words. An engaging conversation with an academic colleague had just turned bitter as I heard him repeat a slur and a biased narrative I’ve experienced far too often.

I was making an argument about the lack of recognition of the Romani victims of the Holocaust when he blurted it out. He said that “G\*\*\*\*\*”, a repellent term for the Roma people in my and his part of the world, were targeted by the Nazis due to “criminality”. This ill-informed assertion has long been used in certain academic works that depict the Romani people as inferior victims of the Holocaust.

While some official statements and ceremonies that commemorate the Holocaust acknowledge its Roma and Sinti victims – such as during the recent 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz – many institutions still depict and distance them as part of a separate genocide or as “other victims” of Nazi regimes. In part, this stems from the racist myth of criminality that accompanied the campaign of mass extermination of Romani people and the telling of history afterwards.

Still, this myth, strongly tied to biological racism, is still alive and well today, and it affects policies, behaviours, and attitudes towards Roma people even in allegedly progressive places like Canada.

In my research, I have seen that in the daily lives of Canadians, anti-Roma racism seldom reveals itself through explicit acts of violence, unlike the incidents I have experienced or witnessed in Europe. Instead, it often takes the form of everyday racism – implied in and perpetuated by words, insults, jokes, stereotype-based questioning, passive or active distancing, and incidents where Romani people are misunderstood, underestimated, overlooked, or ignored—sudden and day-to-day stings that not only irritate and hurt but also wound one’s self-worth and wellbeing.

Over the past few years, I worked with a research team from Harvard University’s FXB Center

and the Canadian Romani Alliance to identify and examine such indignities, labelled as “assault on worth” by sociologist Michele Lamont. We interviewed Romani and non-Romani individuals in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA), home to Canada’s largest Romani community, and put together our findings in a study titled *Confronting Major and Everyday Discrimination: Romani Experiences in Canada’s Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area*.

One of the most common experiences of everyday racism reported by

**A typical experience of Romani individuals is being casually told, “Oh, if you’re a G\*\*\*\*, you must steal, or you move around a lot and stuff.” These narratives can instigate harmful actions. As a 76-year-old Romani Canadian woman told us, she had been episodically suspected of theft after disclosing her Romani identity to varied co-workers. Feeling humiliated and wronged, she felt compelled “to open my backpack several times and say, ‘Here, look through my things.’” The old trope of criminality, along with others, gets amplified over and over again in pop culture, movies, television shows, and even academia. In the context of the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area, such daily and repetitive use of criminality-related tropes in social interactions leaves Romani people feeling misunderstood and discriminated against. A 25-year-old Romani woman spoke to felt that Canadians saw her as “just another G\*\*\*\*, another thiefing G\*\*\*\*”. Other Romani Canadians are cautious in their interactions with fellow Canadians, particularly those of European descent, and especially in sharing information about their ethnic descent.**

Romani Canadians we interviewed involved a suspicion of criminality stemming from the pervasive globally spread trope, associating thievery and deception with Romani identity and culture.

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A 25-year-old Romani woman we spoke to felt that Canadians saw her as “just another G\*\*\*\*, another thiefing G\*\*\*\*”. Other Romani Canadians are cautious in their interactions

Brazil, Israel, and the US.

Surprisingly to some, such incidents also occurred in family circles. Several Romani people shared experiencing ethno-racial insults or jokes related to G\*\*\*\* criminality originating from their non-Roma partners or members of partners’ families. A Romani interviewee shared that his non-Roma wife told him that Roma people are either “stupid or dirty”.

The expression “dirty G\*\*\*\*”, rooted in racist ideas linked to either physical and societal attributes or inherent biological and cultural uncleanness, was fre-

exonym G\*\*\*\* is generally considered a racial slur within Romani circles, although it is embraced by some Romani groups, such as British Romani people.

The equivalent slurs to G\*\*\*\* in different languages are also used, particularly by Canadians of European origin. Essentially, we noticed a nexus between immigration and the import to Canada of stereotypes from countries with significant Roma populations, which we also documented in the US in 2020.

he study shows that confronted with ethno-racial insults, Romani Canadians feel sad, ashamed, traumatised, unsafe, hurt, shunned, or overwhelmed; they also share that such experiences cause nausea, anxiety, panic, numbness, or feeling threatened. “Those experiences ... stay with us,” one Romani Canadian study participant told us.

While to many, the suspicion of criminality, the term G\*\*\*\*, and the related insults might be just words or automatic thoughts, for Romani Canadians and the global Romani community, they represent weapons of rejection, humiliation, and discrimination that we have endured for centuries.

It is crucial for our global community to stop weaponising racist tropes and racial slurs and using ethno-racial insults or jokes against Romani people and racialised groups. Allowing such harmful narratives to persist poses actual risks for real people.

In Norway, for example, the trope of criminality justified the recent creation of a Roma register, which was not different from the registers created in a number of European nations before the Holocaust.

In the US, similar tropes are leveraged to support policies of mass deportations and detention of migrants in detention camps like Guantanamo Bay, which, as Center for Constitutional Rights executive director Vince Warren noted, remains a global symbol of “lawlessness, torture, and racism”.

Persistent use of racist tropes and slurs not only contributes to the marginalisation of racialised communities, but it can also lead to dangerous normalisation of state and non-state violence against them.

# Adapting the African Union for a changing world

Hafed Al-Ghwell

In 1961, US President John F. Kennedy redefined civic responsibility by urging a nation to look beyond itself. More than six decades later, Africa faces a parallel reckoning: A continent of 1.4 billion people must confront the question of whether its premier political body, the African Union, can evolve from a symbol of post-colonial unity into a decisive force amid compounding, present-day crises.

The continental union was founded in 2002 to heal divisions and propel collective progress. Yet two decades later, its foundational aspirations have collided with sobering realities. Conflicts once confined by national borders have metastasized into transnational networks of insurgencies, mercenary forces, and military regimes.

Though quick to invoke the principle of pan-African solidarity, member states often retreat into sovereignty-first postures, underfunding of initiatives, and dilution of accountability. Meanwhile, the world’s powers, old and new, increasingly treat Africa as a transactional space, reviving colonial-era extractions in the guise of partnerships.

This is not merely a test of institutional effectiveness, it is a question of survival. The African Union’s ability to mediate crises, from the disintegration of Sudan to the Sahel’s extremist spiral, is hamstrung by reliance on external funding and inconsistent political will.

Donor nations, preoccupied with unrest and far-right angst at home, alongside strategic rivalries, are scaling back long-term overseas engagements, leaving gaps for opportunistic actors to exploit. Even the admission of the African Union to the G20 in 2023, a symbolic victory, risks becoming a hollow gesture if internal fissures prevent coherent negotiations on key priorities such as climate finance, debt relief, and free trade.

The stakes are amplified by Africa’s demographic and economic trajectories. By 2050, one in four of the global population will be African. In addition, the continent holds nearly a third of the world’s mineral reserves, which are vital for efforts to accelerate energy transitions and power the green economies of tomorrow.

Yet these advantages are tempered by vulnerabilities: 23 African nations are in debt distress, while conflict and climate-driven displacement are increasing. The mandate of the African Union, to secure stability, integration and agency, has never been more urgent. But, its current structure, still reflective of 20th-century multilateralism, is misaligned with 21st century “polyplurality.” It must make the transition from issuing open-ended resolutions to orchestrating robust action: from depending on donor funding to mobilizing the continent’s vast resources.

Top of the agenda is continental security and conflict proliferation. Recently, security challenges in Africa have undergone a silent revolution. Gone are the days of conventional armies clashing over obscure territorial claims. Now, non-state actors – violent factions in the Sahel, militia networks in the Horn of Africa, and resource-driven insurgencies in the Congo Basin – wage asymmetrical wars that defy borders and traditional military doctrine or security dynamics.

However, the African Union’s continued reliance on peacekeeping missions designed for interstate conflicts falters in response to such fluid threats. In the

regimes accused of election-rigging or human rights abuses, for example.

Conversely, collective security frameworks are selectively invoked – as in the case of counterterrorism efforts in Mozambique – but ignored when crises demand shared sacrifice. This duality breeds cynicism; the African Union condemns coups yet tolerates leaders who hollow out democracies through legalized repression.

Without financial autonomy and consistent enforcement of its own charters, the bloc risks becoming a stage for performative solidarity, on which resolutions are a substitute for action and external actors fill the voids with self-interested designs.

Thirdly, the strategic importance of Africa has surged in an era of fractured geopolitics, yet the treatment it receives from external powers remains

**Top of the agenda is continental security and conflict proliferation. Recently, security challenges in Africa have undergone a silent revolution. Gone are the days of conventional armies clashing over obscure territorial claims. Now, non-state actors – violent factions in the Sahel, militia networks in the Horn of Africa, and resource-driven insurgencies in the Congo Basin – wage asymmetrical wars that defy borders and traditional military doctrine or security dynamics. However, the African Union’s continued reliance on peacekeeping missions designed for interstate conflicts falters in response to such fluid threats.**

in Sudan, the country’s membership was suspended but the union stopped short of imposing sanctions or deploying mediators, fearing further destabilization. Similar hesitancy marked responses to coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, where deadlines for democratic transitions were extended despite minimal progress.

This pattern of symbolic condemnation without enforceable consequences erodes the credibility of the bloc. It also creates perverse incentives: Leaders facing internal unrest might prioritize regime survival over regional or continental obligations, in the knowledge that any response by the African Union would likely be measured, if there is one at all.

Meanwhile, external actors exploit this disunity. Russia-backed Africa Corps mercenaries, for instance, now fill security voids in Mali and the Central African Republic, trading “coup-proofing” military support for unchecked access to resources, thereby weakening the influence of the African Union and prolonging instability.

Secondly, as the bloc moves to tackle the continent’s challenges and assert its voice on the world stage, critical internal flaws remain. Ironically, its greatest strength, its embodiment of continental unity, is also its most glaring weakness. Member states champion pan-Africanism in speeches but routinely sidestep their obligations, with only one in three fulfilling their financial commitments. This chronic underfunding forces the union to depend on external partners for more than half of its budget, which distorts priorities and overshadows homegrown agendas such as industrialization or infrastructure development.

The contradictions deepen when leaders manipulate the principles of the bloc to serve personal or political ends. The policy of noninterference, designed to ensure mutual respect for sovereignty, shields

rooted in a transactional calculus. Foreign-backed mercenaries offer security assistance to fragile states in exchange for mineral concessions, deepening economic and military dependencies.

A backlash over unsustainable loans has shifted the discourse on avoiding Africa’s looming debt crisis toward the restructuring of deals that will still prioritize resource access over local industrialization. Meanwhile, donor countries are gradually scaling back direct aid and increasingly tying support to aggressive migration control, a pivot that sidelines long-term development goals.

On the bright side, the admission of the bloc to the G20 is recognition of Africa’s growing demographic and economic weight. However, it also puts pressure on the union to transcend internal divisions and shepherd member states toward pursuit of shared interests. Otherwise, disputes over key priorities will only cripple its negotiating power.

The bloc’s potential is also evident in initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, which could fundamentally reshape intra-African commerce. Yet such advances remain incremental, hampered by bureaucratic inertia and administrative stewardship without transformative vision.

John F. Kennedy’s call for interdependence rings differently today. The challenges Africa faces – climate migration, resource exploitation, conflict – are global in cause and effect. If the African Union is to survive, it will demand a serious confrontation of its contradictions: the enforcement of democratic norms while respecting sovereignty; reducing the reliance on donors while accelerating integration; and addressing hybrid threats with agility rather than outdated playbooks. The moment is here. The question is whether the bloc will seize it or be seized by it.

# An international municipal authority for Gaza

Zaid M. Belbagi and James Arnold

This “International Municipal Authority” construct proposed for Gaza is intriguing, if utterly alien to the baroque machinations of Middle East diplomacy as conducted hitherto.

