

Terrorist attack foiled F.P. Report

KARAK: Attempt to attack Banda Daud Shah police station failed, attackers escaped due to timely police response. According to details, armed attackers opened fire on Banda Daud Shah police station from two sides last night, to which the SHO and brave police personnel responded quickly and effectively and thwarted the attack by giving a befitting reply to the attackers.



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

Jl plans protest drive F.P. Report

LAHORE: JI Emir Hafiz Naeemur Rehman said on Monday the party would launch a protest movement against the government after Ramadan. Speaking to media, he said the party had reviewed facilities available to the masses. He said the participants decided to launch a movement against the government after the holy month as there was no relief for the public despite renewed agreements with IPPs.

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BAKU: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif shaking hands with President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev during one to one meeting.

Govt terminates contracts with six Power Plants — reduces electricity cost 4 rupees per unit: Senate committee informed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Power, led by Senator Mohsin Aziz, convened on Monday to discuss the SAPM Muhammad Ali's report on Independent Power Producers (IPPs). Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Power, Muhammad Ali, briefed that the government has terminated contracts with 6 Power Plants and more importantly, implemented rupee base tariff for Bagasse Power Plants and plants operationalized between 1994 and 2002, said a press release.

The government has fixed the return of 17 pc for Power Plants against the

unprecedented return of 35 pc in the last decades. SAPM Muhammad Ali stated that the government has recovered 35 billion from the Power Plants which has been paid by Federal Government in lieu of fuel. Additionally, the government has initiated negotiations on 45 renewable plants to reduce the profit margin on the said plants at sustainable rates. Muhammad Ali further highlighted that the government intends to make an entity named as ISMO for comparative markets in order to make power sector sustainable for the future.

While discussing the circular debt of Power Sector, SAPM underscored that the government is negotiating

to relinquish the interest on the circular debt and formulate a structure for the payment of stock circular debt in the coming five to seven years.

Federal Minister for Power Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari stated that the government has reduced electricity cost around 04 rupees per unit for domestic consumers and 11.5 to 12 rupees for industrial sectors. It is hoped that the cost of electricity will further lower down in the coming as the negotiations with other IPPs will conclude.

Senator Shibli Faraz reiterated that there has been rumors of arm twisting with the Power producers while negotiating the terms and Conditions.

10 terrorists killed in operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Bagh, Khyber District on reported presence of Khwarij.

During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the Khwarij location, as a result of which, ten Khwarij were sent to hell. Sanitization operation is 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.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed appreciation for the security forces following the successful elimination of seven Khawarij in the areas of Daraban and Maddi in Dera Ismail Khan. He emphasized the government's commitment to thwarting the plans of those who threaten peace and humanity.

According to Ministry of Information and Broadcasting statement today, the Prime Minister affirmed that the sacrifices made by the nation's defenders in the fight against terrorism will not be squandered.

He assured that the government remained fully engaged in the mission to eradicate terrorism from the country. The ongoing battle against terrorists.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has praised the security forces for conducting two successful operations against terrorists in Dera Ismail Khan.

Mohsin Naqvi stated that the security forces once again took timely action, eliminating seven Khawarij terrorists. He further said that by bringing these seven Khawarij terrorists to a grim end, the security forces have thwarted their nefarious plans. He also made it clear that the nation is united in the fight against Khawarij terrorists and stands firmly with the security forces.

Azerbaijan to invest \$2b in Pakistan

Shehbaz, Aliyev finalize matters, Ilham hints at Pakistan visit in April

Islamabad, Baku eye surge in bilateral trade volume

BAKU (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev on Monday finalizing the matters on Baku's \$2 billion investment in Pakistan, agreed to expand bilateral trade volume and promote joint defence production.

This was agreed during a meeting between the two leaders in Baku. On the occasion, the two leaders also witnessed the signing of an amendment agreement for the Sale and Purchase of LNG cargoes related to Master LNG Sale and Purchase Agreement. The two sides also signed an agreement between the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and Pakistan's Frontier Works Organization (FWO) and Pakistan State Oil Company Limited for collaboration in Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline Project.

Later, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in a joint press conference with the President of Azerbaijan, assured that he himself would oversee the investment and mutual cooperation projects in the sectors where Azerbaijan was investing, ensuring that there would be no disruption in the pace and effectiveness of these efforts.

"I am happy to share that we also had extensive discussions regarding finalizing the portfolio of Azerbaijan investments worth US\$2 billion in mutually beneficial projects in Pakistan and I look forward to my dear brother, President Aliyev visiting Pakistan in April this year to sign historic agreements involving this investment," the prime minister said in a social media post on X.

Addressing the joint press stakeout, the prime minister said US\$2 billion

investment in Pakistan announced by the President Aliyev will bring dividends to both countries. "This will be the first quantum jump in our trade and investment relations and will be a huge reflection of our fraternal ties," the prime minister said adding that "Our business, trade, and investment ties were not reflecting the true strength of our relations but today we have achieved that target and in a months' time we will celebrate this great decision into action".

President Aliyev regretted that the bilateral trade turnover was only several tens of million of US dollars that was needed to be increased. "I think we have the way how to do it", he said adding that "We received concrete projects from Pakistan and Azerbaijani representatives are evaluating them, today we put ambitious and realistic targets to finalize all the discussions within one month and by the beginning of April, the documents

will be prepared for signing."

The President of Azerbaijan emphasized that these projects covered infrastructure development areas as well as energy, economic, mining and others. He said during his meeting with PM Shehbaz Sharif, they discussed important issues, and reaffirmed resolve to continue to support each other on all issues of international relations.

He said they also discussed numerous issues of current international development and cooperation in defence area including defence industry. "Azerbaijan has already acquired defence equipment from Pakistan and we are satisfied with the quality of this equipment and we will continue to do it. At the same time, he said, they also discussed opportunity of joint manufacturing in defence industrial items, which will be another important sector of bilateral cooperation.

(Continued on Back Page)

IMF team reaches Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team on Monday landed in Pakistan to discuss climate financing. As per details, discussions will focus on green budgeting, climate spending tagging, tracking, and reporting. For the upcoming fiscal year 2025-26, the government is considering imposing a carbon levy, with initial proposals set to be discussed in the next round of negotiations.

The IMF delegation is expected to provide recommendations regarding the levy. The talks, which will continue until February 28, will also cover carbon levies, electric vehicles, and subsidies. Additionally, the IMF is set to propose measures to expand green budgeting in the next fiscal budget. Negotiations will solely focus on climate change initiatives, with federal and provincial representatives briefing the IMF delegation on their respective climate action plans.

This visit follows a successful meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva in Dubai. The IMF had been supporting Pakistan's economic development and reform efforts through various programs, including the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement. The development came after PM Shehbaz Sharif's meeting with Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva wherein both sides discussed Pakistan's ongoing IMF program and the macroeconomic stability achieved through the government's comprehensive reform agenda.

On September 27, Pakistan requested an additional \$1.5 billion loan from IMF to combat the impacts of climate change in the country. During a meeting with IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif discussed the need for urgent action to control climate change in Pakistan. The loan will support Pakistan's Climate Resilience and Sustainability Facility, which aims to promote economic stability and sustainable development in the country.

Tremors felt in Swat, surroundings

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Tremors were felt in Mingora city of Swat and surrounding areas on Monday, causing panic among residents.

According to the Seismological Center, the earthquake had a magnitude of 4.2 on the Richter scale. The depth of the earthquake was recorded at 140 kilometers, with its epicenter located at the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border. A few days ago, tremors were also felt in Buner and other areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. That earthquake had a magnitude of 4.1 on the Richter scale, with its epicenter in Swat.



DT I KHAN: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi interacting with prisoners during his visit to prison.

KP CM shows dissatisfaction over delay in NFC Award

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Department organized a seminar on the National Finance Commission (NFC) here in Islamabad on Monday, titled "Policy Dialogue on NFC and the Way Forward." The event brought together leading economic and financial experts, former finance ministers, representatives of international organizations, parliamentarians, and media personnel from across the country.

Prominent experts in attendance included Shabbar Zaidi, Shaukat Tareen, Ashfaq Ahmad, Qaiser Bengali, Hassan Khawar, Saqib Sherani, Asad Umar, Umar Ayub, Dr. Ahmad Zubair, Louay Shabana, Mr. Tobias, Muzzammil Aslam, and several others. The participants discussed the need to revise the NFC Award in line with contemporary economic realities and highlighted its current shortcomings. They emphasized the urgent requirement for a new NFC Award and underscored the necessity of national consensus for political stability as a prerequisite for economic stability. The participants



appreciated the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's initiative in organizing this timely seminar and hailed it as a crucial step in addressing fiscal concerns.

Addressing the seminar as the chief guest, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur lauded the Finance Department for arranging the event and expressed gratitude to the experts and participants for their engagement.

In his speech, Gandapur stressed that the constitution is a social contract between the state and its people, ensuring their fundamental rights. He lamented that repeated violations of the constitution have gone unpunished, eroding public trust and fostering resentment. Referring to past mistakes, he warned that failure to learn

from history could lead to further instability. Highlighting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's financial grievances, he stated that despite the merger of former tribal areas into the province—a move endorsed by the entire nation—promised commitments remain unfulfilled even after six years. The merger increased the province's population by 5.7 million (a 3% rise) and expanded its land area by 22,000 square kilometers (3.8%). As per this growth, KP's share in the NFC Award should have increased from 14% to 19.6%, yet the province has not received its due share.

Gandapur stated that the federal government had pledged an annual allocation of Rs. 100 billion for the accelerated development of the merged districts, amounting to Rs.

600 billion over six years, but only Rs. 132 billion has been disbursed so far. Additionally, the province receives only Rs. 66 billion annually instead of the committed Rs. 88 billion for operational expenses in these districts. He warned that this neglect by the federal government is fostering distrust among the people of the merged areas.

The chief minister highlighted the government's efforts to generate resources despite financial constraints, saying that the provincial government has increased its revenue by 55%, cleared Rs. 75 billion in outstanding dues from the previous administration, and established Pakistan's first Debt Management Fund, initially allocating Rs. 30 billion with plans to raise it to Rs. 150 billion.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the delayed NFC Award, Gandapur criticized the federal government for avoiding its constitutional responsibility. He warned that if a new NFC Award is not announced by April, KP will take decisive action in May. Touching upon role of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the war against terrorism, Gandapur

remarked that while the province continues to bear the brunt of terrorism, its contributions ensure the safety of the rest of the country. He lamented that instead of receiving due recognition, the province faces injustices.

On environmental matters, he pointed out that KP houses 45% of the country's forests, acting as a major carbon sink. The government spends Rs. 330 billion annually on forest conservation and has invested Rs. 650 billion in afforestation efforts. He advocated for an NFC allocation for environmental conservation, as is the case in India.

The chief minister also highlighted KP's role in energy production, arguing that despite producing cheap electricity and gas, the province is forced to buy them at higher rates. He criticized the federal government for withholding Rs. 2 trillion in net hydel profit owed to KP and vowed that not a single rupee would be waived, as it belongs to the people of the province. Additionally, he pointed out that while agriculture has been devolved to the provinces under the 18th constitutional amendment, the federal

government continues to collect Rs. 200 billion annually from KP in tobacco cess without returning any share to the province—an outright violation of the constitutional framework.

Gandapur reaffirmed his commitment to securing KP's constitutional rights of the province, and declared that his government would fight for them at every level. If these rights are not granted, the provincial government would take the matter to the Supreme Court, for which a legal case has already been prepared. He appealed to the Chief Justice of Pakistan to ensure a prompt and fair verdict once the case is filed so that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa receive their rightful share.

Concluding his address, Gandapur delivered a strong message, declaring that while he has endured political persecution, he will not tolerate any compromise on the province's rights. He urged the people of KP to be ready for a struggle, promising to lead them personally, and warned that responsibility of any kind of loss as a result of suppression would lie on those who are in power.



Ahsan attends first provincial workshop on Uraan Pakistan

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Mr.Ahsan Iqbal attended first provincial workshop on Uraan Pakistan at CM Sindh House Karachi on 24th February 2025.

The session was graced by Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, Senior Minister Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon, Provincial Minister for Planning and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Senior Federal and Provincial Bureaucrats, civil society, business community, academia and media persons.

In his welcome note, Provincial Minister for Planning and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah welcomed the guests and said that Sindh is the flagbearer province in implementing the 5Es of Uraan Pakistan program as it is already working on the economic revival, energy generation and conservation of environment.

Addressing the gathering, Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal

expressed honor to be part of first ever provincial workshop on Uraan Pakistan. He termed the event as a stepping stone and a sign of synchronisation between the Federal and Provincial Government on the revival of Pakistan's economy.

He said that after partition in 1947, the two neighbours will be presenting their economic pictures in 2047, and hopefully due to Uraan Pakistan, our country will be having 3 trillion dollars vibrant economy. He said that Pakistan is blessed with bright minds and unlimited resources and it is our job to utilise these resources for the development of our country.

He stressed on the importance of export led growth and urged all the stakeholders to play their part in promoting exports. He remained hopeful that Pakistan can also achieve 10% growth rate. He said that in past we had different economic plans like Uraan Pakistan to revive economy but those plans failed because of political instability, inconsistent policies, clash between three state pillars. But now, all of the state machinery is unanimous on the single point that Pakistan don't

have second chance and Uraan Pakistan is our last attempt towards economic glory and development, he continued.

He said that 40% children are malnourished and stunted, only 13% achieve tertiary education, population growth is around 2.5%. Regrettably despite 30 years have been passed and our development indicators are still like some African countries, therefore, we have to make concerted efforts in education, poverty, population explosion and health. He announced that despite being provincial subjects, Federal Government will grant supplementary funds to the Sindh to control malnutrition, Hepatitis C and other health issues.

CM Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, acknowledged the Federal Government's sincerity in economic revival and assured that Sindh is working diligently on the footsteps of Federal Government on the 5Es dimension of Uraan Pakistan. He thanked Ahsan Iqbal for attending the workshop and said that Sindh Government is ready to extend every assistance for reviving country's Economy.

800 Candidates apply for NTS test under PM's Youth Skill Development Program

F.P. Report



KARACHI: The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with YouExcel, successfully conducted the National Testing Service (NTS) examination for the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Program.

The program aims to equip the nation's youth with cutting-edge skills through free-of-cost training leading to internationally recognized certifications in Artificial

Intelligence, Information Technology, and Banking and Finance.

The overwhelming response saw over 800 candidates apply for the NTS test, reflecting the eagerness and enthusiasm of Pakistani youth to gain professional expertise and enhance their career prospects.

This initiative aligns with the government's vision to foster a skilled and empowered workforce, ready to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving job market.

Arora holds productive meeting with French ambassador

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Ramesh Singh Arora met with French Ambassador to Pakistan Nicolas Galey at his camp office here on Monday.

The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral ties between Pakistan and France, with a special emphasis on cooperation related to religious minorities, education, and cultural exchange.