Rather than some rote choreography of bilateral talks under international auspices, preoccupied as we are by sectarian borders, imagine a decisive conceptual leap – audacious, even radical, but necessary for stalemated realities.

The fundamental insight is simple: Bypass the stranded “peace process,” ignore zealous ideologues seeking maxims without means, and instead focus on governance in the concrete – administration, commerce, municipal order.

For a city-state with a tradition of cosmopolitan mercantilism, this means a global consortium guaranteeing its development as an entrepot, the charter being stability itself, underwritten multilaterally.

Precedent exists for such extraterritoriality: the Shanghai International Settlement thrived for almost 80 years even amid

China’s turmoils. Buttressed by international investment, a Gazan iteration of the concept could eclipse that prototype. Unlike Shanghai, enduring Gazan autonomy requires engagement with organic leadership, even co-opting factions through mutual interest. Any absolutist visions must be disciplined; grand bargains emerge through nuance, not absolutism.

The paradox of order in our time demands recognition of the fact that stability emerges not through grand diplomatic architecture, but through the patient cultivation of practical arrangements. Such governance succeeds precisely where ideology fails: in the quotidian machinery of commerce and administration, where mutual interest forges stronger bonds than proclamations. Through such measured accumulations of functional relationships, sustainable equilibrium takes root.

For the people of Gaza, an international municipal authority would raise living standards without forsaking

political identity. For radical Palestinian militants, it bypasses the nonstarter of recognizing Israel before securing practical gains. Indeed, by building administrative capacity from the ground up through business cultivation, such an authority would replicate Singapore’s success.

Crucially for Israel, it furnishes an exit from demographic nightmares via Gaza’s de facto city-state status. If successful, the model could pave the way for broader solutions, obviating the need for quixotic chimeras.

The essence of transformative change lies not in sudden rupture but in the steady accretion of practical arrangements. Each modest advance in administrative capacity creates a foundation for broader evolution; each commercial connection strengthens the sinews of stability. Like a Marshall Plan in microcosm, the artistry lies not in grand declarations but in the patient cultivation of institutions that can transform theoretical possibility

into tangible reality.

In geopolitics, credibility lies not in airy pronouncements but in on-the-ground facts, forces, and interests, hence the appeal of an international municipal authority. By aligning investor interests and Gazan incentives, organic order can emerge. Bolstered by multilateral guarantees, the heretofore insoluble becomes eminently soluble. The elegance lies in the universality of the underlying principle: Statehood derives not just from politics but practical administration. On such foundational truths, progress builds.

Consider the economic tapestry woven in this way: free trade zones attracting international commerce, maritime facilities reviving ancient trading routes, technology hubs nurturing indigenous innovation. Financial systems that evolve from basic banking to sophisticated digital platforms, while industrial zones are transformed from assembly plants into advanced manufacturing

centers. Through such economic evolution, dependency yields to self-sufficiency.

The architecture of governance emerges through the patient accumulation of practical arrangements, each advance strengthening the scaffolding of stability. Administrative capacity grows not through decree but through practice. Institutional strength builds not through proclamation but through daily operation. When governance serves commerce, commerce in turn sustains governance; a virtuous cycle transforming abstract possibility into concrete reality.

The vision is imperfect, the specifics unsettled. Yet by redefining the problem, possibilities arise. This is the essence of statecraft: imagination but rooted in reality, elevating tension management to conflict resolution. The international municipal authority proposal does precisely that and consequently, despite its novelty, merits consideration. At the very least, it brings much-needed creativity to the long, hard road ahead.

Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso and Dr. Sania Nishtar

Africa, has introduced the HPV vaccine. Together, more than 20.2 million girls have been reached, averting more than 551,000 deaths from cervical cancer.

The pace of HPV vaccination is accelerating. Globally, Gavi’s HPV revitalization program facilitated the immunization of more than 14 million girls in 2023 – more than the previous 10 years combined. And even more girls are expected to have been reached with Gavi’s support in 2024.

In Lesotho, we have so

far reached about 44 percent of the girls who are eligible to get the vaccine. This has widespread implications for gender equity, education and economic growth. By safeguarding their health, we are giving girls the chance to dream bigger, aim higher and contribute meaningfully to society.

The partnership between African countries and Gavi is a model of what equitable global collaboration can achieve. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has supported the immunization of more than 1.1 billion

children worldwide, including some 469 million children in Africa. This has contributed to halving child mortality and preventing millions of deaths among women and children.

In Lesotho, this partnership has extended beyond vaccines and has helped address systemic health challenges through innovation. Solar-powered health facilities have improved vaccine distribution, even to Lesotho’s most remote mountain communities. These advances are not only saving lives but also laying the groundwork for a more resilient healthcare system.

While African countries

are increasingly contributing to the cost of immunization, the journey toward full self-reliance is not yet complete. Since 2008, African nations have collectively invested more than \$940 million in Gavi-supported programs. But sustaining this momentum depends on continued donor commitment. This is a critical moment. Gavi’s replenishment for its next five-year cycle will determine whether countries like Lesotho can continue to protect their populations – especially women and girls – from preventable diseases. A failure to invest now would not only jeopardize decades of progress but also close the door to the brighter, healthier future that is within our grasp.

When we invest in women and girls, we invest in a healthier, safer and more prosperous world. To Gavi’s donors, our message is simple: stay the course. Your support has been instrumental in saving lives and empowering women and girls across Africa. Let us continue this journey together, ensuring that no girl grows up fearing diseases that we can prevent. Give every woman and girl the chance to reach her full potential and build a better future for Africa and the world.

# Investing in the health of women and girls





# ‘Turkiye keen to boost trade with Pakistan’

SIALKOT (APP): Ambassador of Republic of Turkiye in Pakistan Irfan Neziroglu has said that his country is keen to boost mutual trade with Pakistan, and pledged to help remove all hurdles to it.

He stated this during an important meeting with Sialkot exporters at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). SCCI President Ikram-ul-Haq, Vice President Omer Khalid and Sialkot business community representatives were also present.

The ambassador expressed hope that the trade volume between Pakistan and Turkiye would grow significantly in the near future. He assured his full commitment and support for further strengthening ties between the two countries and stressed that Turkiye was making efforts for enhancing and strengthening its economic ties with Pakistan. “Sialkot is the

hometown of Allama Iqbal and Iqbal is our common hero,” he added.

The ambassador highlighted key potential sectors for collaboration, including education, textiles, leather and pharmaceuticals. “Entrepreneurs of both countries should know each other more and work hard to expand trade and economic relations while the embassy will fully cooperate in the efforts,” he said and stressed the importance of joint ventures, business-to-business (B2B) interactions and sector-specific meetings between both countries.

He added that regular exchange of trade delegations would be crucial in exploring untapped potential. “I believe that commercial relations will make it easy for political, cultural and other relations. I will motivate the Turkiye business community to buy Sialkot-made products

directly from Sialkot instead of purchasing them indirectly from other countries at high prices. The bonds between the people of Pakistan and Turkey are strong and enduring, with both nations standing by each other through thick and thin,” he maintained.

He said that Pakistan and Turkiye are two brotherly countries having centuries-old relationship. “The Turkish people have great love for Pakistani brethren.” The ambassador showed keen interest in SCCI’s documentary “Sialkot, the City of Progressive People”, which was screened during the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Ikram-ul-Haq said that there was a huge potential to increase the volume of bilateral trade. “Sialkot is an important economic hub and totally export-oriented city

of the country. Sialkot represents an industrial setup producing specialized products that are supplied to top brands and buyers all over the world. We produce sports goods, surgical instruments, leather products, gloves of all sorts, textiles items, sports wear, martial arts uniform and accessories, musical instruments, kitchen ware & table ware, hollow ware, hunting knives, table cutlery/flatware, and military uniform badges,” he added. He said that Sialkot-made footballs, field hockey sticks, cricket gear and boxing gloves were used in international games including the Olympics and World Cups.

Earlier, the ambassador visited several leading industrial units in Sialkot. He witnessed the craftsmanship of artisans and took keen interest in the production process of sports goods and surgical instruments.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling hand-made wooden stools along roadside.

## Masroor’s extension as Chairman term lauded

KARACHI (PPI): Malik Khuda Bakhsh, a prominent figure in Pakistan’s business community, has lauded Masroor Khan on the extension of his tenure as Chairman of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) for an additional year. He voiced his confidence in Khan’s ability to address the challenges within the oil and gas sector with his extensive experience.

According to Pakistan Business Forum statement today, Bakhsh highlighted Masroor Khan’s impressive career spanning over 30 years in the energy sector, with expertise in downstream retail fuel, engineering, project management, and oil asset management across various international markets. He also reflected on the inception of OGRA by the federal government in 2002 to boost private investment and safeguard public interests through effective regulations.

Bakhsh underscored Khan’s commitment to his role as OGRA Chairman, commending his efforts to engage with stakeholders and formulate policies that serve the national interest. He anticipates that this collaborative approach will persist throughout Khan’s extended term.

## FTO to celebrate silver jubilee

LAHORE (APP): The Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Secretariat is set to celebrate its silver jubilee with a national seminar titled: ‘25 Years of Achievements’ here at Governor’s House on February 25.

FTO Coordinator Saif Ur Rehman informed media on Sunday that FTO Dr Asif Mahmood Jah would present a report, and the event would highlight the secretariat’s accomplishments over the past 25 years, showcasing its contributions to improving tax administration and promptly addressing taxpayer grievances related to federal taxes.

The seminar, he said, would bring together key stakeholders including government officials, tax experts, and representatives from various sectors, to reflect on the progress made and discuss future strategies. The celebration underscores the FTO secretariat’s commitment for transparency, fairness, and efficiency in the tax system.

# Saleem lauds launching of modern agricultural projects

HYDERABAD (APP): President Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry, Muhammad Saleem Memon, has praised the launch of modern agricultural projects under the Green Pakistan Initiative, calling it a commendable step towards strengthening the country’s agricultural economy and ensuring food security.

He stated that the government’s focused attention on the agricultural sector is a highly positive development, which will play a crucial role in meeting the country’s growing food demands and stabilizing the agricultural economy.

President HCSTSI Saleem Memon highlighted that initiatives such as Smart Agri Farms, Green Agri Malls, and Research & Innovation Centers will significantly contribute to the promotion of modern agricultural technology.

These projects will provide farmers with opportunities to learn scientifically advanced farming techniques, leading to a substantial increase in crop production. He noted that Pakistan’s population has now exceeded 250 million, making it imperative to modernize the agricultural sector to meet the increasing food demands. Unfortunately, Pakistan’s agricultural output remains below global standards due to traditional farming methods and the lack of advanced agricultural practices.

He pointed out that Pakistan’s average wheat yield per acre is approximately one ton, whereas China produces two tons, and European countries

between three to four tons per acre. Similarly, maize and rice production in Pakistan also lag behind other nations.

By promoting advanced technology, high-quality seeds, smart agriculture, and corporate farming, Pakistan can significantly improve its agricultural productivity and secure a prominent position in the global agricultural market—an essential step toward food security and economic stability. Chamber President also appreciated the Sindh government’s decision to allocate 52,713 acres of unused land to the Special Investment Facilitation Council for agricultural purposes.

He stated that utilizing this land for agriculture will open new avenues for agricultural development in Sindh, generate employment opportunities for farmers, and further strengthen the agrarian economy.

Emphasizing the importance of the Green Pakistan Initiative, he said that these projects will help address food security challenges and, if implemented consistently, can significantly boost Pakistan’s agricultural exports. In turn, will not only lead to the growth of the agricultural sector but also provide much-needed economic stability to the country.