During the meeting, both sides discussed the key areas of collaboration, including the protection and welfare of religious minorities in Punjab, and how France could play a pivotal role in supporting these initiatives.

Minister Ramesh Singh Arora highlighted the government's commitment to promoting religious tolerance, peace, and harmony within the province, and expressed gratitude for the continuous support of international partners like France. He informed the French Ambassador about the provincial government's ongoing efforts to issue Minority Identity Cards to

ensure the protection of religious minorities' rights in Punjab.

The minister outlined various initiatives to support religious minorities, including financial assistance, health-care, and community development programs aimed at improving the quality of life for religious minorities in the province.

Minister Arora also shared details of the scholarship programs available for minority students in Punjab, aimed at enhancing educational opportunities.

He emphasized the provincial government's commitment to providing financial assistance and support to minority students in higher education institutions. Both sides discussed the potential for developing religious tourism in Punjab, particularly for Sikh and Christian communities. Minister Arora stressed the importance of promoting religious tourism as a means of cultural exchange, economic growth, and fostering mutual respect between different communities.



ISLAMABAD: A group photo of chief guest with staff and students during 6th convocation of ISRA University. —F.P. Photo



NOTICE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary General Meeting (EOGM) of **Lucky Cement Limited** (the "Company") will be held on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 12:00 noon, at the Registered Office of the Company, situated at factory premises i.e., Pezu, District Lakki Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to transact the following business:

SPECIAL BUSINESS:

1. To consider and, if thought fit, pass, with or without modification, the following resolution as special resolution, in terms of Section 85 of the Companies Act, 2017, for the purposes of subdivision of the share capital of the Company:

- (A) **"RESOLVED THAT**, pursuant to Section 85 of the Companies Act, 2017 and Article 34 of the Articles of Association of the Company, the existing capital of the company, including authorized, issued and paid-up capital, is hereby altered in a manner that each ordinary share of the Company having face value of Rs. 10/- be subdivided into five ordinary shares of Rs. 2/- each, with no change in rights and privileges of shares.
- (B) **FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Authorized Capital of the Company be and is hereby subdivided from 500,000,000 Ordinary Shares of Rs. 10/- each to 2,500,000,000 Ordinary Shares of Rs. 2/- each.
- (C) **FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the issued and paid-up capital of the Company comprising of 293,000,000 Ordinary Shares of Rs. 10/- each is hereby subdivided into 1,465,000,000 Ordinary Shares of Rs. 2/- each.
- (D) **FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Chief Financial Officer or the Company Secretary of the Company, be and are hereby singly authorized and empowered to take all necessary steps to effectuate the aforementioned resolutions and to complete any or all necessary corporate and legal compliances and formalities to give effect to the above, including announcement of closure of Members' Registers, determination of effective date, issue/credit of new physical and electronic shares and all other regulatory requirements."

2. To transact any other business with the permission of the Chair.

The Statement of material facts, as required under section 134(3) of the Companies Act, 2017, in respect of the special business to be considered at the meeting is being sent to the shareholders and is also available at the Company's website (www.lucky-cement.com).

By order of the board

Ali Shahab
Company Secretary

Karachi: February 25, 2025

NOTES:

1. Closure of Shares Transfer Books

The Share Transfer Books of the Company shall remain closed from Tuesday, March 11, 2025 to Tuesday, March 18, 2025 (both days inclusive). Share transfers received in order at the office of our Share Registrar / Transfer Agent, i.e., CDC Share Registrar Services Limited (CDCSRSL), situated at CDC House, 99-B, Block 'B', S.M.C.H.S., Main Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi-74400, by the close of business on Monday, March 10, 2025 shall be treated as being in time for the purpose of attending, and voting at, the EOGM.

2. Participation in the EOGM, via physical presence, including through proxy

Members whose names appear in the Register of Members as of March 10, 2025, are entitled to attend and vote at the EOGM. A member entitled to attend and vote at the EOGM is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend, speak and vote for him / her.

An instrument of proxy applicable for the EOGM is being provided with the Notice sent to the members. The Proxy form may also be downloaded from the Company's website: <http://www.lucky-cement.com>. An instrument of proxy and the power of attorney or other authority (if any) under which it is signed, or a certified true copy of such power or authority duly notarized must, to be valid, be deposited through email on company.secretary@lucky-cement.com or by post at the registered address of the Company, not less than forty-eight (48) hours before the time of EOGM, excluding public holidays.

Members are requested to submit a copy of their Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) at the registered address to our Share Registrar, CDC Share Registrar Services Limited (CDCSRSL), CDC House, 99-B, Block 'B', S.M.C.H. Society, Karachi.

If a member appoints more than one proxy and more than one instrument of proxy is deposited by a member, all such instruments of proxy shall be rendered invalid.

3. Participation in the EOGM through video conferencing:

- a. To attend the EOGM through video-conferencing facility, members are requested to register themselves by providing the following information through email at company.secretary@lucky-cement.com at least forty-eight (48) hours before the EOGM: (i) the Name of Member; (ii) CNIC / NTN No.; (iii) Folio No. /, CDC IAS No.; (iv) Cell No.; and (v) Email Address.
- b. Members will be registered, after necessary verification as per the above requirement and will be provided a video-link by the Company via email.
- c. Only those members will be accepted at the EOGM via video-conferencing whose names match the details shared with the Company for registration (as mentioned in point 'a' above).
- d. The login facility will remain open from 11:30 a.m. till the end of EOGM.

4. Guidelines for Central Depository Company of Pakistan Limited ('CDC') Investor Account Holders:

CDC Investor Account Holders will further have to follow the under-mentioned guidelines as laid down in Circular No. 1 dated January 26, 2000, issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP).

- a. For attending the EOGM:
- (i) In case of individuals, the investor account holder or sub-account holder and / or the person whose securities are in group account where registration details are uploaded as per the CDC Regulations, shall authenticate his / her identity by showing his / her original CNIC or valid passport at the time of attending the EOGM.
- (ii) In case of a corporate entity, the Board of Directors' resolution / Power of Attorney with specimen signature of the nominee shall be produced at the time of the EOGM.
- b. For appointing Proxies:
- (i) In case of individuals, the investor account holder or sub-account holder and / or the person whose securities are in group account and their registration details are uploaded as per the CDC Regulations, shall submit the proxy form as per the above requirement.
- (ii) The proxy form shall be witnessed by two persons whose names, addresses and CNIC numbers shall be mentioned on the form.
- (iii) Copies of CNIC or the valid passport of the beneficial owners and the proxy shall be furnished along with the proxy form.
- (iv) The proxy shall produce his original CNIC or original valid passport at the time of the EOGM.
- (v) In case of a corporate entity, the Board of Directors' resolution / Power of Attorney with specimen signature shall be submitted (unless it has been provided earlier) along with proxy form to the Company.

5. E-voting and Postal Ballot

It is hereby notified that pursuant to the Companies (Postal Ballot) Regulations, 2018 and its amendments notified vide SRO 2192(1)/2022 dated December 5, 2022, members will be allowed to exercise their right to vote for the special business(es) in the EOGM, in accordance with the conditions mentioned in the aforesaid Regulations. The Company shall provide its members with the following options for voting:

- i) E-Voting Procedure
- (a) Details of the e-voting facility will be shared through an e-mail with those members of the Company who have their valid CNIC numbers, cell numbers, and e-mail addresses available in the register of members of the Company within due course. Members who intend to exercise their right of vote through E-Voting shall provide their valid cell numbers and e-mail addresses on or before March 10, 2025.
- (b) The web address, login details, will be communicated to members via email.
- (c) Identity of the members intending to cast vote through e-Voting shall be authenticated through authentication for login.
- (d) E-Voting lines will start from March 12, 2025, 9:00 a.m. and shall close on March 17, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. Members can cast their votes any time in this period. Once the vote on a resolution is cast by a member, he / she shall not be allowed to change it subsequently.
- ii) Postal Ballot
- (a) Members may alternatively opt for voting through postal ballot. For convenience of the members, Ballot Paper is annexed to this notice and the same is also available on the Company's website www.lucky-cement.com to download.
- (b) The members shall ensure that duly filled and signed ballot paper, along with copy of Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) should reach the Chairman of the meeting through post at 7-A Muhammad Ali Housing Society, Karachi (**Attention of the Company Secretary**) by Monday, March 17, 2025 before 5:00 p.m. The signature on the ballot paper shall match with the signature on CNIC. A postal ballot received after this time / date shall not be considered for voting.



PUBLIC NOTICE

AUCTION OF GOLD

Finance facilities were extended by Mobilink Bank against the security of deposit and pledge of gold to the customer mentioned below. The customer who has neglected and failed to repay the finance extended to them by Mobilink Bank along with the markup thereon.

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Haneefan Bibi	12102-8461982-2	Garah Hayat, Rorhi, Tehsil Kulachi, District Dera Ismail Khan	29	1 Tulsī, 1 Mala, 1 Haar, 1 Jhoomar, 1 Tika

Notice is hereby given to the customer in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to Mobilink Bank within 1 day of the publication of this notice, Mobilink Bank shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customer to make the payments.

Ramazan relief package distributed to Kurram TDPs at Governor House

PESHAWAR (APP): A ceremony was held at Governor House Peshawar to distribute Ramadan relief packages for the temporary displaced persons (TDPs) of Kurram district.

The event was attended by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi as the chief guest, along with Chairman Red Crescent for merged districts Imran Wazir Advocate, Vice Chairman Farzand Wazir, and other officials.

During the ceremony, Governor Kundi handed over the relief package from the Sindh government and the Local Council Association Sindh to the Red Crescent for the merged districts.

The Ramadan package weighs 28 kilograms and includes essential food items such as wheat, rice, sugar, lentils, cooking oil, tea, salt, and powdered milk.

The total cost of the relief package is Rs. 20 million, with Rs. 10 million contributed by the local government of Sindh. The aid will be distributed among 1,584 families in Kurram district, including 884 families in Upper Kurram and 700 families in Lower Kurram.

Speaking at the event, Governor Kundi expressed gratitude to Sindh Chief Minister and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for their support.

He said that the relief package has been prepared to provide essential food supplies for 15 days and will be distributed where needed.

The Governor also highlighted ongoing security efforts in Kurram, including the demolition of bunkers, to restore peace in the region.

He urged philanthropists to come forward and support the affected families during this challenging time.

PHC upheld govt decision to collect of Professional tax from doctors

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has dismissed a petition challenging the collection of annual professional tax from government doctors, ruling that the tax collection is in accordance with the rules and law.

The court issued a written verdict, authored by Justice Syed Arshad Ali. According to the verdict, the petitioners had challenged the deduction of annual professional tax from their salaries.

The petitioners' lawyers argued that there is no clear procedure for deducting professional tax, and challenged Section 10 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tax Rules. The petitioners claimed that the tax is not on income but rather on profession.

However, the court ruled that Section 10 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tax Rules allows for the collection of tax from civil servants and employees of legal institutions. The court also noted that the Finance Act 1990 outlines the procedure for tax deduction.

According to the verdict, the Finance Act 1990 stipulates that specialist doctors in different categories are subject to professional tax deductions ranging from Rs. 80,000 to Rs. 30,000.

The court ruled that the professional tax is being collected in accordance with Rule 10 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Professions, Trade, and Calling Tax Rules 1991, which applies to government servants and civil servants.

Since the petitioners fall under these categories, the tax collection is deemed valid.

UoP's Economics Department holds first Diamond Grand Alumni event

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi, attended the alumni event as the chief guest, accompanied by the Chief Minister's Special Assistant for Communications and Works, Muhammad Sohail Afridi.

During the alumni celebrations, male and female attendees visited the department.

The University of Peshawar's continuous progress is undoubtedly admirable, reflecting the strong administrative, academic, and leadership capabilities.

The provincial minister Meena Khan said these on the occasion of economics department's first Diamond Grand Alumni event, the KP higher education minister, who is also an alumnus of the Economics Department.

The alumni gathering was held on the administrative lawn of the University of Peshawar. On this occasion, Mr Meena Khan appreciated the academic, research, and renovation efforts made by Professor Sajjad Ahmad Jan in a short span of two months.

He also acknowledged the constructive efforts of students and faculty members, including Dr. Faheem Nawaz, for successfully bringing together more than 300 alumni for the first time in 75 years.

The event was attended by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Peshawar, Professor Muhammad Naeem Qazi.

Special shields were awarded to alumni from the 1960-70s, and the event featured Balochi dance and music performances, which were thoroughly enjoyed by the attendees.

Additionally, honorary souvenirs were presented to all the alumni.

As part of the alumni celebrations, attendees also toured the Economics Department, where Minister Meena Khan Afridi informed them that the provincial government is planning to regularize university pensions in the upcoming fiscal year.

"This initiative aims to enhance financial stability in universities and improve the standard of education" he said.

ILF suspends two membership including former general secretary

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Insaf Lawyers Forum (ILF) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Qazi Anwar Advocate has suspended the basic membership of Mazhar Butt, former Central Secretary-General of ILF, and Ejaz Advocate, due to disciplinary violations.

The Provincial President has directed Mazhar Butt and Ejaz Advocate to present their stance on the matter. The case has been referred to the Provincial President, Junaid Akbar, and the founder of PTI, Imran Khan, for further action.

A press statement was issued by the Provincial President of ILF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, stating that Mazhar Butt and Ejaz Advocate had held a press conference and leveled baseless allegations against ILF and several party leaders.

Therefore, their basic membership has been suspended.

The statement informed all provincial leaders of ILF that Mazhar Butt and Ejaz Advocate will not be invited to any ILF programs. Both individuals have also been served show-cause notices and asked to provide explanations.

The statement further stated that the matter has been referred to the Provincial President and the founder of PTI for the suspension of their basic membership from the party.

It is worth noting that Mazhar Butt, former Central Secretary-General of ILF, had leveled serious allegations against ILF and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advocate General's office, and had also expressed strong reservations about the party leadership's meeting with Imran Khan.

Free medical camp organized at Dua Welfare Clinic in Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A free medical camp was successfully organized at Dua Welfare Clinic under the supervision of expert specialist doctors.

The initiative provided free medical check-ups to hundreds of patients, earning praise from the local community and social circles.

Residents appreciated the efforts, calling it a valuable service for those in need and emphasizing the importance of expanding such initiatives.

The medical camp featured renowned specialists, including Dr. Shahnaz (Gynecologist), Dr. Moeenuddin Khan Khalil (Gastroenterologist & Hepatologist), Dr. Muhammad Adnan Khan (Anesthesiologist), Dr. Muhammad Waqar Khan (Orthopedic Specialist), and Dr. Wajid Ali (General Physician). These doctors volunteered their expertise to diagnose and treat patients free of charge.

Local residents and social activists acknowledged the camp as a crucial step toward providing healthcare to underprivileged individuals.

They urged authorities and welfare organizations to arrange similar medical camps more frequently, ensuring better healthcare access for all.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Health Ihtesham Ali paid a surprise visit to Khyber Teaching Hospital.

Ihtesham pays surprise visit to KTH; inspect ongoing projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Health Ihtesham Ali, paid a surprise visit to Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH).

He was accompanied by Director General Health Services Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Additional Director General Public Health Dr. Shahid Younas, and Chief Executive of Sehat Card, Dr. Riaz Tanoli.

During his visit to the Sehat Card Pharmacy, he was briefed on the Sehat Card pharmacy medicine distribution process to the admitted patients in the wards. Advisor personally checked the pharmacy store and found availability of branded and Multi national standard medicines.

He appreciated the efforts of the hospital administration for ensuring better health and supply of quality medicines.

He was also given a detailed briefing on Total Lab Automation, a significant step towards modernizing diagnostic services at KTH.

Commending the initiative, he suggested the establishment of collection points in other Districts so that people across the province could also benefit from state of art/ modern services.

Later, the Health Advisor visited the Cath Lab of KTH and directed sehat card authorities to activate the facility for cath lab under the Sehat Card scheme as soon as possible to ensure top-notch cardiac care for patients.

During the visit, the Health Advisor inspected the site of Pakhtunkhwa Transplant Center and received a detailed briefing from the hospital's Director, Dr. Muhammad Zafar Afridi. He was briefed that Establishment of transplant centre was discussed during Board of Governors meeting on 20th February 2025, minutes will be released soon.

Mr. Ihtisham Ali said that CM has instructed him to visit and expedite the work on project, for which the KP Government has already approved Rs. 500 Million.

The center will initially start for kidney and later Bone marrow and Liver transplant. He Termed the project as a top priority of the KP Government, the Health Advisor stated that patients from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa currently have to travel to other cities for transplants, which imposes a heavy financial burden on them. However, once operational, the center will provide free transplants under the Sehat Card program, bringing significant relief to the people of the province. The advisor was informed that the hospital is awaiting the Board of Governors (BOG) meeting minutes, accordingly action will be taken.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to provide modern and high-quality healthcare services to the public and assured that international standards of medical care will be maintained at Khyber Teaching Hospital.

Chanzeb pays visit to ill Miraoos

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Tourism, Culture, Archaeology and Museums, Zahid Chanzeb, visited the hospital to inquire about the health of renowned Pashto comedian "Miraoos." He checked on Miraoos' well-being and prayed for his speedy recovery.

On this occasion, the Advisor presented a cheque of five lakh rupees as financial assistance to Miraoos. He assured that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government would take all possible steps for the welfare of artists and provide every kind of support to Miraoos' family.

Zahid Chanzeb stated that the artists of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are a valuable asset, and their contributions will be appreciated by ensuring their well-being. He further announced that, under the direction of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, an endowment fund for artists is being launched to provide sustainable financial assistance to the province's artists. The advisor recalled that The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will continue to take effective measures to preserve its cultural heritage and ensure the welfare of artists so that they do not face financial hardships and can further promote their art.

One day seminar on self-accountability held at UoP



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Department of Criminology, University of Peshawar, organized a One-Day Seminar on Self-Accountability in collaboration with Student Societies and the Business Incubation Center, University of Peshawar.

The event saw the presence of esteemed guests, Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Naem Qazi; Chief Guest, Advisor to the Chief Minister on Anti-Corruption, Brigadier (Retd.) Muhammad Musaddiq Abbasi, Dr. Muhammad Ibrar, Assistant Professor, Criminology Department and Director, Student Societies, University of Peshawar and Director, Business Incubation Center, Dr. Shakeel Ahmed.

The event was commenced with a welcome address from Director, Business Incubation Center, Dr. Shakeel Ahmed, who highlighted the significance of self-accountability in shaping responsible individuals and professionals.

He spoke about the role of BIC in fostering an environment of learning and development.

The Chief Guest, Brigadier (Retd.) Muhammad Musaddiq Abbasi in his address provided insights into self-accountability in governance and personal life. He categorized corruption into two forms: Need-based and Greed-based, emphasizing that elite corruption is the most destructive. He addressed the importance of developing key life habits and recommended several books to the students of Criminology department, reinforcing the importance of reading. Lastly, he recited Allama Iqbal's poetry, reinforcing the importance of nationhood and Unity, stating that "Unity is held through religion and gives rise to a nation."

The concluding remarks were shared by Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Naem Qazi. He praised the thought-provoking discussion and urged students to apply these lessons in their daily lives. He underscored the necessity of gaining authentic knowledge and referenced the achievements of Abbas Ibn Firmas, emphasizing the idea that continuous learning and innovation are key to progress.

The event concluded with the distribution of shields to the Chief Guest and a group photo.

Dy Dir SIDP briefs on Small Industrial Estate Abbottabad II

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy managing Director Zulfiqar Ali Shahibzada of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Small Industries Development Board said that Small Industries Estate Abbottabad-II is comprised of 461 kanal land.

It is completed with huge budget of Rs. 600 Million. Two categories plots (133*No.) allotted to industrialists through balloting in 2017.

Out of which 25 kanal land is allocated to a Masjid, B.H.U and Community Center. Possession has been handed to most industrialists and they have taken practical steps for plots construction and building plan submission.

He expressed these views to the chairman of the standing committee on industries, Commerce and Technical Education while briefing him along with other members. On this occasion Managing Director SIDB Habib Ullah Arif, Deputy Managing Director Noman Fayaz, Joint Director Safdar Abbas and Estate Incharge Imad Ali were present.

Deputy Managing Director Zulfiqar Ali further said that infrastructure of the S.I.E Abbottabad-II like sewerage, drain and roads has completed. Security Guards deployed and surveillance system installed. Electrical poles in the estate has erected and fixed over which wires have also stretched.

So independent feeder will soon be energized. The Havelian / Abbottabad interchange has a close link with it and that is approximately 800 meter. This small distance is an edge which will definitely ease doing of business and their transportation across the country.

The chairman of the standing committee along with other members have appreciated and admired the entire project and the work on it. They said that it will first benefit the local community in job hunt and will flourish the local businesses as well. They made a detailed tour of the estate and found it satisfactory.





In brief

Workers are assets for PTI Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister on Law, Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Advocate has said that party workers are our precious asset. They will be taken into confidence step by step including the development plan and will move forward with their mutual consultation. He expressed these views while presiding over a consultative meeting of the PTI Kohat's Party Workers in the Hujra of Senior Leader of PTI Tehsil Dara Adam Khel Haji Abidur Rahman on Monday. The Party Workers on this occasion were consulted on the developmental strategy and their opinions were sought. After a long consultation, the development plan was decided. Aftab Alam said that the party workers supported the party and its leaders in difficult times and faced the cruelty and brutality. We acknowledged their exemplary sacrifices and cannot even imagine forgetting them. The Law Minister said that we will proceed together with the workers and In Sha Allah, we will put Kohat on the path of development. The party workers while expressing their confidence in the leadership of the minister, thanked him for including him in the future developmental plan and assured him of their full support.

Youth shot himself Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: A youth lost his life in a tragic incident while making a TikTok video. According to details, the incident occurred in the village Hisar Tang, Tehsil Jhangira, Nowshera. The victim, identified as Zubaib, son of Attaullah. He was at his home when he decided to make a TikTok video using a pistol. While making the video, Zubaib's finger accidentally touched the trigger of the pistol, causing it to fire. Unfortunately, the pistol was loaded with a bullet, which hit Zubaib, resulting in his instant death. The police were informed about the incident, and they immediately reached the scene. The police have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the incident. The incident has sent shockwaves through the community, and people are expressing their condolences to the family of the deceased. The police are urging young people to exercise caution and avoid using firearms and other hazardous materials while making videos.

Woman injured by aerial bullet F.P. Report

RISALPUR: A woman critically injured by a stray bullet while walking in the courtyard of her home in the Kotaran in the premises of Risalpur police station. According to details, the incident occurred in the Alfalah neighborhood of Kotaran, where a woman, identified as the wife of Hussain Gul, was walking in the courtyard of her home after taking medication. Suddenly, a gunshot was heard, and a stray bullet came from an unknown direction, hitting the woman and injuring her severely. The injured woman was immediately rushed to the Mardan Medical Complex for medical treatment. After receiving treatment, she was discharged from the hospital and sent home. Police registered a case under Section 337 against unknown individuals and have started an investigation into the incident. The police are investigating the incident and trying to determine the source of the stray bullet.



HYDERABAD: A view of dried part of Indus River due to acute shortage of water.

PTI leaders highlight Sindh's water issue

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Key figures from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) gathered at the residence of PTI Sindh Vice President Mohsin Ghum in Hyderabad to address pressing regional issues including Sindh's water issue. According to PTI information, PTI leaders, including General Secretary Barrister Salman Akram Raja, former National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, and PTI Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh, among others, met with local PTI leaders and workers. They discussed the challenges faced by Sindh and shared their commitment to resolving the water crisis that affects the province.

During a media interaction, Salman Akram Raja emphasized the nationwide nature of PTI's politics and pointed out the continuous struggle of the poor across Pakistan. He criticized the current governance for failing to protect water rights in Sindh, highlighting the Indus River's critical importance to the region. Raja stressed PTI's dedication to safeguarding every drop of Sindh's water and fighting for constitutional rights nationwide. He noted an alarming increase in authoritarianism, mentioning economic and social challenges in Balochistan and other regions.

Asad Qaiser brought a message of unity and support for Sindh's people, addressing the severe water shortage and criticizing the ruling party's role in the crisis. He urged stakeholders to prioritize national integrity over personal interests. Sardar Latif Khosa condemned recent police misconduct in Hyderabad and criticized the weakening of the judiciary through constitutional amendments. He expressed solidarity with the legal community and decried the suppression of free expression.

Sheikh welcomed TTAP leaders to Sindh, emphasizing the need for collective action to counter authoritarianism and protect the province's agricultural interests, which hinge on the Indus River's water supply. The gathering underscored PTI's commitment to addressing Sindh's issues and called for a united effort to safeguard Pakistan's democratic values and resources.

Two dead, 3 injured in road mishap

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: A tragic jeep accident occurred 9 kilometers away from the district headquarters in Alpuri, in the village of Kass Lilownai, resulting in the death of two individuals and injuring three others.

According to the details, a jeep traveling from Lilownai to the village of Kas lost control near Kandaw Kas Lilownai and fell into a deep ravine. Local residents immediately rushed to the scene of the accident to rescue the injured and the deceased and transported them to Alpuri District Hospital.

The accident claimed the lives of Bakhto, wife of Mateen, and Jamila, wife of Sher Muhammad, both residents of Tango Lilownai. The injured include the driver, Zahir Ullah, son of Rahim Ullah (age 20), Rehana, wife of Ghafar (age 18), and Rwasia, wife of Izzat Khan (age 24), all residents of Tango Lilownai. The injured are currently receiving treatment at the District Headquarters Hospital in Alpuri.

Police arrests two alleged dacoits

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Police arrested two alleged members of Ditto Dacoits Gang and recovered two motorcycles, two Buffalo, illegal arms and more than five lakh of rupees booty from their possession.

According to details, some month ago, two unidentified armed dacoits were looted Rs. 50 thousand from owner of marble show rooms on Lahore Road on gun point and sped away on their motorcycle. The police registered case against unknown accused and started investigation.

Police some days ago, arrested two members of Allah Ditta aliases Ditto involved in different robberies, cattle lifting and other crimes and recovered two motorcycles, two Buffalo, illicit arms and more than Rs. 5 lakh booty from their possession.

Last Day, after Jumma prayer, SHO Mian Zaher Ahmad visited Masjid Allah Ho Akbar on Lahore Road and returned looted money of Miraz Sultan Akhlaq in presence of the local people.

SHO said on this occasion, that under the leadership of DPO Hafizabad and supervision of DSP Pindi Bhattian, police are taking all possible measures to save lives, property and honour of people.

DC visits DHQ hospital: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Abdul Razzaq visited District Headquarters Hospital, Maryam Nawaz Health Clinic and different schools to review availability of treatment facilities in hospital and quality of education being imparted to students in the schools.

While visiting DHQ Hospital, DC inspected general emergency, children emergency, and other departments of the hospital and checked provision of health facilities being provided to patients. He also took feedback from patents regarding availability of medicines and other treatment facilities.

During the visit of Maryam Nawaz Sharif Rural Health Clinic Muradian, he checked vaccination of children and other treatment facilities in the clinic.

Resolution to local issues

APC announces formation of jirga

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl, Lower Dir organized an All-Parties' Conference in Maidan here on Monday. The APC decided to form a grand jirga to address the pressing local issues.

The conference, attended by representatives of various political parties, emphasized the need to improve law and order, expedite the construction of Category-D Hospital Lal Qila and Maidan Kalpani Road, promote tourism, abolish co-education, resolve funding shortages in development projects, and construct a bypass road to alleviate severe traffic congestion in Kambat Bazaar.

Prominent attendees included JUI-F Lower Dir General Secretary Maulana Muhammad Huzaifa, Patron-in-Chief Syed Naik Muhammad, JUI-F Tehsil Maidan Amir Maulana Rohul Amin, Jamaat-e-Islami Youth President Atiq-ur-Rehman, PPP's Sajid Iqbal, social activist Behror Syed, PML-N's Jehanzada, PTI's Salim Khan, Malik Qadir Khan, Qari Mahmood-ul-Hassan, and other political and social figures.

Speakers unanimously agreed to form a Grand Jirga, which will meet with the Chief Minister and Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to highlight the region's challenges and seek solutions.

A major demand of the conference was the immediate completion of the Government Girls' Degree College Maidan. The participants firmly stated that no one would be allowed to disturb the peace and stability of Tehsil Maidan, which they described as exemplary. They pledged unity in ensuring the security and progress of the area.

Mobile phone snatched: A robber snatched a mobile phone from a shop owner and fled on a motorcycle in Kambat Bazaar. The victim, Imran, told journalists that he was present in his shop when a man entered, pretending to be a customer. The suspect handed over an old mobile phone, seemingly for repair, and urged him to fix it quickly. He then asked to see a new phone and inquired about its price.

The moment Imran handed over the phone, the suspect suddenly bolted out of the shop, jumped onto a running motorcycle, and fled. Several local youths present at the scene attempted to chase the suspect, but he took advantage of the darkness and managed to escape. Samarbagh police have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the incident.

Gujjar youth forum: The Gujjar Youth Forum has called for greater unity among the Gujjar community, emphasizing the need for education and political representation to ensure progress.

Speaking at the Gujjar National Unity Convention in Siyah Adenzai, leaders highlighted the community's historical sacrifices and its significant contributions to Pakistan's parliament and various sectors. The event, hosted at the residence of Malik Hakeem Khan, was attended by prominent figures including Central Chairman of Gujjar Youth Forum Chaudhry Iftikhar Bursa, Vice Chairman (UAE) Sardar Raza Khan, Malik Raza Khan Khattankhel, Rashid Khan (Azad Kashmir), Sardar Sikandar Bhola (Punjab), Malik Shehzad Gujjar (Chief of Gujjar), Malik Naseem Khan (Upper Dir), Malik Nazir Khan, Malik Jalat Khan (Swat), Usman Fanoos, and others.