Furthermore, President HCSTSI urged the government to expand this initiative by increasing corporate farming opportunities in Sindh. He stressed that fostering modern farming practices would enhance agricultural productivity, ensure farmer prosperity, and contribute to the overall economic development

of the country.

In addition to agriculture, President Saleem Memon highlighted the critical role of the livestock sector, which stands as the second-largest pillar of Pakistan’s economy after agriculture, contributing approximately 60% to the total agricultural GDP. With millions of livestock in the country,

Pakistan possesses immense potential in this sector. However, due to the lack of modern facilities, quality vaccines, superior breed development, and efficient processing units, the nation is unable to fully capitalize on this potential.

He stressed that if the government facilitates investors and traders by promoting modern farming technologies, establishing vaccination centers, feed mills, and cold chain logistics, Pakistan can exponentially increase its exports of halal meat, dairy products, and leather goods. Given the rising demand for halal meat in the global market, adopting international standards and introducing an effective export policy can help Pakistan generate billions of dollars in foreign exchange annually.

To achieve this, he urged the government to provide easy financing, subsidies, advanced research centers, and internationally accredited slaughterhouses to encourage investment in the livestock sector.

By taking these steps, Pakistan can transform its agricultural and livestock industries, ensuring long-term economic stability and securing a stronger position in the global market.

# Furniture industry stakeholders to review budget proposals

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) is going to convene a special meeting of all stakeholders to review and consolidate their budget proposals for submission to the federal government.

Talking to media here Sunday, the PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq added that the meeting aims to address key challenges and opportunities within the furniture industry, ensuring that the sector’s needs are adequately represented in the upcoming national budget. Stakeholders including manufacturers, exporters, designers, and industry experts, would assemble to discuss strategies for growth, innovation, and sustainability.

He emphasized the importance of aligning the budget proposals with the government’s economic policies to foster a conducive environment for the furniture industry. Key agenda items would be tax

reforms, incentives for local manufacturing, export promotion, and support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The council also plans to highlight the need for infrastructure development, skill enhancement programmes, and access to affordable raw materials. This collaborative efforts underscore the PFC’s commitment to strengthen furniture industry, which plays a vital role in Pakistan’s economy, he remarked.

from monthly and quarterly tariff adjustments and prior-year recoveries.

The government collected an additional Rs67 billion from quarterly and monthly fuel adjustments and another Rs140 billion through other price adjustments, according to the report.

Experts added that HESCO and SEPCO alone contributed Rs82 billion of the Rs158 billion losses, with an increase of Rs28 billion from last year. This clearly means that the government’s policies to appoint independent Boards of Directors at State-Owned Enterprises are yielding results, they said.

# PIAF hails action against smuggling, as under-invoicing threat to economy

## E.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) on Sunday hailed the Prime Minister’s action against smuggling, saying presently under-invoicing has become the real threat to Pakistan’s economy.

PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol, in a joint statement along with senior vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary said that the legal commercial import has been facing a serious threat of smuggling, forcing the documented sector of the country towards under-invoicing. So, there is a strong need to improve laws of Afghan Transit Trade and FTA, especially with China for high economic growth.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken notice of the presence of a smuggling network involving 78 alleged corrupt Customs officers and smugglers, as preliminary information reveals how money was collected and distributed among the

members of the network.

According to reports, the Prime Minister’s Office has asked the Federal Board of Revenue about the presence of the smuggling network, which was uncovered by one of the premier intelligence agencies. The PIAF chairman suggested the government take stern measures to control such kinds of trade misconduct.

Faheem Saigol called for strict measures to stop illegal trade, as the smuggling is not only causing massive shortfall in revenue collection but also discouraging the legal businesses and documented economy. Majority of the people don’t want to get them registered and prefer purchasing of smuggled goods mainly due to high duties on legal import, besides the benefits of no invoice, no record and no audit. There is a cost difference of around 50 percent between smuggled and legally imported goods.

Nasrullah Mughal said that it would only yield results when stringent measures will be taken at four borders along with Iran and Afghanistan to curb smuggling in cooperation with customs, Rangers,

coastal guards and armed forces of Pakistan.

Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary that under this catastrophic situation a country can stand only if it has a high tax base, strong industrial backbone and implementation of laws of ease of doing business like China.

Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary said that if we make a control on smuggling, non-availability of material through this source, it will force everyone to register themselves because investors certainly choose legal options. Moreover, detailed study of the sector should be conducted through associations of the related sector, improving the data of its manufacturing and capacity, he added. This will help in making decisions of what to import and what is the manufacturing capacity. The tariff decisions and FTA with China are based on this hypothesis. “Until and unless we don’t have major data, haphazard decisions will only ruin the local business.”

Faheem Saigol said that the present government should not be blamed for everything as the path, which has been adopted for the last several decades, cannot be changed at once.

Today, commercial importers can help in easing out from this epidemic by importing emergency relief medical assistance but hurdles in the form of unnecessary laws have been made in this regard. Laws are different for those who are well connected. When things are in control of certain elements, these factors create hoarding. Hence, delay in proper policy making, anything going wrong is like sugar disease which is a silent killer. Smuggling is a silent killer of the economy.

Further effect is that, Pakistan tax-to-GDP ratio is very low and due to lack of policy, the government is mainly responsible for this, as its tax machinery creates harassment among businessmen, discouraging those who are already registered. In this situation how unregistered businessmen will take a risk to get registered themselves, as without taking these headaches they are earning more in this way.

In this complex situation a large number of taxpayers who want to adopt the right track cannot do this and everyone has to be dependent on smuggled items, directly or indirectly. Government needs to show seriousness in this matter.

# Traders urged to facilitate people

LAHORE (APP): Ramadan-ul-Mubarak is a time for compassion, generosity and solidarity, so the business community should play its part in easing the financial burden on people particularly low-income families.

SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s former president Iftikhar Ali Malik expressed these views through a media statement here Sunday, and urged traders and shopkeepers to sell daily-use items, edibles, groceries, garments and shoes at minimal profit margins during upcoming Ramadan.

He said that reducing profit margins on essential items would not only benefit

fit the public but also foster goodwill and trust. He stressed that such initiatives align with the spirit of Ramadan that encourages sharing and caring for the less fortunate. He also appealed to traders and retailers to avoid hoarding as it often leads to artificial inflation during this sacred month and Islam strictly forbids hoarding and profiteering.

Malik also urged the government to monitor markets closely to ensure compliance with fair pricing policies.

He hoped that the business community would respond positively to this call, demonstrating ethical responsibility and contributing to a more inclusive and compassionate society during Ramadan.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Muhammad Haroon Senior Civil Judge Family Court Malakand at Batkhela, Case No. 3/FC of 2025, Next date: 13/03/2025, Mrs. Wala Izat d/o Said Nawab resident of Mohallah Saman Abad Batkhela District Malakand, Versus Mr. Waqar Ahmad s/o Abdur Rahman Proclamation Against Legal heirs: Waqar Ahmad S/O Abdur Rahman Resident of Tarkhobi Korona Karak Tehsil District Karak. In the above title case the service of you above named defendants is not possible with ordinary means, hence you are hereby informed through this proclamation to attend this court on 13/03/2025 at 08:00am in person or through appointed agent/attorney or through counsel, otherwise you shall be placed and proceed against ex-parte.

## Court Notice

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III/ judicial Magistrate II. Matta swat. Case #.181/1. Institution 21/11/2024. Next Hearing date 17/03/2025. Muhammad Ghaffar VS Shah Zameen. Notice to defendant 01 to 39.1/1) Mst. Charagha bibi widow. 1/2) Mubarak shah. 2/3) Muhammad Ajmal. 1/4) Rahmat Ali. 1/5) Bakht ali. 1/6) zia-ul- haq. 1/7) Naseeb dar(sons). 1/8) Mst. Rahmat begum. 1/9) Mst. Zeb ul Haram. 1/10) Mst. Abida (daughter. 2) khan baz. 3) isfandiyar sons. 4) Mst. Tajber sultana daughter hashim ali. 5) Gul Muhammad s/o Manjoor. 6) rozi khan s/o Zor Muhammad khan. 7) zor talab khan. 8) Muhammad karim (Muhammad karam sons Nazar. 10) Noorani sons Amir zada. 11) Mst. Bakht haram (widow). 12) Mst. Jehan Pari ( widow). 13) Nisar.14) Messon. 15) Nawab. 16) lhsan ullah. 17) inam ullah sons Afreen. 18) Mst. Shahzia. Mst. Nazia daughter Afreen khan. 20) Mst. bacha zameena (widow). 21) faiz ur Rehman (Hafiz ur Rehman). 22) Rafiq Ahmad sons nasir kham. 23) Mst. Usmania bibi. 24) Mst. Hanifa. 25) miaraj bibi.26) Mst. Sadia bibi.27) Mst. Merman. 28) Mst. Shahib jamala. 29) ghan-chak widow sir Zameen kham. 30) Muhammad kham s/o zameen kham. 31) Muhammad dost kham. 32) belawar kham. 33) Moambar. 34) salah uddin. 35) shahabuddin. 36) zain ul abiddin. 37) Sher Bahadar. 38) sir amad sons Ahmed Khan. 39) shah Naseeb dar s/o nasir kham r/o bedara tehsil matta district Swat. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 17/03/2025. at 8.00 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you. Seal of the court.

## Court Notice

In the court of Rabia Abbasi senior civil judge/alla Illaqa Qazi Swat. Case # 224/1 year 2024. Next Hearing date 27/02/2025. Imran Ullah s/o Badshah r/o panr muhalla fazal colony Mingora tehsil babozai District swat. VS Anwar ul haq s/o Muhammad yousaf. 2) Muhammad yousaf s/o unknown r/o muhalla madakhel tooital khadokhel district Buner. 3) Akbar bacha s/o Ghulam sarwar r/o Bartana matta district Swat. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 27/02/2025. at 8.00 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Javeria Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal. No.82/13. Institution. 3/7/2024. Date of hearing. 6/3/2025. Muhammad Rahim Shah etc VS Gul Zarena etc.Notice to No.2 Said Ghawar Shah s/o Ibrahim Shah alias Natay.3.Abdul Hamed Shah s/o Tujab. 4/2/2. Shah Bakh Zada. 4/2/3. Sahib Zada sons of Sher Zada Khan. 5/2. Said Ali Shah s/o Mst. Shamoazay resident of Anghapur tehsel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 6/3/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





In brief

Rumanza Open Pakistan concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Golf Federation (PGF) successfully concluded the ADT Rumanza Open Pakistan at Rumanza Golf and Country Club. The prestigious championship, featuring a total prize purse of \$85,000, witnessed participation from 37 international players alongside Pakistan's professional card holders recognized by PGF, said a press release. The four-day event, played over 72 holes, saw Ahmed Baig successfully defend his title, clinching the championship trophy once again with a remarkable performance. Project Director Brigadier Ahmed Ghumman extended heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Pakistan, PGF sponsors, Asian Tour and the management of Rumanza Golf and Country Club for their unwavering support and contribution towards the successful conduct of the championship. A significant highlight of this year's championship was the inclusion of five TARS-qualified referees from Pakistan who became part of the Asian Tour officiating team. The referees included Maj Rao Muhammad Ismail, Omar Javed Rao, Col Tahir Ayub, Col Zahid Iqbal, and Malik Mohammad Kamran from PGF. The closing ceremony was graced by Lt Gen Qazi Muhammad Ikram Ahmed, President of PGF, who attended the occasion as the Chief Guest and congratulated all participants, officials, and organizers for hosting an international event of such high standard.