The speakers strongly criticized the provincial government for allegedly taking control of the ancestral forests of the Gujjar community and attempting to evict them from their mountainous lands. They declared such actions unacceptable and vowed to resist any forced displacement.

They also highlighted the adverse effects of past divisions within the Gujjar nation, which they said hindered educational and developmental progress. However, they expressed pride that Gujjar representatives are now playing key roles in the country's governance and other important fields.

The convention urged community members to prioritize education, stating that educated Gujjar youth would be better equipped to serve the nation and contribute to Pakistan's progress. The speakers reaffirmed their commitment to national development and unity.

Teachers hold protest rally against cluster policy

F.P. Report

LARKANA: On the call of the Primary Teachers Association a protest rally held from the Government PVC Sindhi Primary School in order to acknowledge the demands of the PTAlf Taluka and City.

On this occasion, PTAlf Larkana Division President Aslam Deddar, District President Irshad Ahmad Dhamraho, Madam Naseem Akhtar Mughal and others told the demonstration that under the cluster and hub policy, efforts are being made to subordinate primary schools to secondary schools, which will not be accepted in any way, while with the cluster and hub policy, the posts of 17th grade primary headmaster, TEO, DEO and director of primary schools will be abolished, which is a complete process with

primary teachers.

It is unfair, they added that the legitimate problems of primary school teachers have not been solved for a long time, including regularizing the contract period of teachers from 2010 to 2018, making wrongful transfers under STR and other demands, but no attention is paid to them, which has spread unrest among primary school teachers. Prazor demanded that the matter should be taken into consideration and the cluster and hub policy imposed on the primary school teachers should be abolished, otherwise there will be a strong protest by PTAlf on February 26.

DAPD employees held protest in favor of their demands: The teachers and junior employees of the Department of Education and Rehabilitation of Special Children staged a

protest in front of the Press Club holding placards and banners to acknowledge their demands.

In this occasion Hafeez Ahmed Langah and others said that the Promotions list was issued by the education department employees for many years for legitimate and legal rights while social welfare department in 2018 merged some institutions, which were not mentioned in the rules but illegally put all the skills in their rights.

This is because we have 6 Directorates in Sindh including 5 Regional Director Social Welfare Department officers and our rights have been violated by imposing them on us, while all the officers are busy giving promotions to their staff, by which they are trying to spoil the school environment. So that we can get our legitimate rights.

SWCCI president safely recovered

F.P. Report

WANA: In a dramatic turn of events, Southern Waziristan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Saifur Rehman has been safely recovered after being abducted along with two customs officials. Expressing profound gratitude, he acknowledged the relentless efforts of tribal elders, political leaders, security forces, journalists, and the business community in securing his release.

"I don't have enough words to thank everyone who played a role in my safe return," Rehman said, extending special appreciation to FPCCI President Atif Akram Sheikh, UBB Patron-in-Chief S.M. Tanveer, and Chamber of Commerce officials for amplifying calls for his recovery at every forum.

Rehman recounted the harrowing incident, stating that he and two customs officials, Superintendent Nasir Abbasi and Inspector Khushhal, had visited the Pak-Afghan border at

Angoor Adda to assess the resumption of trade activities. However, their visit took a tragic turn when they were kidnapped on their way back.

While Rehman has returned safely, the ordeal is far from over. He made a fervent appeal to the government to take immediate and decisive action for the safe recovery of the two customs officials and Dr. Nauman, emphasizing that restoring trade activities and regional peace is contingent on their return.

The incident has raised concerns about security along the border and the challenges faced by business and trade representatives operating in the region. Authorities are under mounting pressure to ensure such abductions do not occur again.

Meanwhile, the protest against the non-payment of funds for District Headquarters Hospital Wana continues, with representatives of the Wana Councilors Alliance actively participating in the demonstration. The

protesters have voiced their frustration over the persistent delays in fund disbursement, which have severely impacted the hospital's operations and staff salaries.

Addressing the protest, Tehsil Council Opposition Leader Chairman Ahmed Wazir criticized the repeated postponement of funds for the hospital, which operates under a private partnership model. He accused the authorities of creating unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, further exacerbating the crisis. Ahmed Wazir acknowledged that healthcare services had seen improvement, but lamented that the health department had failed to release funds for the past eight months, since June 2024, causing significant financial strain on the hospital and its staff.

"The past eight months without funds and the last three months without salaries have placed immense pressure on hospital employees," he emphasized, calling on the government to intervene without further delay.

Kuli Katcheri held

F.P. Report

KARAK: A Kuli Katcheri held in the Patwar Khana of Khojki Kala in the Takht Nusrati area, in which all the officers of the sub-division except the Assistant Commissioner Takht Nusrati were absent, except for the Tehsil Municipal

Officer, District Account Officer Umar Hayat Khattak was present from the district administration.

Representatives from across the tehsil were Mayor Sajjad Ahmed, Village Chairman of Muskan Amir Hayat, besides them Shakir Hawari, Siddiquallah,

Waqas Ayaz and others were present. The elders of the area, Engineer Jamal, Gul Dawood and other elders, started pelting stones at all the departments including electricity, gas, drinking water, tube wells, roads, the deteriorating condition of schools.



WEST BANK: Israeli soldiers detain Palestinian men during a raid in one of the refugee camps.

Trump right to engage Putin on peace talks, says minister

LONDON (BBC): US President Donald Trump was right to re-establish links with Russian leader Vladimir Putin to set up peace talks to end the war in Ukraine, a senior Labour minister has said.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said there could be "no negotiated peace without Russia" and that Trump's approach had brought "Russians to the table". The US president has faced a backlash for excluding Ukraine from talks after his aides met Russian officials in Saudi Arabia. Trump has also suggested Ukraine may be a bystander, saying it has "no cards" in the deal. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer will meet Trump in Washington this week and press for Ukraine to be "at the heart" of any peace talks.

Speaking with Laura Kuenssberg, Phillipson said that Trump thawing diplomatic ties with Russia and Putin was "the right approach". "President Trump has brought the Russians to the table," she added.

When asked by Kuenssberg if welcoming Putin back was the right move, Phillipson said, "absolutely". "There can be no settlement, no negotiated peace, without Russia," she said. She added "any lasting settlement where it comes to peace does require Ukrainian voices, President Zelensky's voice to be a central part

of that.

"There can be no settlement unless we have a negotiation involving both Russia and Ukraine. "We are however, also clear of the risk that Russian President Putin poses to our interest," Shortly after coming to office, Trump held a phone call with Putin in which the leaders agreed to begin negotiations to end the war in Ukraine. It was the first phone-call to Putin by a US president since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. It was a significant thawing of the US relationship with Russia. Trump's predecessor Joe Biden previously called Putin a "murderous dictator" and a "pure thug". Since the call Trump has claimed Putin wants to reach a deal to end the war in Ukraine - arguing Russia did not necessarily have to negotiate a ceasefire, because it could take "the whole country" by force.

Trump has instead turned on Zelensky in recent days, calling him a "dictator without elections," claiming he was doing a "terrible job" and falsely suggesting he was the one who started the war with Russia. Trump's short-term goal is to stop the fighting in Ukraine. Longer term, he appears to want less US involvement, given that the country has sent tens of billions of dollars' worth of weapons to Kyiv.

The White House is pushing Ukraine to sign a \$500bn (£395bn) minerals deal, which would give the US control over half of Ukraine's mineral resources - which the Trump administration describes this as "payback" for earlier US military assistance. The Ukrainian president had rejected the initial US proposal made several days ago, saying he "cannot sell our state".

In a video address, Zelensky said Ukrainian and US teams were working on a draft agreement, which "can add value to our relations". But he stressed that "what matters most is getting the details right". Sir Keir is seeking to balance support for Ukraine with keeping his working relationship with Trump. This weekend, Sir Keir assured Zelensky of the UK's "ironclad support" for Kyiv. The comments came in the second telephone conversation in four days between the two leaders. It comes ahead of a big week of diplomacy, as Sir Keir heads to the White House shortly after French President Emmanuel Macron visits Washington on Monday. While making his pitch to Trump this week, Sir Keir is expected to set out a path for the UK to increase spending from 2.3% of GDP to 2.5% by 2030 - in line with Labour's election manifesto commitment.

French aircraft carrier stages combat drills with Filipinos in Sea

ABOARD THE CHARLES DE GAULLE, Philippines (AP): France's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier and accompanying warships were in the Philippines after holding combat drills with Filipino forces in the disputed South China Sea in a show of firepower that would likely antagonize China.

The Charles de Gaulle docked at Subic Bay, a former US Naval base northwest of Manila, for a break after more than two months of deployment in the Indo-Pacific. The French carrier engaged with security allies for contingency readiness and to promote regional security, including with Filipino forces, navy ships and fighter jets. They held anti-submarine warfare drills and aerial combat training in the South China Sea, Philippine and French officials said. "We aim to deepen our cooperation with regional partners with whom we share common values such as upholding international law and ensuring freedom of navigation in shared maritime spaces," French Ambassador to Manila Marie Fontanel said at a news conference on the Charles de Gaulle's flight

deck.

Fontanel spoke near several parked Rafale supersonic fighter jets, an assault helicopter and a surveillance plane. The flags of France and the Philippines fluttered separately in the wind. "Our presence is a constant reminder of the importance to promote and to protect what unites us all - international law and cooperation," Fontanel said.

Last year, the French navy deployed a frigate for the first time to participate in a joint sail with United States and Philippine counterpart forces in and near the disputed waters. It was part of the largest annual combat exercises in years by American and Filipino allied forces in the Philippines. The drills, known as Balikatan (Tagalog for "shoulder-to-shoulder"), involved more than 16,000 military personnel. China strongly criticized the exercises then, saying the Philippines was "ganging up" with countries from outside Asia in an obvious reference to the US and its security partners, and warned the drills could instigate confrontation and undermine region-

al stability.

France's recent and ongoing military deployments to the Philippines underscore its "commitment to regional security and the shared goal of strengthening maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson Co. Xerxes Trinidad said. The Charles de Gaulle, the only nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in the world other than those of the US Navy, led a strike group that included three destroyer warships and an oil replenishment ship in its first-ever visit to the Philippines, French officials said.

France has been shoring up its military engagements with the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations at odds with China in the disputed waters, a key global trade and security route although it says those emergency-preparedness actions were not aimed at any particular country. China, however, has bristled at any presence of foreign forces, especially the US military and its allies, which carry out war drills or patrols in the South China Sea, which Beijing

claims almost in its entirety although it has not publicly released exact coordinates of its claim other than 10 dashed lines to demarcate vaguely what it calls its territory on maps.

Beijing's claims overlap with those of the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan in long-unresolved territorial standoffs. Indonesia has also figured in violent confrontations with Chinese coast guard and fishing fleets in the Natuna waters. Two weeks ago, Australia protested after a Chinese J-16 fighter jet released flares that passed within 30 meters (100 feet) of an Australian P-8 Poseidon surveillance jet over the South China Sea, according to Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles.

The Australian military plane did not sustain any damage and no crewmember was injured in the Feb. 11 incident. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson accused the Australian aircraft of "deliberately" intruding into airspace over the disputed Paracel Islands, which China and Vietnam contest.

ICE agents directed to find, deport unaccompanied migrant children

WASHINGTON (Reuters):- The Trump administration is directing immigration agents to track down hundreds of thousands of migrant children who entered the United States without their parents, expanding the president's mass deportation effort, according to an internal memo reviewed by Reuters.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement memo outlines an unprecedented push to target migrant children who crossed the border illegally as unaccompanied minors. It lays out four phases of implementation, beginning with a planning phase on January 27, though it did not provide a start date for enforcement operations.

More than 600,000 immigrant children have crossed the US-Mexico border without a parent or legal

guardian since 2019, according to government data, as the number of migrants caught crossing illegally reached record levels. Tens of thousands have been ordered deported over the same time frame, including more than 31,000 for missing court hearings, immigration court data show.

The US Department of Homeland Security and ICE did not respond to a request for comment about the memo and the Trump administration's plans. During his first term, Trump introduced a "zero tolerance" policy that led to the separation of migrant children from their parents at the border. The children were sent to children's shelters run by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a government agency housed within the Department of

Health and Human Services, while their parents were detained or deported. The separation of families, including babies from nursing mothers, was met with widespread international outrage. Trump halted the policy in 2018, though up to 1,000 children may still remain separated from parents, according to Lee Gelernt, the lead American Civil Liberties Union attorney in a related legal challenge. As well as enforcing immigration laws, the memo, headlined the "Unaccompanied Alien Children Joint Initiative Field Implementation," said the initiative aims to ensure that children are not victims of human trafficking or other forms of exploitation. The memo said the children would be served a notice to appear in immigration court

or deported, if deportation orders were pending against them. In the memo, ICE said it had collected data from a number of sources on unaccompanied minors and sorted them into three priority groups, "flight risk", "public safety" and "border security."

It directed agents to focus on children deemed "flight risks" - including those ordered deported for missing court hearings and those released to sponsors who are not blood relatives. The agency uses several databases and government records to track down targets. Under the law, migrants who have exhausted their legal options to stay can be removed, even if they are children. But the US government has limited resources and typically prioritizes arresting adults with criminal records.

Moldova urges clergy to 'tell the truth' about Ukraine war

CHISINAU (Reuters): Moldova's government, a fierce critic of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, appealed to the country's clergy to "tell the truth" about the war, saying that Moscow's military actions had destroyed some 500 places of worship.

Government spokesperson Daniel Voda's appeal, on the eve of the third anniversary of the Russian invasion, appeared linked to a split in Moldova's Orthodox Church into competing branches subordinate to Russia and Romania. More than 90 percent of churchgoers in Moldova, which lies between Ukraine and Romania, adhere to the Orthodox Church.

The invasion, backed enthusiastically by Russia's Orthodox Church, has accelerated a move by parishes from Moldova's majority Moscow-linked Moldova Metropolis to the smaller Romania-linked church, the Metropolis of Bessarabia. Since the invasion, still dubbed a "Special Military Operation" in Russia, more than 60 parishes have transferred their allegiance in the country of 2.5 million. "From the beginning of the invasion, more than 500 churches, synagogues and mosques have been destroyed or damaged. That's one every two days," Voda said in his appeal.

"Do not remain silent. Tell the world the truth. The aggression is not just a fight for territory, it is the destruction of shrines," Metropolitan Vladimir of the Moscow-linked Moldova Metropolis has made a point of saying his church denounced the invasion "from the very first day" and organised assistance for more than 90,000 Ukrainian refugees, the highest number per capita in Europe. "At every service I say a special prayer in which I ask for mercy for the church and pray for an end to the war in Ukraine," Vladimir said in a 2023 interview. "I am not afraid to call it the 'war in Ukraine' in the prayer. I do not pray for (Russian President Vladimir) Putin."