Haaland ruled out

M A N C H E S T E R (AFP): Manchester City will be without top scorer Erling Haaland for Sunday's Premier League clash against leaders Liverpool due to a knee injury. The Norwegian suffered the issue in the closing stages of last weekend's 4-0 win over Newcastle and sat out City's Champions League exit to Real Madrid in mid-week from the bench. Haaland is not named among Pep Guardiola's substitutes as the City boss makes four changes from the side that was comfortably beaten 3-1 in Madrid to round off a 6-3 aggregate defeat to the European champions. Nathan Ake, Rico Lewis, Kevin De Bruyne and Jeremy Doku return in place of Ruben Dias, Bernardo Silva, Ilkay Gundogan and the injured John Stones. Liverpool can open up an 11-point lead over second-placed Arsenal with their first league victory at the Etihad in a decade. Arne Slot makes just one change from the side that drew 2-2 at Aston Villa on Wednesday as Luis Diaz replaces Diogo Jota up front.

Pogacar wins UAE Tour

PARIS (AFP): Tadej Pogacar rounded off his overall victory of the UAE Tour with a solo stage win on the Jabel Hafeet mountain on Sunday. The 26-year-old swept all before him in 2024 taking a rare Tour de France, Giro d'Italia and world championships triple, and the UAE Tour was his first outing on 2025. Pogacar attacked early on the 10km culminating climb to finish 33sec ahead on the day. "I didn't want to be surprised by a counter attack or anything. It was better to go at my own pace," the Slovenian explained. Italian climber Giulio Ciccone of Lidl-Trek was second Sunday and second overall at 1min 14sec, with Spanish rider Pello Bilbao of Bahrain coming third overall.

## Din Polo clinch Diamond Paints Polo Cup trophy

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Din Polo clinched the coveted trophy of the Diamond Paints Polo Cup, co-sponsored by Pro Health, after securing a thrilling 10-6 victory over Diamond Paints in the main final at the Lahore Garrison Polo Ground. A large number of spectators and families gathered to witness the final of the six-goal event, part of the Pakistan Polo Association's calendar. Prominent attendees included Diamond Paints Director Sabina Saman, CEO Mir Shoaib Ahmed, Mrs. Shoaib Ahmed, Director Mir Huzaifa Ahmed, Pro Health Director Ghulam Muhammad Laghari, Sardar Isa Laghari, and Club Secretary Major (Retd) Babar Mahboob Awan, along with a significant crowd of polo enthusiasts.

The final match between Din Polo and Diamond Paints proved highly competitive. Din Polo emerged victorious with a 10-6 triumph. Raja Jalal Arsalan and Muhammad Ali Malik led the charge for Din Polo, scoring four fabulous goals each, while Farhad Muhammad Sheikh and Mian Abbas Mukhtar contributed one goal each. For Diamond Paints, Mir Huzaifa Ahmed scored three goals, Raja Taimur Nadeem netted two, and Malik Ali Kuli Khan added one goal. Diamond Paints asserted their dominance in the first chukker, netting three brilliant goals against one from Din Polo, securing an early 3-1 lead.

However, Din Polo roared back in the second chukker, firing four spectacular goals, while Diamond Paints managed just one, bringing the match to an intense 5-5 deadlock. The third chukker remained fiercely competitive, with both teams adding one goal each, keeping the contest finely balanced at 6-6. In the fourth and final chukker, Din Polo took complete control, delivering a stunning four-goal blitz to seal a resounding 10-6 victory and clinch the title in style. At the concluding ceremony, Club Secretary Maj (Retd) Babar Mahboob Awan extended special thanks to sponsors Diamond Paints and co-sponsors Pro Health, acknowledging their efforts in making the tournament a success.

## Shiffrin claims historic 100th World Cup win



SESTRIERE (AFP): Mikaela Shiffrin, who on Sunday became the first skier to score 100 World Cup wins, admitted that she had questioned her decision to return to competitive skiing so soon after a serious crash in November.

The 29-year-old American, who suffered an abdominal puncture wound in a crash in Killington in November, produced an epic performance in Sestriere to win Sunday's slalom as world champion Camille Rast skied out on the first run.

Shiffrin, competing in just her second slalom since her crash two and half months ago, finished 0.61 seconds ahead of Croatia's Zrinka Ljusic. Another American Paula Moltzan was third 0.38sec behind her teammate.

Shiffrin, who finished fifth in the world championships and 33rd in Saturday's giant slalom, has held the record for most victories since 2023, having overtaken a record long held by Sweden's Ingemar Stenmark (86).

"It hasn't been easy," she said as she stepped off the podium. "Several times I've asked myself if I'd made the right decision by coming back to competition. "It certainly feels like I've been fighting a lot lately. To come back and compete with these women who are skiing so strong and so fast... I have wondered in the last weeks so many times whether it is the right thing to come back."

Since her debut on the world circuit in March 2011, Shiffrin has now won 63 slaloms, her preferred specialty, and 22 giant slaloms. She has also five super-G races, five in parallel, four in downhill and one in combined.

Her first World Cup win came in Slalom at Are in March 2012 when she was just 16. "My dream since I was a child has been to make beautiful turns and to improve every day," she said. "I just have to take this day and be grateful for it."

'Pretty special'

Shiffrin was leading by 0.09sec after the first run during which Rast hit the deck right at the end of her first run, ruling her out of the second. She then produced a superb second run, falling to her knees and pulling a double take to check she had pulled off the milestone win.

"It's pretty special to share it with Paula," she said as she held back the tears. "I could hear everyone cheering at the start when she went and I thought, ok, it's like a day of training. "Today a lot of things had to go right for me and wrong for others. Camille was going so fast... In the end I did something right too."

Ljusic takes over at the head of slalom standings 39 points clear of Rast while Federica Brignone, who won both the giant slaloms in Sestriere, leads the overall standings, 190 points clear of Lara Gut-Behrami.

Statistically, Shiffrin is a phenomenon with a 36 per cent win ratio in all the races she starts. She also reaches the podium in 56 percent of her races: indeed her win on Sunday gave her 155 podiums finishes, equalling another Stenmark record. She has won 16 Crystal Globes, five of which are overalls.



RAWALPINDI: Palyers of New Zealand cricket team take part in practice session ahead of their fixer with Bangladesh in ongoing ICC Champions Trophy at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. —INP Photo

## Rawalpindi gears up for ICC Champions Trophy

RAWALPINDI (APP): The First match of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 in Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium will be played between Bangladesh and New Zealand teams on Monday.

Besides interesting point table positions of the participating teams, the citizens of Rawalpindi are desperate to watch the match.

All arrangements by the government have been completed regarding foolproof security, traffic flow, spectators entry points at the stadium and check points.

The spokesman police informed APP that more than 5000 police

officials, contingents of Dolphins and Elite Force and expert sniper squads on important rooftops, have been deployed. Moreover, the security measures are fully collaborated with Pak Army, Rangers and other security agencies to provide the best environment for cricket fans.

The spectators arriving at the stadium to watch the matches will have to strictly follow the SOPs devised by the security establishment.

Triple security check points and walk-through gates are the standard entry procedures while bringing any kind of unauthorized equipment is strictly banned.

The city will host two more important matches of the tournament; Australia vs South Africa, and Pakistan vs Bangladesh scheduled on 25th and 27th February. All the matches will be played in day-night format providing an enormous opportunity to the spectators for sporting entertainment.

Hosting Champions Trophy matches has put a new zeal among the residents of Rawalpindi, a city that has contributed various cricket heroes including Miran Bakhsh, Shoaib Akhtar, Shadab Khan, Sohail Tanvir, Yasir Arafat, Muhammad Wasim and many others.

## Pakistan team bag SAAF Cross Country C'ships title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan team bagged the SAAF Cross Country Championships 2025, title here at the Fatima Jinnah Park (F-9) on Sunday.

Pakistan won both first position trophies in senior 10km and junior 8km competitions in the cross country athletics championship. The Sri Lankan team bagged the second position while Bangladesh and Maldives grabbed the third and fourth positions, respectively.

Gen. (R) Ehsan ul Haq was the chief guest on the occasion while Maj. Gen. (R) Mohammad Akram Sahi, Chairman SAAF, Brig. (R) Sultan Mahmood Satti, Chairman Islamabad Athletics Association (IAA), Brig. (R) Wajahat Hussain, President Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP) and Col. (R) Shahjehan Mir, Secretary General were also present.

M e a n w h i l e Ambassadors of Nepal, Sri Lanka and other senior diplomats from Maldives and Sri Lanka came to watch and encourage their teams in action.

The event was held under the auspices of Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP). This is the first time in 77 years that SAAF Cross Country was held in Pakistan. Last SAAF Games were held in Islamabad in 2004.

All member countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) of SAAF showed interest to participate in the mega event but at the last moment due to unavoidable circumstances, Indian and Bhutan Teams could not make it.

Meanwhile, the member countries which featured in the championship included Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The competitions were held in two categories including Men10km and Men under 20 years 8km. A track of 2km was made, for Category - 1(5 Laps) Category -2 (4 Laps).

For holding this event the credit also goes to Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC), Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) and AFP.



ISLAMABAD: General (Retired) Ehsan Ul Haq in a group photo with the winner team Pakistan during the SAAF Cross Country C'ships 2025 hosted by Islamabad Athletes Association (IAA) at Fatima Jannah Park.

## Andreeva becomes youngest WTA 1000 winner in Dubai

DUBAI (Agencies): Mirra Andreeva made history by becoming the youngest player to claim a WTA 1000 title after the 17-year-old won the Dubai Tennis Championships.

The Russian beat Clara Tauson 7-6 (7-1) 6-1 and her victory means she will next week climb into the top 10 for the first time.

Andreeva defeated Grand Slam winners Marketa Vondrousova, Iga Swiatek and Elena Rybakina on her way to the final. "I'd set a goal for myself to be in top 10 by the end of the year," she said. "Now it's the end of

February and I've already made it, so this is something incredible for me."

Denmark's Tauson, 22, had gone 2-0 up early on but Andreeva soon settled into her game to break back and level the match at 2-2.

There was little to separate the two as the first set went to a tiebreak, where Andreeva won the first six points before Tauson sent a return long. Andreeva then dominated the second set, breezing into a 5-1 lead before world number 38 Tauson's return went long again to seal the title for the teenager.

"I'm just super happy



with the way I was playing," added Andreeva. "I was nervous. I think you could see it during the match with all those double faults, some mistakes. "So I'm just really happy

that I could manage and deal with the pressure. And now it just feels amazing. "This is something I dreamt of and now my dream came true so I'm just, I'm speechless right now."

## Forest felled by Isak as Newcastle bolster top four bid

NEWCASTLE (AFP): Newcastle blew Nottingham Forest away with four goals in 11 minutes as Alexander Isak's double inspired a vital 4-3 win in the race to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Eddie Howe's side recovered from Callum Hudson-Odoi's early opener to run riot with a first half goal spree at St James' Park on Sunday. Lewis Miley bagged Newcastle's equaliser, sparking an astonishing spell of dominance as Jacob Murphy put the hosts ahead.

Isak netted twice in less than two minutes to reach 50 Premier League goals and leave Forest in tatters.

The Sweden striker has 19 league goals this season, taking him level with Manchester City's Erling Haaland in second place behind Liverpool's Mohamed Salah in this season's scoring chart.

Nikola Milenkovic and Ryan Yates scored for Forest in the second half, but it was too late for an incredible escape act.

After three defeats in their previous four league games, fifth-placed Newcastle are back in the hunt to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish. The Magpies are behind fourth-placed Manchester City on goal difference, with third-placed Forest just three points above them.

"I'm trying to control my thoughts and stay positive. We won the game and that's what we needed to do," Howe said. "It was a great performance in the first half, then a couple of frailties showed in terms of defending set plays.

"We can reflect on that. There are things we can do better. We pride ourselves on getting the details right."



Forest boss Nuno Espirito Santo added: "In the first half I didn't recognise our team. In the second half we were much better. "We made mistakes. It was two totally different halves. We started well and then they just rolled over us."

Newcastle keeper Nick Pope made his first league start since early December in place of Martin Dubravka. But Pope was partially at fault as Newcastle gifted Forest the lead in sloppy style after just six minutes.

Jacob Murphy lost the

ball in his own half as Hudson-Odoi pressured the Newcastle midfielder into conceding possession.

Hudson-Odoi wasn't closed down quickly enough by Dan Burn and the winger unloaded a powerful low drive that caught

Pope out of position as it flashed into the net. Miley ensured Newcastle's strong response to that early setback was rewarded in the 23rd minute.

Newcastle hold on

With Forest's usually rock-solid defence slow to react, Miley had time to control Lewis Hall's pass inside the penalty area and drill his shot through a sea of legs past unsighted keeper Matz Sels. Murphy made amends for his earlier mistake to put Howe's team ahead two minutes after Miley's equaliser.

Hall's driving run was the catalyst as the defender took Isak's return pass and hit a deflected cross that looped over Sels for Murphy to bundle home from virtually on the goal-line. Newcastle were firing on all cylinders and they struck again in the 33rd minute. Ola Aina used his

arm to block Hall's cross, conceding a penalty that Isak dispatched past Sels with an audacious lofted effort that left the keeper sprawled on his back as he tried in vain to claw it out.

Forest had no answer to Newcastle's intensity and it was no surprise when they conceded a fourth just 60 seconds later. Joe Willock raced unchecked through the Forest midfield and slipped his pass to Isak, whose shot from 12 yards took a deflection on its way past the wrong-footed Sels.

Newcastle eased up in the second half and Milenkovic reduced the deficit in the 63rd minute, flicking Chris Wood's cross past Pope from close-range.

When Yates steered home in the 90th minute, a nervous hush descended on St James' Park, but Newcastle held on by their fingernails.





## In brief

### Police bust dacoit gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have busted a dacoit, street criminal and bike lifting gang by arresting four accused and recovered three stolen motorcycles, cash Rs 1.7 million, weapons, two mobile phones and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Mandra police arrested four accused, namely Hameedullah, Saif, Rehmanullah and Zahid Khan, members of dacoit, street criminal and bike lifting gang and recovered three stolen motorcycles, cash Rs 1.7 million, weapons, two mobile phones and other items from their possession. During preliminary investigation, the arrested accused confessed to their involvement in several dacoity, robbery and street crime cases in the area of G.T.Road and adjoining areas. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Police are making efforts to net other members of the gang, he added.

### Police arrest two robbers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police arrested two most wanted robbers who were trying to flee after a robbery, said a police spokesman here on Sunday. He informed that New Town police succeeded to net two robbers, wanted in several robbery and street crime cases. The robbers were arrested when they were trying to flee from the scene after a robbery from a citizen. Police recovered 15 mobile phones, weapons, cash Rs 750,000 and other items from their possession. During preliminary investigation, the arrested robbers namely Ehsanullah alias Three Star, the ringleader of the Three Star Robber and street criminal gang and Ijaz, confessed their involvement in more than two dozen incidents of robbery and street crimes in different areas, New Town police acting on information about the incident of a robbery from a citizen responded immediately and succeeded to net the accused. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani appreciated SP Rawal, DSP New Town, SHO and police team for give quick response on robbery incident call and arresting the robbers. The attack on the lives and property of citizens would not be tolerated and the accused involved in dacoity, robbery and street crime cases cannot escape the grip of the law, he added.

### Mall Road to remain closed

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) have urged the citizens to use alternative route during construction work of the Mall Road underpass which would be started from Feb 24, Monday. According to a CTP spokesman, CTP have formulate a comprehensive traffic plan to facilitate the citizens. The construction work of the underpass on Rawalpindi Mall Road would be started from Feb 24, Monday. During the construction work, the Mall Road will be temporarily closed from MH Hospital to TM Chowk and the traffic going from MH Chowk to TM Chowk will be shifted to Haider Road parallel to the Mall Road, from where traffic will be able to easily go towards Katchahri Chowk using Marri Chowk, Murree Road and Rashid Minhas Road. No parking will be allowed on Haider Road and Murree Road up to the Jang Building U-turn.

# PTI's narrative has failed: Kausar Kazmi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Kausar Kazmi on Sunday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) repeated attempts to manipulate narratives were failed miserably. Talking to a private news channel, he said that all of PTI's political strategies, ranging from false claims about 26th November casualties to fabricated accounts of violence, have failed. He said that when PTI's approach of influencing

the state institutions and demanding intervention outside the legal framework was exposed and failed. "Rather than following due process, they resorted to chaos and agitation," he said.

He further pointed out the inconsistency in PTI's protests, stating that while they claim mass support, their rallies and demonstrations, especially regarding the 26th constitutional amendment, have seen little participation. "They chant slogans in

Lahore, but when the time comes for actual protests, there are barely any lawyers or supporters in sight," he added.

Referring to PTI's waning influence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kazmi noted that even with access to state resources, the party failed to organize a successful rally.

Their claims of popularity in KP collapsed when their own leader had to scold workers for using old footage to exaggerate turnout, he said.

## Commuters plea for 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.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling hand-made wooden stools along the roadside in the city. —APP Photo

## Murree's winter scenery steals hearts

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the weekend unfolded, the scenic hill station of Murree witnessed a massive influx of tourists, eager to experience the magic of the snow-covered mountains and revel in the crisp, cool air.

The roads leading to Murree were choked with cars, motorcycles and buses, as families, friends and couples alike flocked to this popular getaway on weekend, said a report aired by a private news channel.

Murree's winter scenery steals the hearts of visitors this Weekend where hill station's frosty landscape has left visitors spellbound, with its snow-covered peaks, frozen lakes and picturesque valleys, making it a perfect winter getaway, report added.

"I have been waiting for this trip for weeks!" exclaimed student from Islamabad, who was visiting Murree with her friends. "I

love coming to Murree, it's so peaceful and serene," said a businessman comes from Lahore, who was visiting the hill station with his family."

"The kids are having a blast, and we are enjoying the cooler weather," he added, as his children played in the nearby park. Meanwhile, the local vendors and shopkeepers were thrilled with the surge in tourist activity. "It has been a great weekend for business," said Rashid, a shopkeeper at the Murree Mall Road. "We have had a lot of customers and sales have been brisk," he added, as he arranged his wares to attract more customers.

Despite the chaos and congestion on the roads, the tourists were in high spirits, enjoying the scenic views, the cool weather and the various attractions that Murree has to offer. "It's a bit crowded, but it's worth it," said a

tourist from Karachi. "The views are breathtaking and the atmosphere is so lively," she added, as she strolled along the Mall Road, taking in the sights and sounds of the bustling hill station.

To manage the heavy influx of traffic, traffic police officials were also deployed at various points along the route, advising motorists to exercise caution and follow traffic rules.

"We have made elaborate arrangements to ensure smooth flow of traffic," said DSP Traffic, Murree.

"Motorists are advised to drive slowly, use low gear and avoid overtaking, especially on steep and slippery roads." The traffic police also devised a comprehensive plan to manage the traffic, including diversion of traffic at certain points, deployment of additional personnel, and provision of emergency services.

## Experts advise parents to monitor children's mobile screen time

ISLAMABAD (APP): The excessive use of mobile phones among children has become a pressing concern for parents, educators, and health experts.

With the widespread availability of smartphones and tablets, kids were spending increasing amounts of time glued to their screens, sparking fears about the impact on their physical and mental health.

According to this APP Scribe, many parents reported that their children were spending hours each day playing games, watching videos, and chatting with friends on their mobile devices adding that this excessive screen time was leading to a range of problems, including sleep deprivation, eye strain, and decreased attention span, they complained.

A mother of 10-year-old Sabrena expressed her deep concern about her

child's phone addiction saying, "I have noticed a significant change in my child's behaviour since they started using a smartphone and they are constantly glued to the screen, and it's affecting their mood, their grades, and their overall health".

She said that children have become inseparable from their devices adding that they can't seem to put it down, even during meals or family time.

"She feels like I have lost control over my child's phone use which is affecting my child's grades and they are not focusing on their schoolwork like they should be, they are constantly on it, and I don't know how to limit their screen time," she stated.

Health experts warned that excessive mobile phone use could have serious long-term consequences for children, including increased risk of

obesity, decreased physical activity, and impaired cognitive development.

A paediatrician Saira Jabeen said "Children need a balanced diet of physical activity, social interaction, and mental stimulation to develop properly adding that excessive mobile phone use can disrupt this balance and have serious consequences for their health and wellbeing.

She advised limiting screen time to 1-2 hours daily can ensure a healthy balance adding that encourages kids to engage in outdoor games and sports to promote physical activity and teamwork. She recommended monitoring children's mobile phone use to set responsible boundaries and limits, while also encouraging social interaction to foster essential communication skills and emotional intelligence.



ISLAMABAD: People watching ICC Champion Trophy cricket match playing between Pakistan and India on TV in a local restaurant in the federal capital. —APP Photo

### AIOU holds seminar on 'Cancer Awareness'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has organized a national seminar on 'Cancer Awareness'.

Dr. Muhammad Kashif, Associate Surgeon (Oncologist) at Federal Government Polyclinic Hospital was the chief guest, while it was presided over by Dr. Zaheer Ahmed, Chairman of the Department of Nutritional Sciences & Environmental Design.

During his lecture on cancer, Dr. Muhammad Kashif emphasized the importance of recognizing early symptoms to effectively combat the disease. While discussing the causes, stages, types, symptoms, and treatment strategies for cancer, he highlighted key warning signs, including lumps in any part of the body, non-healing ulcers or wounds, coughing up blood, persistent indigestion, blood in urine or stool, and unexpected vaginal bleeding. He stressed the need to consult a doctor if such symptoms appear, as early detection significantly improves treatment outcomes.

Dr. Kashif further stated that the most common type of cancer among women is breast cancer, while in men, prevalent forms include prostate, lung, intestinal, stomach, and blood cancers. He added that if diagnosed in the early stages, many types of cancer can be successfully treated. The seminar was organized by the Department of Nutritional Sciences & Environmental Design under the Faculty of Sciences, with Dr. Mehpara Jadoon serving as the event coordinator.

### Police seize over 7,000 Kites

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have intensified their crackdown on kite sellers and flyers, with the Industrial Area Police Station seizing over 7,000 kites and 6,000 spools of chemical-laced string in a major operation on Sunday.

A public relations officer told APP that officials arrested a suspect, Muaz Ahmed, and confiscated the illegal materials during the raid. "Kite selling is a punishable offence, and strict action is being taken against those violating the law," said SSP Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan.

## Prefabricated containerized data Center launched

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's first prefabricated containerized data

Center has been launched.

Talking to Gwadar Pro, Syed Arsalan Manzoor, Country Manager of Data Center Facility and Critical Business at Huawei, highlighted the importance of this project, noting that it will support the educational sector's growing needs for research, digital learning, and administration.

Utilizing the company's innovative modular technology, the data center aims to propel Pakistan into a new era of digital transformation, meeting the demands of the digital age and contributing to the nation's technological progress, he added.

The Center was jointly launched by Huawei Pakistan, in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of

Pakistan and DWP Technologies.

This state-of-the-art facility is set to significantly advance the country's digital infrastructure by offering efficient and scalable solutions for data management. The Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, inaugurated the state-of-the-art Astrolabe Data Center at NED University of Engineering and Technology in Karachi.

This landmark initiative is the part of the government's E-Pakistan initiative under the Uraan Pakistan program, representing a substantial step toward modernizing Pakistan's technological infrastructure and fostering a knowledge-based economy.