Media reports have spoken of priests from the Russia-linked church backing the Russian invasion in some parishes. Reuters could not independently verify these reports. And the church acknowledges that groups of priests last year made "pilgrimages" to holy sites in Russia, with Russian financing. The split in church ranks reflects Moldova's turbulent history, with most of its current territory having belonged at various times in the past to the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union and "Greater Romania."

The Romania-linked Metropolis of Bessarabia is increasingly linked to Moldova's drive to join the European Union by 2030.

Bongino picked as FBI deputy director

WASHINGTON (AP) : Dan Bongino, a former US Secret Service agent who has penned best-selling books, ran unsuccessfully for office and gained fame as a conservative pundit with TV shows and a popular podcast, has been chosen to serve as FBI deputy director. President Donald Trump announced the appointment in a post on his Truth Social platform, praising Bongino as "a man of incredible love and passion for our Country." He called the announcement "great news for Law Enforcement and American Justice."

The selection places two staunch Trump allies atop the nation's premier federal law enforcement agency at a time when Democrats are concerned that the president could seek to target his adversaries.

Bongino would serve under Kash Patel, who was sworn in as FBI director at the White House and who has signaled his intent to reshape the bureau, including by relocating hundreds of employees from its Washington headquarters and placing greater emphasis on the FBI's traditional crime-fighting duties.

UN faces difficult votes on Ukraine

NEW YORK (AFP): Defying Kyiv and its European allies, Washington plans on Monday to submit to the UN Security Council and General Assembly a draft text that calls for a "swift end" to the Ukraine conflict but makes no reference to its territorial integrity, in an early test of Donald Trump's muscular approach to the crisis.

Since Russian forces invaded Ukraine three years ago, the balance of power at the United Nations has been clear: the General Assembly, representing all members, has clearly and overwhelmingly supported Ukrainian sovereignty, while the 15-member Security Council has been paralyzed by Russia's veto power.

But Trump's return to the White House last month has brought a dramatic reshuffling of the diplomatic cards, as he undertakes a clear rapprochement with the Kremlin while dismissing his Ukrainian counterpart, the severely pressured Volodymyr Zelensky, as a "dictator."

Against this tense diplomatic backdrop, Ukraine and more than 50 other states are planning on Monday -- the third anniversary of the Russian invasion -- to introduce a text before the General Assembly saying it is "urgent" to end the war "this year" and clearly repeating the Assembly's previous demands: an immediate cessation of Russian hostilities against Ukraine and an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops.

Amid heated speculation that the United States might abstain from the General Assembly vote -- expected around midday - Washington generated widespread surprise by proposing a competing text. The US resolution is "simple (and) historic," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said, as he urged member states to approve it.

The tersely worded US draft "implores a swift end to the conflict and further urges a lasting peace between Ukraine and Russia." It makes no reference to Ukrainian territorial integrity, a cornerstone of the previous resolutions passed by the Assembly, with the United States under former president Joe Biden among its strongest supporters.

For Vassili Nebenzia, the Russian ambassador to the UN, the American resolution is "a good move," though he believes it should also "address the root causes" of the war. According to diplomatic sources, the American delegation plans to submit that text to a Security Council vote set for 3 pm (2000 GMT) Monday, according to the Chinese presidency of the Council.

The vote will place European delegates in an awkward position. To be adopted, a resolution needs the votes of at least nine of the 15 Security Council members -- while not being vetoed by any of the five permanent members (the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China).

Even if the EU members (France, Slovenia,

Denmark and Greece) along with Britain were to abstain, the resolution could still pass. Would France or Britain be prepared to cast their first vetoes in more than 30 years -- even as their respective leaders, Emmanuel Macron and Keir Starmer, are expected this week at the White House for key talks on Ukraine? "I do not see how Paris and London can support a text that is so far from their stated positions on Ukraine, but I also do not see how they can veto it," Richard Gowan of the International Crisis Group told AFP.

Predicting the outcome of the diplomatic confrontation in the General Assembly is not easy: While some Europeans are deeply unsettled by the American approach, several UN member states have grown tired of the constant attention to Ukraine, and some Arab countries have not forgotten Kyiv's refusal to support their resolutions on Gaza. For the Europeans, the competing votes will be "a test of their standing in the multilateral system."

At the same time, Kyiv could be left "increasingly isolated" if it draws too little support, Gowan said. The votes also constitute "an early test of the Trump administration's strong-arm approach to UN diplomacy," he added. With core principles of international law at stake, UN chief Antonio Guterres called for a peace that "fully upholds Ukraine's territorial integrity" and respects the UN Charter.

Big challenges loom for Merz in divided country

BERLIN (BBC): Germany is at a crossroads and now for Friedrich Merz the hard work begins. The point of this election was never just about a nation's struggle to rediscover its economic mojo or re-evaluate its asylum policy - important as those issues absolutely are. It's also about Germany's ability to become the confident, world power that many of its allies want it to be.

While there are capitals in Europe looking to Berlin for global leadership, within Germany, the priorities are often different. Merz will now need to balance those demands along with the inevitable compromises that come with coalition building. His promise to represent everyone comes amidst clear and stark divides in Germany.

This election has again highlighted an east-west split, decades on from reunification. Voting data so far suggests that the AfD is solidifying its dominance in the former communist east while the CDU continues to prevail in much of Germany's south and west. An ARD exit poll shows 18 to 24-year-olds were most likely to back the left Die Linke party - followed by the far-right Alternative fur Deutschland. An irony of this campaign has been that - of the four main parties - the one most guaranteed to not get power sucked up so

much attention.

AFD's rise is a central story of this election - and contemporary German politics. This is a party blocked from government because of a policy of non-cooperation with the far-right, known as the "firewall". Sections of the AfD have been classified as right-wing extremist by domestic intelligence. One of its most prominent figures, Bjorn Hoecke, has been fined for using a banned Nazi-era slogan - Alles fur Deutschland. Eyebrows have been raised as some AfD supporters have reportedly since morphed the phrase into, "Alice fur Deutschland" - in reference to leader, Alice Weidel.

Those people may suggest it's a finger up to an establishment that they think finds spurious excuses to smear them. Others worry that it's a sign of something far more sinister. The AfD has become ever-bolder, some might even argue reckless, in its rhetoric. On the campaign trail, we heard one AfD councillor - in a row with two men of colour - say: "Go back to your Heimat (homeland) if you don't like this here." He did so, as we were openly filming him - then flatly denied it was racist. Yet a stream of controversies hasn't stopped the AfD from enjoying its best ever result. In second place, it

hasn't outperformed expectations but this still marks the strongest showing for a far-right party in post-war Germany.

Already social media savvy, it has a powerful ally in tech billionaire Elon Musk who's openly endorsed the party. Many talk of 2025 as an inflection point for Germany. Either this is the high watermark for the far-right - or the moment that will be remembered as the key stepping stone on its path to power. Much depends, say opponents of the AfD, on Germany's centrist politicians getting their act together and tackling voters' concerns.

If they don't, the AfD will be a prime position to launch political attacks on the government as Germany's main opposition party. Frontwoman, Alice Weidel, has her eye on the next election as much as this one. And the 46-year-old's mission to make the AfD a more palatable political force appears to have been effective. Finally, let's not forget Olaf Scholz (even if many already have). His allies say that the outgoing chancellor had to play a difficult hand; in charge of an unwieldy three-way coalition, at a time of crisis - notably dealing with the fallout from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Leaders of France and Britain head to US

LONDON (AP): The leaders of France and Britain are making tag-team visits to Washington this week as Europe attempts to persuade President Donald Trump not to abandon Ukraine in pursuit of a peace deal in the three-year-old war with Russia.

There is an element of good cop, bad cop in efforts by U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron to salvage American support for Kyiv. Starmer, reluctant to openly confront Trump, speaks of being a bridge between Europe and the US administration. Macron has more strongly criticized Trump's recent statements that echo Russia's narrative and American moves to negotiate with Moscow while sidelining Ukraine.

The two leaders spoke by phone and said the U.K. and

Europe must "show united leadership in support of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression," Starmer's office said. Both also stress that Ukraine's voice and sovereignty must be at the center of any peace talks. The French president warned Trump against appearing "weak in the face of President Putin." "It's not you, it's not your trademark, it's not in your interest," said Macron, who is due at the White House on Monday, the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Starmer is set to follow.

The trips come after Macron called a crisis meeting of European in Paris last week to discuss the continent's next steps - and after Trump claimed Macron and Starmer "haven't done anything" over the past three years to end the war.

The centrist French leader,

known for his bold diplomatic moves, says he'll seek to persuade Trump that American and European interests are the same, telling him: "If you let Russia take over Ukraine, it would be unstoppable." Starmer, a cautious center-left politician, has avoided directly contradicting Trump or criticizing his actions. The U.K. joined the US in refusing to sign a joint declaration at an Artificial Intelligence summit hosted by Macron in Paris this month in what was seen as an attempt to curry favor with Washington.

But the prime minister has reaffirmed Britain's support for Ukraine, rejecting Trump's assertion that Zelenskyy is a "dictator" and the president's suggestion that Kyiv started the war, which erupted when Russia invaded its neighbor on Feb. 24, 2022.

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Window of peace should not be squandered

FOR many, it might be no exaggeration to describe the disruptive impacts of the first month of the second Donald Trump administration as earthshaking.

That has certainly been the case for the United States' European allies, as his administration's approach to the Russia-Ukraine conflict has left them floundering as they scramble to adjust.

What has taken the rest of the world aback is not that the US president, whom his most zealous admirers call the "greatest dealmaker on Earth", is prepared to broker a deal, but that he has initiated talks with Russia that so far exclude all other parties. Even Ukraine and the European Union have not been invited to the table.

It is the Trump administration's approach to the settlement that has left the US' allies and partners bemused and anxious, as they have been left wondering whether they can continue to count on the US security guarantees, and what form of European order they can expect going forward.

The first weeks of the Trump administration have made it clear that nothing matters in the face of the imperative to put "America First". To "Make America Great Again", it appears that the administration will not hesitate to throw the US' allies, let alone Ukraine as a non-ally, under the bus.

After blaming the war on Ukraine and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the US president is mounting pressure on the latter to sign an agreement that surrenders half of Ukraine's mineral resources in exchange for so-far unsubstantiated US support.

The US administration seems determined to press ahead with its one-on-one engagement with Russia. It is already talking about improved bilateral relations post settlement.

On Ukraine's part, President Zelenskyy has expressed willingness to sign such a deal and resign in exchange for a just end to the war and/or NATO membership for his country.

With conflict fatigue setting in after three years of fighting, every stakeholder, Russia included, appears to be in favor of a negotiated end to the war.

That means that although the positions of all parties are not consistent, "a window for peace is being opened", as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi pointed out when speaking to the Chinese media on Saturday, after returning from his visits to the United Kingdom and Ireland and his chairing of a high-level meeting of the United Nations Security Council, and attendance at the Munich Security Conference and the G20 foreign ministers' meeting.

Wang urged support for all efforts committed to peace, saying that "dialogue is better than confrontation, and peace talks are better than war".

China has made its position clear on what the outcomes of any peace talks should be: It expects the parties to find a sustainable and lasting solution that accommodates each other's concerns and promotes long-lasting peace and stability in Europe.

China has always called for an early and peaceful settlement of the crisis and has been actively promoting peace talks in line with President Xi Jinping's four-point observations about what must be done. In his phone call with his Russian counterpart on Monday, in which he said that China is pleased to see that Russia and relevant parties have made positive efforts to resolve the crisis, Xi stressed that the four propositions are the basis for a political settlement. He reiterated that China is committed to creating an atmosphere and accumulating the conditions for a political solution to the crisis.

Wang also made clear that China will continue to play a constructive role in supporting a political settlement of the crisis; working to build a consensus on ending the conflict so as to pave the way for peace and the establishing of a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture.

With the Trump team saying they want a deal in place within 100 days, it can be anticipated that things will gather pace. But while it is clear that both Ukraine and Russia will have to accommodate some ceding of their staked out positions, one unanticipated impediment to the long-hoped for peaceful resolution to the now three-year-old Russia-Ukraine conflict may be the Trump administration's attempts to ensure that the US is the one that profits from it.

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The wounds of the 1944 deportation still fester in Chechnya and beyond

Marat Iliysov

A day before Ukraine marks three years since the full-scale Russian invasion, the Chechen and Ingush peoples are commemorating the 81st anniversary of their forced expulsion by the communist regime in Moscow. The impact of this genocidal operation, which began on February 23, 1944 on the orders of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, continues to reverberate today throughout the North Caucasus and beyond.

The decades-long efforts to suppress the memory of this violent expulsion and the refusal of Moscow to acknowledge and apologise for it have ensured that it remains an open wound for the Chechen and Ingush people.

I distinctly recall being six or seven years old when I first heard the term "deportation". It slipped from the lips of one of my parents, only to be swiftly followed by silence. Soviet authorities in the early 1980s still had a strong grip over the country and resolutely suppressed discussions of this topic, particularly within the Chechen and Ingush autonomous republics.

Adults lived in an atmosphere of fear and mistrust and were very cautious about discussing the topic even in front of their children. A child repeating the word in front of strangers or at school could attract the attention of the Soviet secret police, the KGB, and lead to some kind of punishment.

The era of Perestroika, marked by increased openness and the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union, lifted the veil of silence surrounding taboo subjects, including the various crimes the Soviets had committed. The younger generations of Chechen and Ingush peoples began to

learn about what had happened to their parents and grandparents.

They finally heard the stories of how, during World War II, elite divisions of the NKVD, the predecessor of the KGB, and the military were deployed to deport the entire Chechen and Ingush populations from their ancestral lands. Even more chilling was the revelation that Soviet soldiers did not hesitate to kill the elderly and sick to meet the deportation schedule. Their bodies were callously disposed of in mountain lakes.

Entire communities were burned down. In the case of the village of Khaibakh, the NKVD burned alive 700 of its residents, including pregnant women, children and the elderly, who could not be transported to train stations in time for deportation due to heavy snowfall.

The gruelling three-week journey in rail cars meant for livestock, where people faced starvation and unsanitary conditions, further contributed to the staggeringly high death toll. Dropped off in the Central Asian steppe with no food or shelter, the deportees had little chance of survival. Due to the deportation, the Chechens and Ingush lost almost 25 percent of their populations, according to the official estimate, before they were allowed to go back to their homes in 1957, four years after Stalin's death.

In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first democratic elections in the Russian Federation, the state started paying monetary compensation to those who were born or lived in exile. But the amount paid out was meagre and insulting. Still, the Chechen people hoped they would receive a formal apology from newly elected

Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

In 1993, during a visit to Poland, he honoured the more than 20,000 Polish officers executed by the Soviets in Katyn at a monument commemorating the massacre. However, neither he nor any of his successors issued a formal apology for the more than 100,000 Chechen and Ingush deaths during the deportation.