The Astrolabe Data Center is designed to revolutionize Pakistan's techno-

logical landscape by supporting big data analytics, offering Maktab ERP solutions, and providing high-performance computing services, including AI-Sadeem and AI-Meidsa, at subsidized rates for students, researchers, and industry professionals.

According to the latest data from the Data Center Map, Pakistan is home to a total of 22 data centers spread across its major cities. Karachi, the country's largest city and economic hub, leads with 10 data centers, reflecting its status as a central point for business and technology.

Lahore, known for its growing IT sector and industrial base, follows closely with 8 data centers, while Islamabad, the capital city and a hub for government and educational institutions, hosts 4 data centers.

## Social media makes wedding events expensive

ISLAMABAD (APP): In wake of high influence of social and digital media, a significant change in wedding traditions had been observed in the country.

Due to increasing social influence, wedding culture had undergone a significant transformation in recent years with addition of many new trends.

Now this simple celebration had evolved into a lavish, week-long extravaganza, complete with multiple events and excessive spending.

The rise of new, elaborate traditions such as "Bride-to-Be" parties, Mehndi nights, and Dholki celebrations had contributed to the shift mainly due to having such trends in tv dramas and showbiz personalities in social media.

These events, often characterized by lavish food, decorations, and entertainment, have

become an integral part of Pakistani wedding culture.

According to wedding planners and industry experts, the average cost of a wedding in Pakistan has skyrocketed, with some families spending upwards of Rs five million on a single event.

Imtiaz Niazi a wedding planner said the wedding industry in Pakistan has become a multi-billion-rupee market as families willingly spend exorbitant amounts of money to make their wedding celebrations unforgettable not for just family members but for getting popularity and likes in social media apps like Facebook, Instagram and tiktok.

However, not everyone is pleased with the shift towards excess.

Still many families feel that emphasis on materialism and extravagance has overshadowed the true

meaning of marriage.

"The focus should be on the union of two people, not on how much money we can spend on decorations and food," he stated.

Marriage Bureau head Mrs Khan said these excessive traditions have led to unnecessary expenses, with some families spending millions on a single event adding that this has created a culture of competition, where families feel pressured to outdo one another in terms of extravagance and opulence.

She said the emphasis on elaborate events, such as "Bride-to-Be" parties, Mehndi nights, and Dholki celebrations has shifted the focus away from the true essence of marriage.

She said, "It's time for us to reassess our priorities and return to the simplicity and elegance of our traditional wedding celebrations."

## CTP finalize all arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have finalized all arrangements to regulate traffic on city road during Champions Trophy matches to be played at Rawalpindi cricket stadium.

According to a CTP spokesman, CTP on the directives of Chief Traffic Officer, Rawalpindi Beenish Fatima have also finalized arrangements and implemented a comprehensive and organized traffic plan for the Champions Trophy practice match at the cricket stadium on Sunday, Feb 23.

CTP have devised a special plan for maintaining smooth traffic flow on the city roads during the Champion Trophy matches scheduled to begin at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Feb 23. Some 367 traffic police personnel, including DSPs/Circle in-charges, inspectors/sector in-charges and wardens would be on roads to maintain traffic flow during the matches to be

played from Feb 23 to Feb 27, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Beenish Fatima said. The CTO said additional personnel have been deployed to keep the traffic flowing on alternate routes during the movement of cricket teams.

The Murree Road, she said, would be completely closed from Faizabad to Double Road at the time of arrival and departure of the cricket teams from the stadium. During the time, the traffic coming from Islamabad to Rawalpindi would be diverted from Faizabad to Expressway, while the traffic from Rawalpindi would be able to enter Islamabad via Saidpur Road using 6th Road. Similarly, the traffic from Ghouseia Chowk would be diverted to the Kurry Road via Farooq Azam Road.

She said during the match, the Stadium Road, from 9th Avenue Chowk to Double Road Turn, would remain fully closed for traffic. The traffic coming

from Islamabad via 9th Avenue would be able to enter Rawalpindi through Expressway via Faizabad, and IJP Road from Pindora Chungi, Katarian, Carriage Factory and Pirwadhai Mor Chowk, while those going to 9th Avenue from Murree Road via Double Road would enter Islamabad from Faizabad.

The CTO said five spaces had been specified for parking of vehicles, from where the shuttle service arranged by the district administration would carry spectators to the stadium. She said the CTP would have displayed banners at different places for the awareness of people about alternate routes during the cricket match. The public could also get guidance in that regard from the CTP's social media pages and FM radio station, she added. Beenish urged the citizens to cooperate with the traffic police for smooth flow of traffic on city roads during the cricket matches.



**Org ready to provide care**

PANJSHIR (BNA): Mawlawi Faiz-ur-Bari Nawbahar, head of Economic Department, convened with Dr. Sayed Najmuddin Rizwani, representative of the “Children Need Us” organization. Dr. Rizwani outlined the organization’s commitment to delivering specialized medical programs aimed at treating children with congenital heart defects, cleft lips, cleft palates, and paralysis. Nawbahar stressed importance of upgrading and equipping local healthcare centers.

**70 Afghan refugees arrested**

KABUL (Khaama Press): Turkish police, identified and arrested 69 undocumented Afghan refugees. Five others were arrested on charges of human trafficking. The freight vehicle was detected while traveling from organized industrial zone in Van to the western cities of the country. The authorities identified a group of Afghan refugees and transferred them to migrant detention centers, while five individuals were referred to judicial authorities for charges of human trafficking.

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

## Over 14,000 Afghan refugees return home

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation reported that in the past month, 3,160 families, totaling more than 14,000 individuals, have returned to Afghanistan.

According to ministry spokesperson Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, over 10,600 of these returnees came from Iran, more than 3,300 from Pakistan, and nearly 150 from Turkey.

Haqqani stated: “Among them, 10,638 returned from Iran, 3,311 from Pakistan, and 146 from Turkey.”

Meanwhile, several Afghan refugees have complained about continued police mistreatment and forced deportations. They urge both the Islamic Emirate and the govern-

ment to resolve their challenges.

Atiqullah Mansoor, an Afghan refugee in Pakistan, said: “The arrests and deportations of Afghan refugees from Rawalpindi and Islamabad continue. The deadline set by the Pakistani government is approaching, and police behavior toward refugees is worsening daily.”

Naseem Shinwari, another Afghan refugee, said: “We have lived here for over 40 years. We urge the Pakistani government to grant us legal status.”

But what is the solution for Afghan refugees in neighboring countries?

Nazar Nazari, a refugee rights activist, explained: “Afghanistan’s Foreign

Ministry plays a crucial role. When host countries decide to deport Afghan refugees, the ministry should engage in strong diplomacy to negotiate their legal status.”

Mohammad Khan Talebi, another migration expert, suggested: “Through political negotiations, both countries should establish a legal framework to regularize Afghan refugees’ stay.”

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation has consistently urged host countries—particularly Pakistan—not to make unilateral decisions regarding Afghan migrants. However, Pakistan recently announced a new phase of mass deportations of Afghan refugees.

## New polio vaccination campaign starts today

KABUL (Khaama Press): The organization known as “Polio-Free Afghanistan” has announced that a polio vaccination campaign begin today (Monday).

The organization published a statement on their X page, mentioning that the campaign will begin in several provinces of the country.

However, the “Polio-Free Afghanistan” organization did not provide details regarding the specific provinces and the number of children who will be vaccinated.

Earlier, on Monday, the organization also announced the start of the polio vaccination campaign in the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Urozgan, Zabul, Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Ghazni, Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Nuristan, Kabul, Baghlan, Herat, and Badghis, via a message published on their X page.

The organization urged citizens to assist vaccinators in ensuring their children receive the vaccine.

Recently, officials from the Ministry of Public Health in Badghis reported that the first case of polio in the current year was registered in the Bala Murghab district of the province, affecting a five-year-old child.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only two countries in the world where polio has not been eradicated and continues to claim the lives of children.

According to the World Health Organization, since the beginning of the previous year, a total of 92 polio cases have been registered in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Among these, 25 cases were in Afghanistan, and 67 were in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, efforts to eliminate polio in Afghanistan are ongoing, the country still faces challenges in eradicating the disease.

Continued public participation and vaccination campaigns are crucial for ensuring the health and safety of children.

## Baradar meets with Afghan investors, traders



KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar met with Afghan businessmen living in Uzbekistan on Friday where he urged them to return home and invest in the country.

Addressing business owners at the Afghanistan Embassy in Tashkent, Baradar stated that Afghanistan has been freed from occupation and, after decades, is now enjoying an unprecedented level of nationwide security.

He added that significant steps have been taken to develop the country’s economic growth, major infrastructure projects have been initiated, road reconstruction is progressing rapidly, domestic production and exports have increased, and there has been a relative improvement in the trade balance.

“The investment and trade system has been cleansed of corruption and bureaucracy, and opportunities for investment in various sectors have been provided to both domestic and foreign investors,” he said.

Baradar stated that over the past twenty years, Afghans, especially wealthy individuals, had no security or dignity but under the rule of the Islamic Emirate, the assets and dignity of businesspeople and investors are now safeguarded, allowing them to operate in a secure environment.

He emphasized that investment in sectors such as energy, mining, agriculture, transportation, infrastructure, telecommunications, technology, and healthcare, among many others, is essential for the country’s economic growth and development. He urged Afghan investors to prioritize these sectors for investment.

The Deputy PM further stated that the Islamic Emirate gives its full support to the private sector, the facilitation of investment opportunities for returning industrialists, businesspeople, and both domestic and foreign

investors, as well as the advancement of domestic industries. He emphasized that the goal is to transform Afghanistan into a regional economic and trade hub and to further expand economic and commercial relations with all countries.

Addressing the investors and traders, Baradar said: “You are the pillars of our country’s economic development. Your investments, experience, and suggestions are valuable to us. Your investments and business activities bring economic benefits to all of Afghanistan.”

“We want to create even more investment opportunities for you so that you can utilize your expertise and capital to develop industrial production, agriculture, transit, and other economic sectors.”

“The Islamic Emirate is committed to supporting the private sector. For this purpose, it has simplified trade and investment processes, organized the tax system, and is fully committed to protecting all the rights of businesspeople.”

In conclusion, Baradar assured Afghan investors and businesspeople residing in Uzbekistan that their capital, wealth, and business activities are secure in Afghanistan and that the Islamic Emirate will provide all necessary cooperation whenever needed.

He urged all investors and traders to transfer their industries and capital to Afghanistan to contribute to the country’s progress and fulfill their responsibility in national development.

Afghan investors and traders residing in Uzbekistan expressed their support for the expansion of political and economic relations between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

Each investor indicated their willingness to invest between \$10 million and \$100 million in Afghanistan. They also shared their challenges in various sectors with the Deputy PM and he assured them of solutions.

## Sancharak residents lack access to clean water

KABUL (TOLOnews): Officials from the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Sar-e Pul province report that 70% of residents in Sancharak district still lack access to clean drinking water.

Due to the severe water shortage, the government has prioritized expanding water supply networks in remote and underserved areas of Sancharak.

Juma Haqyar, head of Sar-e Pul’s Rural Rehabilitation Department, stated: “Sar-e Pul is a mountainous province with a high demand for water. Currently, 70% of the population lacks access to safe drinking water.”

Habibullah Masroor, the provincial spokesperson, said: “Local authorities, from the governor to department heads, are committed to providing social and developmental services in remote areas.”

Meanwhile, residents of Arab Bai village in Sancharak, who recently gained access to clean drinking water, expressed relief over their improved living conditions.

Mahmoodul Hassan, a local resident, said: “Previously, people had to transport drinking water from neighboring villages such as Bazaar Bashi, Archatoo, and Khwaja Surkh using donkeys or vehicles, facing significant hardships.”

Abdul Qadir, another resident, said: “Due to water shortages, many villagers were forced to leave

their homes. Those who remained struggled to fetch water from distant villages.”