In 2004, during the raging war in Chechnya, the European Parliament raised a question about recognising this tragedy as genocide. The initiative was not successful and the genocide was not formally recognised.

The violent and traumatic experience of deportation was a driving force behind the declaration of Chechnya's independence in 1991. The Chechens did not want to have a repetition of this experience and therefore sought the protection of their statehood through international law.

However, Russia's aggression in 1994 against Chechnya shattered these hopes. Even after achieving victory against Russia in 1996, the Chechens found themselves abandoned by the world, meaning it was for Moscow to decide what came next.

Three years later, the second Russian aggression against Chechnya followed. During the war, which lasted until 2009, Yeltsin's successor, Vladimir Putin, installed an authoritarian regime led by the Kadyrov family.

To demonstrate his loyalty to the Kremlin, in 2011, Ramzan Kadyrov, who inherited the presidency of Chechnya from his father Akhmat after his assassination in 2004, forbade the commemoration of the deportation on February 23. Instead, he

forced people to celebrate the Russian holiday, the Day of the Motherland Defender.

It was only five years ago, in 2020, that some commemoration events were permitted in the republic on February 23. Yet, these ceremonies primarily served to legitimise Kadyrov's power in Chechnya and propagate the cult of personality surrounding his father, Akhmat.

In 2023, Kadyrov took a step further and compelled the authors of a newly issued Russian history textbook to revise the section that had justified Stalinist deportations. Of course, this move does not signal a shift in Kadyrov's relationship with the Kremlin. He will remain loyal to Putin as long as he maintains power.

But the fact that the Chechen leader who wields absolute power in Chechnya feels compelled to revise his own policies of erasure means he understands that the memory of the deportation will continue to serve as a rallying cry for the Chechens for years to come.

The memory of the deportation continues to inspire support for Chechen independence, despite the brutality and devastation of the two Chechen wars. It also motivated hundreds of Chechens to go to Ukraine and fight the invading Russian army in 2022.

It is important to remember what happened to the Chechen people today, as Ukrainians also face the danger of suppression and erasure. Ukraine risks being abandoned by the world just as Chechnya was in the 1990s.

The consequences can be devastating, just as they have been for the Chechen people who continue to suffer under brutal authoritarianism.

US bid to end Ukraine crisis may hit bumps

Martin Sieff

LESS than a month into office, a seemingly confident US President Donald Trump sent his "A team" — Vice-President J.D. Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and special envoy to Russia and Ukraine, retired Lieutenant General Keith Kellogg — to the annual Munich Security Conference, held from Friday to Sunday, to inform European allies of the new US administration's policies and pressure Russia into accepting Washington's new terms to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In fact, Trump called Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday, and said later that he had a "lengthy and highly productive phone call" with Putin, characterizing it as the beginning of a negotiation to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Trump has apparently told his advisers that finding US-backed process to end the conflict is a priority for his administration.

Although there has been no official response from Moscow, Russia is unlikely to give concessions to the US president to end the conflict nor will it settle the conflict on the US' terms.

Besides, his "America first" policy is causing chaos and consternation among the very same US allies that he takes for granted will blindly follow the US' lead on Ukraine as

they have been doing for the past three years.

Indeed, Vance, Rubio and Kellogg are in for a set of nasty surprises as they collide with the new unyielding realities their own policies have created. Because the Russia-Ukraine conflict has already reshaped Europe's security mechanism and undermined, even wrecked, it in multiple ways.

The US-NATO policy — encouraged by the United Kingdom and Poland, and somewhat reluctantly supported by France, Germany, Spain and Italy — was to arm Ukraine to the teeth against Russia in the expectation that Ukraine would bleed the Russian army white and force Moscow to settle the conflict on the terms of the US and NATO, even leading to the overthrow of the Putin government.

But the opposite has happened. Ukraine's losses in the three years of the conflict have been horrendous. Instead of bleeding Russia white, Ukraine itself has been bled white. And while Russian arms production has expanded exponentially, the US and NATO have drained their arsenals dry in their vain attempts to prop up Ukraine.

NATO has been exposed as a "paper tiger", and it will take at least five years, if not more, for its major member states to restore

security guarantor — with significant consequences for Ukraine". The report goes on to say that "US foreign policy in the coming years will likely be shaped by Washington's bipolar contest with Beijing. This, however, may well accelerate the multipolarization of the international system".

The US leader's threat to bring Greenland, Canada and even Panama under US control has already prompted many European allies to see the US not as "an anchor of stability, but rather (as) a risk to be hedged against", the report warned. The report also said the US administration's new policies would, unwittingly, accelerate the development of a multipolar world order to replace the US-dominated one that was established in the early 1990s after the end of the Cold War.

Twenty-two years ago, when I covered the Munich Security Conference for United Press International, I was told by a senior European arms-control negotiator that there was widespread worry that the US was going to act like a "rogue cowboy" on the international stage.

To cite the famous French proverb, "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose." The more things change, the more they stay the same. However, the consequences will be far greater and more unpredictable this time.

A flawed peace deal would not end the war in Ukraine

Maksym Skrypchenko

TODAY, we mark three years of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. For three years, the Ukrainian people have demonstrated remarkable resilience, foiling Russian plans to conquer Kyiv and forcing its army to retreat from Kharkiv and Kherson.

Ukrainians continue to resist against the onslaught of the Russian army, but the war has inevitably entered a grinding phase in which every territorial gain comes at an enormous cost, testing Ukraine's endurance and the West's willingness to maintain support.

At this critical stage, a new administration in the United States has signalled a dramatic shift in its policy on Ukraine, demanding that a swift peace agreement be reached. Last week, US and Russian officials met in Saudi Arabia for direct negotiations without Ukraine at the table. This meeting and the rhetoric coming from Washington have raised fears that President Donald Trump's administration is laying the groundwork for broader concessions in the name of de-escalation with Russia.

For Ukraine, the fundamental issue is not whether diplomacy should be pursued — any war eventually ends at the negotiating table — but what terms those negotiations will involve. If the priority is simply to stop the fighting as quickly as possible, there is a risk of Ukraine being pressured into accepting a settlement that does not address its long-term security concerns and that temporarily freezes the war rather than putting an end to it.

Recent history provides a clear warning against such flawed "peacemaking". In February 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and occupied it; two months later, its troops along

What came to be known as the Minsk I agreement, signed in September of that year, lasted no more than six months. In January 2015, forces loyal to Moscow and regular Russian army units renewed their attacks on Ukraine to force it into more concessions. In February 2015, what came to be known as the Minsk II agreement was negotiated and signed, stipulating that Kyiv had to recognise the "special status" of two regions in the Donbas in effect occupied by Russia. The Minsk agreements ultimately failed to secure a durable peace. Structured to freeze the conflict rather than resolve it, they allowed Russia to consolidate control over the occupied territories while keeping Ukraine politically and militarily constrained. Moscow never adhered to its commitments, using the diplomatic process to buy time, regroup and prepare for further aggression. The failed Minsk agreements serve as a cautionary tale: Settlements that ignore Ukraine's security realities and societal expectations do not lead to lasting peace but merely postpone the next conflict.

With local pro-Russia forces launched an operation in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, taking control of some territory. In August, Kyiv was forced into negotiations brokered by France and Germany that aimed to put a stop to the fighting under unfavourable terms.

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postpone the next conflict.

Any settlement must reflect the will of the people who have endured this war for three years. Polls conducted in Ukraine show clearly what the Ukrainians want.

War fatigue is real, as illustrated by a poll conducted by Gallup in November, in which 52 percent of respondents said they supported negotiations. However, when it comes to any territorial concessions, only 27 percent said Ukraine should consider such a step. A clear majority of Ukrainians reject giving up any land as part of a peace agreement.

These figures highlight an inescapable political reality: There is no broad support in Ukraine for a peace agreement that legitimises Russian territorial gains. Any Ukrainian leadership attempting to negotiate such terms would face enormous public pressure. And even if an agreement were reached at the diplomatic level, attempts to implement it would be met with fierce resistance domestically.

That is why US and other Western policymakers advocating for an expedited resolution cannot ignore the will of the Ukrainian people. If they do want a peace deal to hold, they should consider continuing support for the Ukrainian army. Ukraine's ability to negotiate from a position of strength depends on continued military success and a unified stance from its allies.

In making decisions on their Ukraine policy, Western countries should not fall for Russia's flawed narrative. Moscow has been trying to create the illusion of strength while concealing its growing vulnerabilities.

Russian officials have insisted the Russian economy is stable despite sanctions, their military operations are sustain-

able and time is on their side. At the Riyadh talks, Russian representatives reportedly suggested that businesses in Moscow are thriving, restaurants are full and only Western economies are suffering from prolonged engagement in Ukraine. The message was clear: Russia can fight for as long as it takes while the West faces diminishing returns. This framing has led some in the West to conclude that a quick peace deal — one based on Ukrainian concessions — may be the most pragmatic way forward.

But it is not. Appeasing Russia would only increase its appetite for more aggression. The way to guarantee peace in Ukraine is by setting up a robust post-war security framework. Whether through NATO integration, bilateral defence agreements or a structured European-led security framework, Ukraine needs concrete security commitments. If these are absent in any peace settlement, the risk of renewed conflict would remain high.

The coming months will be critical as Washington reassesses its role in Ukraine. While much is unknown, one reality is clear: Ukraine's fight is not only about reclaiming lost territory but also about ensuring that its sovereignty is no longer in question. Whether Western policy continues to align with that goal or shifts towards a more transactional approach will shape the next phase of the war.

Germany’s far-right may be frozen out of power, but the AfD is now a powerful force

GERMANY’S political system is set up to exclude extremists. Yet the country is waking up to a new political reality that has lurched to the right with the once outcast Alternative for Germany (AfD) party now firmly established in German politics.

The country’s mainstream conservatives, as polls predicted, won the largest share of votes in Sunday’s election according to official preliminary results and will be looking to form the next government, while the AfD came in second. But make no mistake – second place is a huge result for a party that although it likely won’t be in office once the dust settles, will enjoy expanded influence.

The party has doubled its support since the previous election in 2021, when it received 10.3% of the vote. It is now the first far-right party in Germany’s post-World War II history to have attained such broad levels of public popularity, and it has also significantly increased its share of seats in Germany’s parliament, or Bundestag.

The AfD reached a particularly large number of voters in eastern Germany, where it has long had a stronghold. But it also gained some significant support in constituencies in the country’s west, including the industrial city of Gelsenkirchen which has been suffering with stagnating economy and high unemployment, and Kaiserslautern, which is surrounded by a number of US military installation, including the Ramstein Air Base.

“We have never been stronger - we are the second-biggest force,” AfD co-leader Alice Weidel gloated, as she addressed crowds in Berlin after exit poll results were revealed on Sunday evening.

The mood at the far right’s election party in Berlin was ecstatic as the exit polls first flashed onto the screens, with people cheering and waving German flags.

For his part, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) leader and Germany’s likely next chancellor Friedrich Merz claimed victory as he slammed US interference in the country’s election campaign – which saw high-profile figures from the Trump administration speak out in support of the AfD.

These interventions are “no less dramatic and drastic and ultimately outrageous than the interventions we have seen from Moscow,” Merz said.

Formed in reaction to Eurozone policies in 2013, the AfD had become accustomed to being on the fringe of German politics, in a country scarred by its Nazi past and where any far-right party has been treated with caution. It only secured its first seats in the Bundestag in 2017 and struggled to find a platform on Germany’s traditional media due to its strident anti-migrant and anti-Islam rhetoric. This election marks the first time the party has ever fielded a candidate for chancellor.

The party has called for “remigration” – the mass expulsion of immigrants. The controversial policy has drawn comparisons to the Nazi era. The AfD is officially suspected of right-wing extremism by German authorities, and parts of it have been under

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government surveillance. All that appears to have changed. The AfD is now Germany’s largest opposition party, making it a major political contender that cannot be ignored. It has driven the debate in Germany while forcing mainstream rivals to recognize that they need to do more on flashpoint issues if they want to retain votes.

Their rise reflects what has been happening across Europe where a host of hard-right parties have made gains. Whether in the Netherlands, France or Austria, such parties can no longer easily be dismissed as political outcasts when they have won over sizeable shares of the vote – or in the case of Italy, run the country.

Having a significant voice in parliament means that “they [the AfD] will be able to apply pressure on the major parties from a position of greater strength,” said Gemma Loomes, a Lecturer in Comparative Politics at Keele University.

Sophie Tanno and Nadine Schmidt

“The surge in support will embolden the party to talk, perhaps even more aggressively, about the issues that matter most to them but that the major parties are reluctant to address,” Loomes added.

All this begs the question: can the so-called “firewall” – an unofficial agreement between Germany’s mainstream parties to band together to keep the AfD out of power – last?

In a display of the party’s confidence, the leader of the AfD’s youth wing, known as the Young Alternative (JA), told CNN on election night he is “certain” that the firewall would end after Sunday’s vote.

Merz’s controversial decision to push through an immigration bill with help from the AfD in

the firewall” will no longer exist.

“I am certain that this so-called ‘firewall’ will stop after this election,” AfD youth wing leader Hannes Gnauck told CNN Sunday evening. He added, “There will be a CDU after Friedrich Merz, and this CDU will have to work together with the AfD.”

Similarly, Weidel told reporters in Berlin on Monday morning, “Friedrich Merz has decided to maintain his blockade stance towards the AfD. We consider this blockade to be undemocratic. You cannot exclude millions of voters per se.”

Merz’s right-wing pivot ‘fraught with danger’

Merz now faces a tightrope walk as he seeks to form a new government while carving out a new path for the CDU.

The CDU has been

And the AfD’s powerful transatlantic ally is only serving to bolster this view.

Tech billionaire Elon Musk addressed crowds during a surprise appearance at the AfD campaign launch in January. “There is too much focus on past guilt, and we need to move beyond that,” he said, in a speech that echoes AfD talking points and was met with rapturous applause.

Meanwhile, in a scathing speech at the Munich Security Council, US Vice President JD Vance told Europe’s leaders that there is “no room for firewalls” in a democracy, a clear nod to the AfD.

Merz will have to contend with a Trump administration that has praised a key rival and appears set on dismantling long-term security ties between Europe and the US.

A strong Berlin government and a united Europe now seems more important than ever. The continent is searching for leadership as Trump moves ahead on Ukraine peace talks without its involvement.

For Merz, Europe’s independence from the US is a prime concern. “My absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that, step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA,” he said at a televised roundtable with other party leaders Sunday evening.

While Germany’s mainstream has held off a radical far-right government, Merz’s challenges are only just beginning.

— CNN

After three years of war in Ukraine, Europe’s security guarantees face the abyss

In a war dominated by the unexpected, few imagined Ukraine’s fourth year at war would so firmly question the security of all of Europe.

The most basic tenets have crumbled in this war?. Russia’s military superpower status has weakened, and the Kremlin’s inner circle overcame an uprising. Drones have altered warfare permanently, and rendered warehouses of tanks near-useless.

The United States has flipped from a moralistic benefactor to a transactional predator of Kyiv’s resources. The president of Ukraine has survived physically yet now must deal with a revisionist version of events purveyed by a White House that just over a month ago was his steadfast backer.

Flippant or spontaneous as it may have been, US Secretary of Defense Peter Hegseth’s remark in Brussels that the US was no longer the guarantor of European security has overturned eighty years of norms on the continent. Perhaps it was a bluff to boost European security spending, but you cannot bluff in nuclear security.

The Kremlin will have heard about the weakness in the transatlantic alliance and will be plotting accordingly. In one sentence, Hegseth turned a conflict, in which Moscow had been roundly diminished and humiliated for three years, into the chaotic re-ordering of continental security, in which Moscow may somehow dominate to its west.

Europe has taken American security guarantees as a given for decades and is now scrambling to imagine a world without it while appearing firmly behind Ukraine and insisting that any peace be just. European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas told CNN on Sunday that rushing to a bad deal would “would only serve to embolden tyrants worldwide.” She said NATO membership was a “the strongest and cheapest security guarantee” and that “Ukraine aid is not charity, it’s an investment in our security.”

With Moscow tied up in Ukraine, the security of wider Europe is for now an ethereal policy debate - an unwelcome distraction when contrasted with the relentless daily horror of the actual fight. After a week of social media tirades and tense microphone diplomacy, the gruesome battle has somehow faded into the background. Yet the acute horror is real.

A Ukrainian company commander serving inside Russia’s Kursk region said his men had to regularly dig new positions in the frozen ground as they were so accurately targeted by waves of Russian drones.

Nick Paton Walsh

“I don’t really believe in a quick end to the war or in peace in general”, he said after three years of fighting. “I am very exhausted, so is everyone here. Nothing changes for us here because of political statements.”

While Ukraine’s military commander, General Oleksandr Syrskiy, insisted Sunday morale was high despite a turbulent week, troops serving told CNN of a reality mixing shock and survival. An intelligence officer in a frontline town said: “We all feel betrayed since Trump started to talk about his ‘peace plans.’ I would not be surprised if he’s Russia’s best agent. We have to hold on...that’s all.”

Oleksandr Nastenکو, commander of the 475th assault battalion, said talk of peace had impacted recruitment as potential soldiers were saying “maybe it will all be over in a month or two, I’ll wait.” He said talk of

Europe has taken American security guarantees as a given for decades and is now scrambling to imagine a world without it while appearing firmly behind Ukraine and insisting that any peace be just. European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas told CNN on Sunday that rushing to a bad deal would “would only serve to embolden tyrants worldwide.” She said NATO membership was a “the strongest and cheapest security guarantee” and that “Ukraine aid is not charity, it’s an investment in our security.” With Moscow tied up in Ukraine, the security of wider Europe is for now an ethereal policy debate - an unwelcome distraction when contrasted with the relentless daily horror of the actual fight.

Ukraine collapsing after six months without American aid was premature. “We will somehow figure it out, there is no smell of capitulation.”

Yet a form of capitulation has haunted the opening salvos of the Trump administration’s negotiating plan – Hegseth gifting Moscow with the prospect of Ukraine not joining NATO or recovering territory, before talks had apparently begun. The White House’s revisionism has become an ugly extension of their apparent race to pursue a détente with the Kremlin almost at all costs.

Russia’s parallel narrative – that it was forced into action to prevent NATO expansion, and Ukraine must be de-nazified – had been overwhelmed by the sheer weight of its frailty on the frontlines and isolation. It had begun to sound silly – the wobbly excuses of the loser. Yet it has suddenly gained a new lease of life, parroted in part by the world’s most powerful man and his inner circle. It is a potent sign of how the war continues to turn basic norms upside down, that a

pressing question on its third anniversary is: “Who is feeding Trump these Kremlin talking points?” Russian state television seems to think it is Russian President Vladimir Putin himself in his conversations with Trump.

Western unity has been an outlier during the war: European nations often differed in how suspicious of Russia they instinctively were, but they spoke as one since Moscow’s full invasion. Yet we now face the world’s pre-eminent power somehow convinced Russia might be a potential ally, and it is their European democratic allies who are the tyrannical problem. It is naïve for anyone in Washington to imagine a future in which Moscow drops its main financier and neighbor, China, in favor of an alliance with the US. Instead, they project frailty at a time when Beijing is actively weighing its next moves on Taiwan, and at times seems the most stable, serious power globally.

On Sunday, Zelensky said he would step aside if it meant peace for Ukraine. The distressing fact is his fraught relationship with Trump risks becoming an obstacle to almost everything. Yet the alternative is worse still. An election in wartime or handover to an anointed successor would simply increase false claims of Zelensky’s illegitimacy.

The dichotomy of the White House’s position is evident again in the inflated casualty numbers they claim is the reason the war must end (millions have not died, as Trump suggests, but possibly hundreds of thousands). This onus on preserving life is not compatible with a peace deal that weakens Ukraine’s defense and risks Russia refitting and coming back for more ground next year. More will die if peace fails or is weak.

The ugliest truth of this moment also needs saying out loud so Europe can be ready. The evidence of our eyes and ears is, as the biggest war in Europe since the forties drags into its fourth year, that Trump favors Putin.

Lebanon caught between hope and apprehension

THE Lebanese capital, Beirut, nowadays fills visitors with hope, as well as apprehension. The hope is embedded in a sense of renewal, following January’s election of a president free of interference from Syria, Iran or Hezbollah and their so-called axis of resistance, which for decades has been holding the country to ransom under the pretext of confronting Israel and the Western agenda for the Arab Middle East.

This sense of hope is evident in people as they talk about their new president, Joseph Aoun – another general, but no relation to his pro-Hezbollah predecessor, Michel Aoun – and his promise to revive the ethos of a neutral Lebanon, a state willing to serve all its people under the banner of “Army, People, State.” The banner favored by Hezbollah, “Army, People, Resistance,” had previously dominated the political and popular narratives of the country for more than two decades.

Another reason for the renewed sense of hope in the country is the appointment of a new head of government. Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, a former judge at the International Court of Justice, has assembled a Cabinet that breaks with the previous political

elite’s practice of filling the government with corrupt cronies.

Salam’s government might be hard for many members of the nation’s parliament – and their supporters and clients in all communities across the country – to stomach. In particular, it has created further disquiet among the Shiite community, which has for decades formed the backbone of the popular support for Hezbollah’s military and political operations.

The feeling of apprehension is evident from the welcome you get once you land in Beirut, as you are never certain if you will be able to leave the airport safely. Hezbollah-affiliated mobs have often staged protests, burned UN vehicles, dumped trash and erected barricades at Rafic Hariri International Airport because, they say, the Lebanese government refuses to allow Iranian airlines to land there.

The sense of apprehension increases when you see Hezbollah flags lining streets across the country, alongside banners commemorating the deaths of many of the group’s commanders and leaders, while claiming victory and a willingness to continue the struggle. The apprehension comes from the fact that everyone, even Hezbollah’s strongest supporters,

knows that things have changed, the war has been lost and it remains unclear who will foot the bill to rebuild the villages in the south that were destroyed during the

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Again, one feels apprehensive when watching the Lebanese return to their villages, farms and businesses only to find them completely destroyed by a war many people in the country believed was entirely avoidable.

More than two months of full-blown fighting

before the ceasefire took effect on Nov. 27 left villages close to the border with Israel completely destroyed.

In addition, the conflict took a heavy toll on

the southern suburbs of Beirut and parts of eastern Lebanon close to Baalbek, another Hezbollah stronghold that was flattened. Meanwhile, the new leaders of the country continue their talks with the US and France in an effort to apply diplomatic pressure on Israel to fully withdraw from Lebanon, denouncing the continued presence of Israeli troops in five strategic locations as an “occupation.”

The UN has condemned the failure of

Israeli forces to completely withdraw as a violation of a Security Council resolution. One fears that the continuing Israeli presence could be a trigger for further con-

frontations between soldiers and villagers, as the latter return to their destroyed homes and businesses, thereby providing a pretext for Hezbollah to rebuild, reboot and renew its base of support and, ultimately, engage in another war. Lebanon continues to oscillate between two extremes.

On one side, there are high hopes for the future among a large segment of the population, who believe that, with the fall of the Assad regime in Syria, Hezbollah as a

force is massively diminished. This gives the new leadership in Lebanon a golden opportunity to regain control of the state and its machinery to implement reforms and rebuild the country for the good of all its people.

On the other side, there remains the lingering fear that feelings of frustration and a sense of being vanquished might motivate some Hezbollah supporters to turn their guns on the government, the new presidency and their own people.

This would create greater domestic insecurity, disrupting efforts to rebuild the nation free from the shackles of foreign influence and interference and ultimate return control of this hijacked country to its own people.

Visitors to Lebanon quickly deduce that the truce with Israel remains fragile. This fragility plays into the hands of the Israeli authorities, which are determined not to allow any repeat of the attacks on settlements close to the border with Lebanon, which forced the occupants to abandon their homes for more than 16 months. It also plays into the hands of Hezbollah, which, though diminished, remains unwilling to accept defeat, lay down its arms, bow out and allow Lebanon to be ruled by its legitimate institutions.



In brief

Gymnastics, karate competitions held SARGODHA (APP): Gymnastics and karate competitions of boys and girls were organized by the District Sports Department at the Sports Gymnasium. A large number of players participated in the competitions. The special guest of the ceremony was Deputy District Prosecutor Malik Amir Shahzad, who was welcomed by District Sports Officer Madam Saima Manzoor along with Tehsil Sports Officer Bhalwal Azmat Iqbal, Tehsil Sports Officer Bhera Shahryar Sial Administrator Tehsil Sports Complex No 47, Tayyab Bashir. Addressing the ceremony, deputy district prosecutor Malik Amir Shahzad said that sports are very important in our lives while players are ambassadors of peace. He thanked the District Sports Department, which organized sports competitions among boys and girls to remind the history of Sargodha. The District Sports Officer Madam Saima Manzoor thanked all the players and guests and said that the district sports department would always strive for the promotion of sports. Medals and certificates were distributed among the players.

Man Utd announce up to 200 fresh job cuts

LONDON (AFP): Manchester United said Monday they expect to make up to 200 fresh job cuts as part of a "transformation plan" to improve the club's financial sustainability. Around 250 employees were made redundant last year in a first wave of cost-cutting measures after INEOS chairman Jim Ratcliffe bought a stake in the Premier League club. United have also increased ticket prices despite a backlash from supporters. They said in a statement on Monday that the plan "aims to return the club to profitability after five consecutive years of losses since 2019". "This will create a more solid financial platform from which the club can invest in men's and women's football success and improved infrastructure," the statement said. "As part of these measures, the club anticipates that approximately 150 to 200 jobs may be made redundant, subject to a consultation process with employees. These would be in addition to the 250 roles removed last year." United CEO Omar Berrada said the wide-ranging measures were being implemented to "transform and renew" the club. "Unfortunately, this means announcing further potential redundancies and we deeply regret the impact on those affected colleagues. However, these hard choices are necessary to put the club back on a stable financial footing," he said. "We have lost money for the past five consecutive years. This cannot continue." "Our two main priorities as a club are delivering success on the pitch for our fans and improving our facilities. We cannot invest in these objectives if we are continuously losing money." Accounts released by the club last week showed they paid a total of £14.5 million (\$17.5 million) to get rid of manager Erik ten Hag, sporting director Dan Ashworth and other members of football staff. Ruben Amorim was appointed as United boss in November following Ten Hag's sacking but he has been unable to reverse the decline of the team, who are 15th in the Premier League after a 2-2 draw with Everton at the weekend. United's women's side have enjoyed more success this season, with the team second in the Women's Super League table.

Ravindra ton powers New Zealand into semis, hosts Pakistan out

RAWALPINDI (AFP): Rachin Ravindra struck a superb 112 to lead New Zealand into the Champions Trophy semi-finals with a five-wicket win over Bangladesh and in turn dump hosts Pakistan out of the semi-final race. The result in Rawalpindi also ensured India's semi-final berth in the 50-over tournament as Bangladesh became the other team from Group A to be knocked out. Both New Zealand and India have two wins from two matches and will now meet in Dubai on Sunday to decide team one and two from the group. Pakistan, who won the previous edition of the Champions Trophy in 2017, lost to New Zealand and then India in the first International Cricket Council (ICC) event they are hosting since the 1996 ODI World Cup. India refused to tour Pakistan due to political reasons and instead are playing all their matches in Dubai, which will host the final if the Asian giants go the distance. New Zealand have been the team to beat in this group after they humbled Pakistan by 60 runs in the tournament opener.

Coming in as firm favourites in their second match, New Zealand elected to field first and spinner Michael Bracewell returned career-best ODI figures of 4-36 to restrict Bangladesh to 236-9. Chasing 237 for victory, New Zealand slipped to 15-2 and 72-3 before Ravindra and fellow left-hander Tom Latham, who made 55, added 129 for the fourth wicket. Both were dismissed before the end but New Zealand still achieved the target with 23 balls to spare. The Black Caps had a disastrous start when pace bowler Tasking Ahmed bowled first-match centurion Will Young for a duck. Ravindra reset Bangladesh's new pace sensation Nahid Rana took down Kane Williamson caught behind for five with a delivery bowled at 148.8 kph (92.4 mph). Ravindra, who returned to the team after recovering from a nasty blow to his forehead in a recent tri-series match against Pakistan, joined Devon Conway to rebuild the innings. Conway hit back with a flurry of boundaries and made 30 before Bangladesh checked the surge and

Mustafizur Rahman hurried one on to the left-hander who chopped on to his stumps. Ravindra stood firm and with fellow left-hander Latham, another centurion in the opener against Pakistan, waded his way through the chase and after reaching his fifty bossed the bowlers. He raised his fourth ODI ton with a single off Rana and raised his bat to soak up the applause. Ravindra finally fell, caught at long-on off leg-spinner Rishad Hossain, and wicketkeeper-batsman Latham's run out added some late drama. But Glenn Phillips, 21 not out, and Bracewell, who hit the winning boundary, sealed the chase. Player of the match Bracewell set up victory with key strikes that started with his second delivery to dismiss Tanzid Hasan out for 24 and end a strong start by Bangladesh. Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto made 77 and Jaker Ali 45 in an attempt to put up a competitive total but Bracewell kept getting wickets. He was ably supported by the New Zealand quicks with rookie Will O'Rourke returning with two wickets.