Khal Nazar, another villager, recalled past hardships: “We had no water and often went thirsty. Now that water reaches our village through pipes, we are extremely happy. Previously, a 20-liter container of water cost 20 afghani in Bazaar Bashi, and bringing it home was a struggle.”

According to the Sar-e Pul Rural Rehabilitation Department, only 20% of the province’s rural population has access to clean drinking water.

Local authorities are working to expand water networks across the region.

Deputy PM urges swift action on energy projects

## Deputy PM urges swift action on energy projects



KABUL (BNA): The Afghanistan’s Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, has urged Uzbekistan to expedite the implementation of the 500kV power line project and the Afghan-Trans initiative during an official visit to Tashkent.

In talks with Uzbekistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Jamshid Khodjaev, Baradar emphasized the urgency of moving forward with these critical energy projects. He highlighted the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and religious ties between the two nations, which have long facilitated strong political and economic relations.

Baradar noted that since the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, trade

between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan has seen substantial growth. He stressed the need for further cooperation in banking, customs, and trade facilitation to sustain and expand economic ties.

Proposing several measures to enhance bilateral trade, Baradar called for transactions to be conducted in national currencies, streamlined cross-border customs procedures, and improved market access for Afghan traders in Uzbekistan. He also urged the removal of trade barriers and the facilitation of visas for Afghan merchants to encourage smoother business interactions.

Reaffirming Afghanistan’s commitment to economic collaboration, Baradar called on

Uzbekistan to commence practical work on the 500 kV power line and Afghan-Trans projects. He also invited Uzbek investors to explore opportunities in Afghanistan, assuring them of full support and necessary facilities.

In response, Khodjaev reiterated Uzbekistan’s commitment to strengthening economic cooperation with Afghanistan. He affirmed Tashkent’s readiness to collaborate in various sectors, including trade, transit, mining, and railway development.

Technical committees from both sides will continue working on joint initiatives in banking, investment, and infrastructure, including efforts to expand Afghanistan’s railway network.

## Iran to end residency extension for Afghans

TEHRAN (Amu TV): Iran will no longer extend the census registration documents issued to Afghan migrants, with the current permits set to expire at the end of the year, a senior Interior Ministry official said.

Nader YarAhmadi, an adviser to the interior minister and head of the ministry’s foreign migrants’ affairs center, made the announcement on Saturday during a gathering of migration officials from across Iran.

“The foreign nationals’ census program was implemented to identify undocumented individuals and prevent legal complications for them,” YarAhmadi said. “It has not created any commitments for the Iranian government. Those identified as being in designated useful jobs may remain in the country.”

He added that Iranian authorities are planning to issue a new, separate residency document for Afghan migrants next year, but those without legal status will no longer be allowed to stay.

According to the official, nearly 99 percent of migrants in Iran have been registered and issued “Amayesh cards,” a residency permit for certain non-Iranian nationals.

On employment regulations, YarAhmadi said registered migrants can work legally in Iran by obtaining an employment card and work permit.

Regarding Afghan migrants specifically, he said, “These individuals must return to their own country. If they wish to come back, they must obtain passports and legal visas. This process will be coordinated with the Afghan government through its embassy.”

## Uruzgan residents resent high power tariffs

TARINKOT (Pajhwok): Some residents in northern Uruzgan province have complained against the high rate of electricity in the province and said they were unable to purchase it.

One kilowatt of electricity produced from diesel cost over 40 afis. Imported electricity which is economical has not yet extended to Uruzgan and people used diesel to produce electricity.

Shafiullah, a resident of Tarinkot city, the capital of Uruzgan, said that he used the electricity in his house, which cost him about 8,000 Afis in just one month.

According to him, they were unable to meet their expenses therefore, they are now using solar power in their house.

Similarly, Musa Jan, another resident of Tarinkot city and shopkeeper, said that due to the high price and lack of electricity, he has been forced to use generators.

Similarly, Samiullah, a resident of the fourth district of Tarinkot city, said that the government should reduce the price of diesel electricity in the province and supply imported electricity to them.

Mullah Sifatullah Inam, the head of the electricity department, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the current price of electricity ranged from 28 Afghanis to 42 Afghanis.

According to him, these prices vary for private homes, commercial mar-

kets, government and other institutions.

He said efforts were being made to transmit electricity from Kajaki Dam to Dehrawood district of the province, and the work of extending the line has been completed by 45 percent.

He said: “A survey has also been conducted to extend a 220-volt line from the Kandahar substation to Tarinkot, but its practical work has been delayed due to lack of budget.”

Inam added that 25 acres of land had been allocated in Tarinkot city for the construction of a 3-megawatt solar power network in Uruzgan and a survey has been conducted, but other work has not yet begun.

Hafiz Samiullah Ikrimah, a spokesman for the provincial governor, told Pajhwok Afghan News that efforts have been launched to activate solar and imported electricity at the provincial level.

He said: “A survey has also been conducted to extend imported electricity lines from Kandahar and Helmand provinces, but since the route to extend the lines from Kandahar is shorter and cheaper than from Kajaki, it has been decided to transfer imported electricity from neighboring Kandahar.”

Officials in Uruzgan did not respond to public complaints about the increase in the price of state-owned diesel electricity.

## Rickshaw surge: Affordable transport or traffic problem

KABUL (TOLOnews): The rapid increase in rickshaws in Herat city has become a major traffic problem, creating significant challenges for residents.

Locals say many rickshaw drivers ignore traffic laws, leading to disorder, congestion, and frequent accidents.

Bismillah, a Herat resident, stated: “Rickshaws have disrupted city traffic, and many people are complaining about the situation. More than 50,000 rickshaws are operating in the city, far exceeding Herat’s capacity. We demand that authorities regulate their uncontrolled growth.”

Faisal, a resident, said: “Rickshaws damage other vehicles and even endanger lives. Several times, rickshaws have crashed into my car.”

Nisar Ahmad expressed frustration over the lack of regulation: “Herat cannot handle this many rickshaws. Every day, 100 to 150 new rickshaws are added, yet no authority is taking serious action to control them.”

According to Herat’s Traffic Management, around 50,000 rickshaws are currently operating in the city, but only 5,000 are officially registered.

Ghulam Nabi Farkhi, deputy head of Herat Traffic Management, stated: “When Herat’s roads were originally built, there were only 2,000 vehicles. Now, there are over 300,000, including cars, rickshaws, and motorcycles.”

The Herat Traffic Police emphasized that with the rising number of vehicles, especially rickshaws, there is a pressing need to expand the city’s roads.

Sayed Ashraf Sadat, a civil society activist, criticized the situation: “The presence of 50,000 rickshaws in Herat has created massive disorder, causing major problems for the people. While affordable transportation is essential, proper management of these



vehicles is also necessary.”

Herat, one of Afghanistan’s largest cities, has seen a dramatic rise in rickshaws in recent years. While they provide low-cost transport, their poor regulation has turned them into a serious urban challenge.

Residents have urged the traffic department to implement strict measures to prevent further congestion and disorder on Herat’s main roads.

## 2 radio stations allowed to resume operations

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban-run Ministry of Information and Culture announced that two radio stations, Jawanan and Begum, have been granted permission to resume operations under certain conditions.

In a statement, the ministry claimed that both media outlets had previously operated in violation of Taliban policies and had collaborated with foreign media organizations banned by the group. The ministry emphasized that it supports media operations

that align with national interests, religious values, and Afghan traditions.

The stations were raided on Feb. 4 by agents from the Taliban’s General Directorate of Intelligence and the Ministry of Information and Culture. The operation targeted Jawanan Radio, which caters to male audiences, and Radio Begum, which focuses on women’s issues. Two employees—a sports journalist from Jawanan Radio and an editor from Radio Begum—were

detained and remain in custody at an undisclosed location.

Radio Begum, which launched on March 8, 2021, has continued to broadcast despite increasing restrictions. In response to mounting Taliban censorship, the Begum Organization for Women expanded its initiatives, launching Begum TV in March 2024 and an online educational platform in 2023 to provide home-based learning programs for Afghan girls barred from attending school.



# Gandapur opens center of excellence in Agriculture Department

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, visited the Agriculture Research Institute in Tarnab, accompanied by provincial ministers Major (Retd) Muhammad Sajjad and Pakhtun Yar, as well as the Commissioner of Peshawar and senior officials from the agriculture department.

During his visit, the Chief Minister inaugurated the newly established Center of Excellence, a state-of-the-art research facility built at a cost of PKR 650 million, aimed at advancing agricultural research in the province.

As part of the initiative to strengthen the agriculture sector, the Chief Minister also handed over 90 motorcycles, 6 tractors,

and 6 mini-trucks to the agriculture department. He toured various stalls set up at the research institute, showcasing innovations and advancements in the sector.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, CM Gandapur emphasized the importance of utilizing national resources efficiently for economic development. He lamented that despite Pakistan's abundant natural resources, past governments failed to leverage them wisely.

He stressed the need for financial self-reliance to achieve true independence and highlighted his administration's commitment to strengthening provincial institutions financially and operationally.

The Chief Minister underscored the critical

role of research in enhancing agricultural productivity, stating that the newly established Center of Excellence would be instrumental in achieving this goal.

He reaffirmed the government's dedication to food security and increased agricultural output, citing expedited completion of long-pending small dam projects.

Over the past year, these efforts have brought 400,000 kanals of land under cultivation, with an additional four small dam projects set for completion this year, adding another 400,000 kanals of arable land.

He further noted progress on the CRBC Lift Canal project, which, upon completion, will bring millions of acres of barren land under cultivation, significantly con-

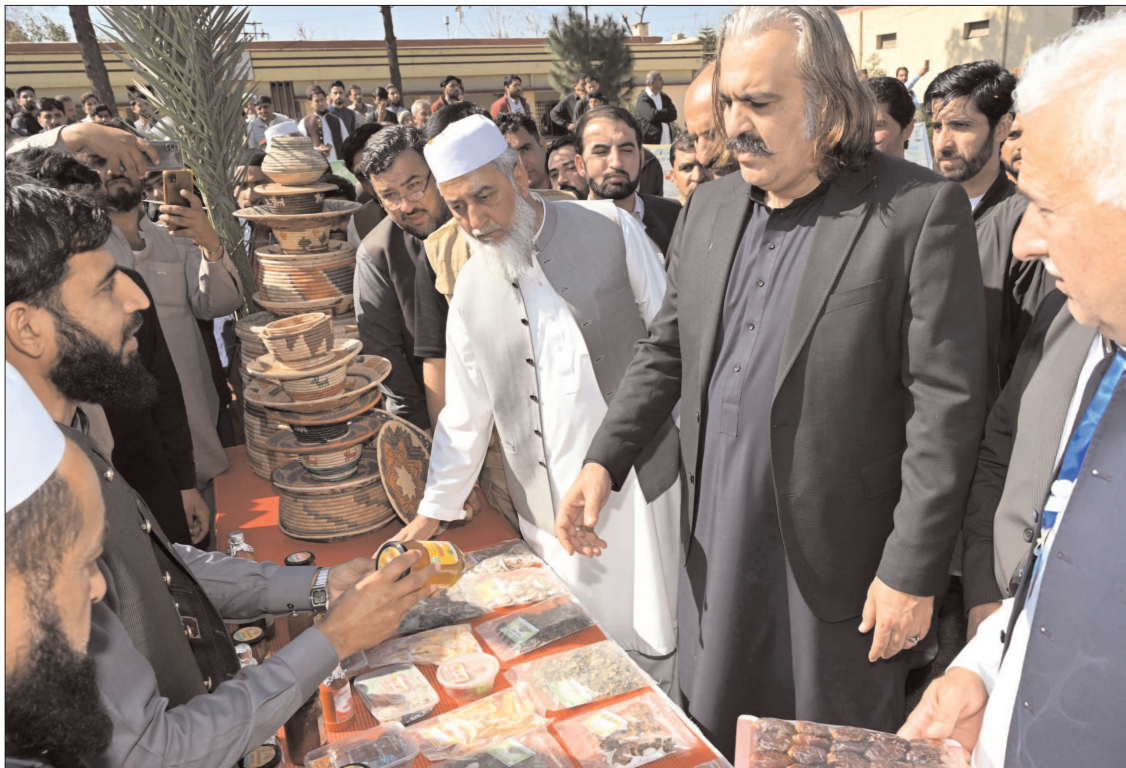
tributing to the country's food supply.

"If we want to move forward, we must embrace change, identify weaknesses, and work collectively for national progress," the Chief Minister asserted.

He urged a shift from personal interests to collective national development, calling it essential for sustainable growth.

CM Gandapur also clarified his government's hiring policy for merged districts, stating that non-technical and local-level positions would be reserved for residents of those areas, with no hiring from settled districts.

He added that for technical positions, preference would be given to local candidates, ensuring better efficiency and improved departmental performance.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister visiting a stall during his visit to Agriculture Research Institute Tarnab.

## Tarar highlights need to check disinformation

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Sunday that youths had played a significant role in the creation of Pakistan and there was no doubt that they were future of the country.

Addressing an interactive session at the 9th Annual Youth General Assembly conference at Aiwan-i-Iqbal, he said, "It is very important for nations to learn from their past. There are two types of history. One is glorious history which makes you feel proud and another history highlights mistakes."

He said that the two nation theory was most relevant in today's world and added that just look across the border and see what is happening in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He said he had attended few conferences in Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other places and what was the reason that when we talk about Gaza, atrocities on Palestinians

and brave Burhan Wani, then silence was seen on social media. He said what was the reason that artificial intelligence-based algorithms or under new technology, likes decrease, visibility goes down and outreach reduces. "Are artificial intelligence-based systems or algorithms fair and the answer to this question is no," the minister added.

He said that just look across the border and see what hardships Muslims were facing, adding that it was a great blessing of Allah Almighty that we are living in an independent country. He said that youths not only contributed to the creation of Pakistan but also played their role in post-management efforts after Pakistan came into being.

"We have a very glorious past which should always be remembered," he added.

He said that Pakistan had received 7 billion dollars remittances in the first quar-

ter of the current financial year and foreign exchange reserves were increasing and it was just because of youths who were earning a good amount of forex from abroad and sending it to Pakistan. "The country's 60 percent population is based on youths and the future is linked with them. It should be admitted that no political party in the country has done justice to youths and it is essential to accept mistakes for making corrections," he added.

The minister said that the laptop initiative had been launched to empower students and there was no example of the initiative all over the world.

"Laptops were given to students purely on merit and the credit goes to this initiative that during the COVID pandemic the country's economy remained stable as laptops helped ensure online working. People would have faced a lot of problems in online classes, work from home, if laptops had not been dis-

tributed under the initiative," he maintained.

He said that Punjab Educational Endowment Fund scholarships had not been started for political mileage. "Construction of motorways was opposed but imagine if there would have been no motorway in the country, then what type of traffic load would have been on the GT Road. It is a job of the leadership to conceive a project by foreseeing future requirements. Unfortunately, the Danish School project was opposed by the elite segment of society because it was against the existing status quo. Criticism could be on individuals but projects should not be criticised. The Metro bus was termed a 'Jangla Bus' and later it was replicated in Peshawar by those who criticized it," he added.

He said that political slogans should be followed if they really bring about revolution of development, adding that hollow slogans result in nothing.

## Kremlin hails Putin-Trump dialogue

MOSCOW (APP): The Kremlin on Sunday hailed dialogue between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin — two "extraordinary" presidents — as "promising", and vowed it would "never" give up territory seized in eastern Ukraine.

Trump broke with Western policy earlier this month by phoning Putin to discuss how to end the Ukraine conflict — a call hailed by Moscow as ending three years of isolation for the Kremlin leader since he launched his full-scale offensive in February 2022.

Top Russian and US officials then met in Saudi Arabia last week to discuss a "restoration" of ties and start a discussion on a possible Ukraine ceasefire — all without the involvement of Kyiv or Europe.

"This is a dialogue between two extraordinary presidents," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV on Sunday. "That's promising," he added.

"It is important that nothing prevents us from realising the political will of the two heads of state."

Trump's overtures to Moscow have triggered alarm in Kyiv and across Europe.

But it is unclear whether his moves will be able to bring Moscow and Kyiv closer to a truce.

Peskov on Sunday ruled out any territorial concessions as part of a settlement.

"The people decided to join Russia a long time ago," he said, referring to Moscow-staged votes in eastern Ukraine held amid

the offensive that were slammed as bogus by Kyiv, the West and international monitors.

"No one will ever sell off these territories. That's the most important thing."

"God willed it. Putin said God and fate had entrusted him and his army with "the mission" to defend Russia.

"Fate willed it so, God willed it so, if I may say so. A mission as difficult as it is honourable — defending Russia — has been placed on our and your shoulders together," he told servicemen who have fought in Ukraine.

Russia was on Sunday marking "Defender of the Fatherland Day" — a holiday hailing soldiers and veterans — a day before the three-year anniversary of the start of its full-scale offensive.

"Today, at the risk of their lives and with courage, they are resolutely defending their homeland, national interests and Russia's future," Putin said in a video released by the Kremlin.

Moscow's army had overnight launched a record 267 attack drones at Ukraine, Kyiv's air force said.

Among them, 138 were intercepted by air defence and 119 were "lost".

Ukraine did not say what happened to the remaining 10 but a separate armed forces statement on Telegram said several regions, Kyiv included, had been "hit".

AFP journalists in the Ukrainian capital heard air defence systems in operation throughout the

night.

"Inappropriate remarks" Amid his outreach to Moscow, Trump has also verbally attacked Ukraine's leader, Volodymyr Zelensky falsely claiming Kyiv started the war and that Zelensky was hugely unpopular at home.

The bitter war of words has threatened to undermine Western support for Kyiv at a critical juncture in the conflict.

Zelensky on Sunday called for the Western coalition that has been helping Kyiv fend off the Russian offensive for the last three years to hold strong.

"We must do our best to achieve a lasting and just peace for Ukraine. This is possible with the unity of all partners: we need the strength of the whole of Europe, the strength of America, the strength of all those who want lasting peace," Zelensky said on Telegram.

Moscow has revelled in the spat between Trump and Zelensky.

"Zelensky makes inappropriate remarks addressed to the head of state. He does it repeatedly," Peskov said Sunday.

"No president would tolerate that kind of treatment. So his (Trump's) reaction is completely understandable."

Scrambling to respond to Trump's dramatic policy reversal, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will travel to Washington next week to make the case for supporting Ukraine.

## Kohli guides India to comfortable win over Pakistan

DUBAI (BBC): Virat Kohli hit a composed unbeaten century as India beat Pakistan by six wickets which put them on the cusp of reaching the Champions Trophy semi-finals and left their opponents on the brink of elimination.

Pakistan mustered a rather unthreatening total of 241 after they won the toss and batted first, lacking power, intent and belief against a disciplined India attack.

Saud Shakeel and Muhammad Rizwan top scored with 62 and 46 respectively, but they fashioned them off a rather ponderous 76 and 77 balls each.

Khushdil Shah boosted the total with a late cameo - whacking 38 off 39 balls - but Pakistan's total felt light at a ground where the average first-innings winning score in one-day internationals is 258.

Spinner Kuldeep Yadav finished the pick of India's bowlers with 3-40 while Hardik Pandya's economical eight overs brought him 2-31.

Pakistan's hopes flickered when a brutal yorker from left-arm quick Shaheen Afridi swung into India captain Rohit Sharma's middle stump in the fifth over.

However, from that point it was a relative cakewalk for India as Kohli guided them to the target with his usual elan en route to his 51st ODI century.

Abrar Ahmed produced a fizzing leg-break to dismiss Shubman Gill for 46 with a beauty although it only staved off the inevitable.

Shreyas Iyer made an enterprising 56 but the day belonged to Kohli as his hundred off 111 balls, featuring seven fours, guided India home with 45 balls to spare.

Ever the showman, Kohli gave the crowd at the Dubai International Stadium a signature moment as he reached three figures in the process of wrapping up the win.

With two runs left for victory, and Kohli on 98, the 36-year-old thrashed a powerful drive off Khushdil through extra cover for four to send the India fans wild.

India have two victories from their opening two group matches and sit top of Group A while Pakistan have lost both and are at the foot of the table.

Should New Zealand beat Bangladesh on Monday then India's place in the knockout phase will be assured along with the Kiwis, and Pakistan will be out.

A perpetual narrative around Pakistan is their mercurial nature - a team with mavericks capable of beating any other side on their day.

Maybe, it's time to dispense with it.

Pakistan's jack-in-the-box surprise element now feels akin to a cliché from a bygone era. The circus is still in town, but the trapeze artists, tightrope walkers and other eye-catching acts are no more.

A tepid defeat to New Zealand in their opening game was followed by another disappointing showing in a match which mattered most for the Champions Trophy holders - against their biggest rivals, and upon which the continuation of their title defence would practically rest.

## For first time since 2002 Israeli tanks move into the occupied West Bank

JENIN, West Bank (AP): Israeli tanks have moved into the occupied West Bank for the first time since 2002, shortly after the defense minister said troops will remain "for the coming year" in parts of the territory and indicated that Palestinians who have fled cannot return.

Associated Press journalists saw a handful of tanks move Sunday into Jenin, long a bastion of armed struggle against Israel.

Israel is deepening its crackdown on the Palestinian territory and has said it is determined to stamp out militancy amid a rise in attacks. It launched the offensive in the northern West Bank on Jan. 21 — two days after the current ceasefire in Gaza took hold — and expanded it to nearby areas.

Palestinians view such raids as part of an effort to cement Israeli control over the territory, where 3 million Palestinians live under military rule. The deadly raids have caused destruction in urban areas.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said he and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the military to "increase the intensity of the activity to thwart ter-

rorism" in all refugee camps in the West Bank.

"We will not allow the return of residents, and we will not allow terrorism to return and grow," he said.

Earlier, Katz said he had instructed the military to prepare for "an extended stay" in some of the West Bank's urban refugee camps, from where he said about 40,000 Palestinians have fled, leaving the areas "emptied of residents." That figure was confirmed by the United Nations.

The camps are home to descendants of Palestinians who fled or were forced to flee during wars with Israel decades ago.

It was not clear how long Palestinians would be prevented from returning. Netanyahu said Israeli forces will remain "as long as needed."

Tanks were last deployed in the territory in 2002, when Israel fought a deadly Palestinian uprising.

The Palestinian foreign ministry called the Israeli moves "a dangerous escalation of the situation in the West Bank," and urged the international community in a statement to intervene in what it termed Israel's illegal "aggression."

Under interim peace agreements from the early 1990s, Israel maintains control over large parts of the West Bank, while the Palestinian Authority administers other areas. Israel regularly sends troops into Palestinian zones but typically withdraws them once missions are completed.

The U.N. says the current Israeli military operation is the longest since the Palestinian uprising of the early 2000s.

Violence has surged in the West Bank throughout the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Israel has carried out raids, but with fighting in Gaza and Lebanon on hold, Netanyahu has been under pressure from far-right governing partners to crack down on militancy in the West Bank.

More than 800 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the war in Gaza erupted on Oct. 7, 2023 with a Hamas attack on southern Israel.

Israel says most were militants, but stone-throwing youths protesting the incursions as well as people not involved in confrontations have also been killed. In the most recent operation, a pregnant Palestinian woman was killed.