RAWALPINDI: New Zealand players celebrate after dismissing Bangladesh's Tanzid Hasan Tamim during the ICC Champions Trophy match at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in twin cities. —APP Photo

Ahmed replaces Carse in England's Champions Trophy squad

LONDON (Agencies): England bowler Brydon Carse has been ruled out of the rest of the Champions Trophy and will be replaced in the squad by leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed. Carse, 29, has been struggling with a blister on a toe on his left foot and the issue reoccurred in Saturday's defeat by Australia. He had trouble with the injury and returned figures of 1-69 from seven overs. Ahmed is expected to arrive in Pakistan on Wednesday, the day of England's next match against Afghanistan, meaning that Jamie Overton would be the most like-for-like replacement for Carse. Gus Atkinson and Saqib Mahmood are the other seam options in the squad while Ahmed, 20, gives England a second frontline spin option, in addition to Adil Rashid, for Saturday's match against South Africa. England pace trio of Carse, Jofra Archer and Mark Wood took 3-226 across 26.3 overs against Australia. Ahmed has taken 10 wickets in six one-day internationals at an average of 23.3, and took a five-wicket haul on his Test debut in Pakistan in 2022 as England's youngest men's debutant.

After losing their opener, England will likely need to win both their remaining games to reach the semi-finals. If England do manage to navigate a way out of Group B they would most likely face India in Dubai, where spin has played a key role. Carse was picked for the Champions Trophy despite missing the final two ODIs of England's tour of India because of the toe issue this month. The injury required stitches, which were removed shortly before the tournament began. Carse has impressed for England this winter after making his Test debut against Pakistan in October. He has a contract worth £100,000 to play for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League (IPL), which begins next month. Boycott would not have positive impact - Root

Afghanistan are also winless in Group B after losing to South Africa in their opening game. Whichever side loses will likely be out of the tournament. There has been debate around whether England should boycott the match because of the Taliban's assault on women's rights in the country. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have called for the International Cricket Council (ICC) to do more but confirmed earlier this month the match will go ahead. Root reaffirmed their view that boycotting would not have a "positive impact". "Clearly there's things over there that are hard to hear and read up on but cricket is such a source of joy for so many people," Root said. "For a number of people within Afghanistan, I think it's an opportunity to celebrate - cricket gives them hope, gives them joy. Hopefully the two teams can do that in this next fixture."

'Bullish' Bavuma wary of Australia ahead of CT clash

RAWALPINDI (AFP): South African captain Temba Bavuma on Monday said his side would not be taking world champions Australia lightly despite a depleted bowling attack. England piled up 351-8 - a new tournament record of highest total -- before Josh Inglis hit an unbeaten maiden hundred to seal the five wicket win. Bavuma hopes his own batters will take advantage of Australia's inexperienced bowling. "Probably within the bowling there's opportunities and I think if that presents itself on the day we'll definitely be looking to make use of that opportunity," said Bavuma. South Africa blunted the famed Afghanistan spin attack, taking 59 runs off world's best Rashid Khan in 10 wicket-less overs. Ryan Rickelton posted a maiden ODI hundred while Bavuma (58), Aiden Markram (52 not out) and Rassie van der Dussen (52) contributed in a strong 315-6 in Karachi. They then restricted Afghanistan to 208 for a win in Group B. Bavuma said Heinrich Klaasen was still recovering from a sore elbow that forced him to miss the

first match. "We still have to assess his (Klaasen) fitness. Mainly he is batting and I guess him and the medical team they'll make a decision accordingly." Bavuma reckoned South Africa have a good chance to break the ICC event jinx, having not won any title since winning the Champions Trophy in 1998, then called the ICC Knock-Out tournament. "Yeah, we're quite bullish about our chances. I think - as much as in the tri-series, we didn't have all our guys, it still was an opportunity for us to get info about conditions," said Bavuma. South Africa lost both their matches in the tri-series that preceded the Champions Trophy, with seven of their top players missing. "Fortunately, the guys who came in, they've come in on the back of some good cricket back home. Confidence is good and we're quite optimistic about our chances."

Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and New Zealand are in Group A. The top two teams from each Group will qualify for the semi-finals.



LAHORE: The Bangladesh fans make themselves heard.

Australia supports Blind Women's Cricket in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Australian High Commission in collaboration with the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) and Serena Hotels on Monday, hosted a national training camp and tournament for blind women cricketers in Islamabad from February 19 to 24. This event welcomed women and girls from all over Pakistan, following the establishment of the country's first blind women's cricket team in 2018. That team played its first international T20 match the same year. This year, 50 more visually impaired women and girls had the chance to enhance their skills and pursue their cricketing ambitions. During the awards cere-

mony, Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins emphasized the role of sports in strengthening international relationships and improving lives. He stated, "Cricket is a powerful force for connection and inclusion. It opens doors for women and girls in both Pakistan and Australia, including those with disabilities, challenging perceptions and breaking barriers." Syed Sultan Shah, Chairman of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council, expressed his appreciation for the initiative, saying, "Blind cricket has become a beacon of hope for visually impaired athletes. It's more than a game, it shows that no disability can hold you back. With the right

support, these women can become champions both in sports and in life." Aziz Bolani, CEO of Serena Hotels added, "Blind cricket is a movement for inclusion, empowerment and opportunity. With ongoing support from partners like Australia, we aim to elevate Pakistan's blind women's team further." The players received coaching from top mentors in blind cricket including Abdul Razzaq, Ibrar Shah, Shahida Shaheen and Tahir Mehmood Butt, who have trained elite athletes. Australia has a rich history in promoting blind cricket, a sport that originated in Melbourne in 1922 when visually impaired factory workers created a ball using rocks in a tin can.

Venus Williams turns down Indian Wells wildcard

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Former world number one Venus Williams has turned down a wildcard for next month's Indian Wells tournament. Organisers said last week the 44-year-old had been invited but the seven-time Grand Slam singles champion has not taken it up. "Our team has been informed that Venus is not accepting the wildcard this year," the event posted on X in a statement attributed to tournament director Tommy Haas. "We wish Venus all the best and hope to see her back in Indian Wells in the future." Williams has dropped to 974th in the world and has not played a WTA Tour-level match since losing in the first round of the Miami Open last March.



She earlier told the TennisWeekly podcast she would not be making her return at the Indian Wells tournament, which runs from 2-16 March. "I'm not playing - I'm going to be overseas. I'm not going to be here," she said. Williams boycotted Indian Wells for 15 years after her younger sister Serena was booed and

heckled by fans during her win against Kim Clijsters in the 2001 final. The jeers appeared to be in response to Venus withdrawing injured from the semi-final between the siblings. Their father Richard later accused fans of racial abuse. Serena returned to the tournament in 2015 while Venus played the following year.

Cavs hold off Grizzlies for seventh straight NBA win

LOS ANGELES (AFP): Donovan Mitchell scored 33 points to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 129-123 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies in a testy cross-conference NBA clash on Sunday. Ty Jerome scored 26 points off the bench, Evan Mobley added 25 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists and Jarrett Allen scored 13 points with 10 rebounds for Eastern Conference leaders Cleveland. Their seventh straight win improved their league-best record to 47-10. The Grizzlies, second in the Western Conference and coming off a come-from-behind victory in Orlando on Friday, were led by Jaren Jackson Jr.'s 22 points. Ja Morant added 21 points and 10 assists for Memphis, who trailed 62-56 at half time but briefly seized a one-point lead early in the third quarter. Cleveland were back on top and both coaches had already received technical fouls when a scuffle erupted midway through the third quarter, where Mitchell and Desmond Bane got into a scuffle chasing a loose ball and ended up wrestling on the court. Players from each team got involved with both Mitchell and Bane receiving technical fouls along with Morant and Cleveland's Tristan Thompson. Cavs coach Kenny Atkinson said he was only sorry that multiple players got involved. "Stay out of the way and let the two guys tussle, everybody else stay out of it," he said. The Grizzlies kept clawing until the end, slicing an 11-point deficit with 5:54 to play to three with 42.4 seconds on the clock, but the Cavs closed it out at the free-throw line. Western Conference leaders



Oklahoma City also had to battle, finally beating the Minnesota Timberwolves 130-123 in a game that featured 18 lead changes. League scoring leader Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 37 points with eight rebounds, eight assists, three steals and three blocked shots for the Thunder, who improved to 46-10. Tatum fuels Celtics The reigning champion Boston Celtics, fueled by a near-triple-double from Jayson Tatum, cruised to a 118-105 victory over the New York Knicks. Tatum scored 25 points with 10 rebounds and nine assists and the Celtics, who led by as many as 27, thwarted a Knicks comeback bid to post a fifth straight victory. Karl-Anthony Towns scored 24 points and grabbed 18 rebounds for the Knicks, who trailed 77-50 early in the third quarter but cut the deficit to four points early in the fourth. Back-to-back three-pointers from Derrick White launched a Celtics surge, with the Knicks' cause further hurt by a right leg injury to Towns, who limped to the bench after a drive to the basket and appeared to be hindered when he returned to the game. "Second half of the season, we all know it's time to

lock in," Tatum said. In San Francisco, Stephen Curry poured in 30 points to lead the Golden State Warriors to a 126-102 victory over Dallas. Jimmy Butler, acquired at the trade deadline, scored 18 points for the Warriors in his home debut. The win was part of a celebratory afternoon on which the Warriors retired the jersey of Andre Iguodala, a four-time champion with the team. The Detroit Pistons pushed their winning streak to six games with a 148-143 victory over the Hawks in Atlanta. Cade Cunningham scored 38 points with 12 assists and seven rebounds and the Pistons turned back a Hawks rally that saw Atlanta take a one-point lead with 1:38 remaining. Dennis Schroder scored 16 points, including a driving layup that put the Pistons up for good with 33.2 seconds left. Elsewhere, Damian Lillard scored 28 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 23 points with 16 rebounds and seven assists for the Milwaukee Bucks in a 120-113 victory over the Miami Heat. Six Bucks players scored in double figures as Milwaukee withstood a 40-point performance from Miami's Tyler Herro.



In brief

Police nab 9 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Monday continued operations against drug dealers, liquor suppliers and illegal arms owners, and arrested nine criminals from across the district. According to a police spokesman, the Westridge Police held accused Aamir with 1.1 kilograms charas, while the Waris Khan and Ratta Amral Police netted accused Saqib Iqbal and Zohaib respectively with 720 grams and 560 grams of the contraband item. Similarly, the Sadiqabad Police nabbed accused Sawal on the recovery of 10 litres of liquor. Meanwhile, five suspects were taken into custody for having illegal weapons and ammunition. The Naseerabad and Morgah Police recovered a 30-bore pistol each from accused Ehteshamul Haq and Arsalan respectively. Likewise, the Dhamial Police also nabbed three accused Ehsan, Usman and Anas recovering a 30-bore pistol each from them.

Five missing children reunited with family

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police Koral police station team successfully located and reunited five missing children with their families in a short span of time. A public relations officer told APP on Monday that a citizen had reported the disappearance of his children Abdul Salam, Muhammad Shayan, Muhammad Ayan, Irshah, and Ayat Fatima, requesting immediate police assistance. He said that upon receiving the report, the Koral police team swiftly utilized all available technical and human resources to trace the missing children. Within a short time, they were safely found and reunited with their parents. He added that the children's parents expressed gratitude to the police team for their prompt response and praised the Islamabad Police for their dedicated efforts in ensuring public safety.

ICT admin cracks down on overpricing

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a proactive move to curb overpricing before the holy month of Ramadan, the district administration of Islamabad has intensified its efforts and arrested 45 violators last week. To ensure strict adherence to government-prescribed rates, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, visited Sunday markets in the H-8 and G-6 sectors to oversee the implementation of the official price lists. Accompanied by Assistant Commissioners and other officials, Memon reviewed the prices of essential goods and inspected the use of polythene bags, which are often a concern for environmental and regulatory reasons. On this occasion, he emphasized that the only solution to prevent overpricing is strict adherence to the government's official price lists. He urged citizens to pay only the rates specified in the official lists and to report any violations. "The public must support us in this effort by identifying those who flout the official rates," Memon stated. Meanwhile, the district administration has already arrested 39 individuals for overpricing in the I-8 sector and the vegetable market. These actions are part of a broader campaign to ensure fair pricing ahead of Ramadan, a period when the demand for essential goods typically surges. DC Memon has directed officials to conduct daily inspections to monitor compliance with the official price lists.



ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to PM for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam addressing an opening ceremony of an int'l seminar on "Networking of Water Centers of Excellence in Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States."

Rubina urges unified action to strengthen social protection system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid on Monday urged development partners, policymakers, and stakeholders to collaborate in fortifying Pakistan's social protection framework. She made this call during the Second National Social Protection Conference, which commenced in Karachi, said a news release. The three-day conference, running from February 24th to 26th, is organized by GIZ Pakistan on behalf of the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The event aims to enhance cooperation, promote digital innovation, and ensure financial sustainability in Pakistan's social protection system. Speaking at the conference's opening session, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized BISP's role as the largest social safety net in Asia. She recalled the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who once said, "No nation can truly progress if its most vulnerable communities are left behind." This vision laid the founda-

tion for BISP's establishment in 2008, ensuring social protection as a fundamental right rather than a privilege. Highlighting BISP's achievements, Senator Khalid noted that the Benazir Kafaalat program has been a lifeline for 9.8 million families, providing them with quarterly financial support. She also pointed out that the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif initiative has enrolled over 10.7 million children 50% of whom are girls by linking financial assistance to school attendance. Additionally, the Benazir Nashonuma program addresses maternal and child health, offering nutritional support to pregnant and lactating mothers across the country. Senator Khalid further underscored the significance of the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER), describing it as the backbone of Pakistan's social protection database. The NSER, a pioneering dynamic registry, facilitates over 95 social sector programs at both federal and provincial levels, ensuring targeted assistance for the most vulnerable populations. The BISP chairperson also announced the launch of new skill

development initiatives aimed at economic empowerment for beneficiaries. She stressed the need for enhanced federal-provincial coordination to establish an integrated social protection ecosystem. "The challenges of poverty, climate change, and economic instability demand stronger social protection mechanisms based on global best practices," she stated. Expressing gratitude, Senator Khalid acknowledged the support of the European Union, the German government, The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and various development partners. She also appreciated the Government of Sindh for hosting the conference and thanked Johanna Knoess, Project Head of Adaptive Social Protection at GIZ Pakistan, for organizing the event. Keynote speakers at the conference included German Consul General Mr. Ruediger Lotz, Country Director for GIZ Pakistan Ms. Maria-Jose Poddey, and Ms. Johanna Knoess, reflecting the strong international commitment to strengthening Pakistan's social protection landscape.

Pak-China cooperation in education, media to be expanded: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong Monday said that it is a high time to take profound and substantial steps to further strengthen China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. "We are ready to expand cooperation with Pakistan in education, media, think tanks, youth exchanges, and the film and television industries, to foster mutual learning between civilizations and strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties," the ambassador said talking to media after addressing a ceremony. The ambassador said, "We will help Pakistan in developing human resources, increasing training opportunities, and implement the bilateral initiative of sending 1,000 Pakistanis to China for modern agricultural training." He said that at the invitation of President Xi Jinping, President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari paid a successful state visit to China earlier this month. "We are pleased to see that since the establishment of the new Pakistani government last year, China and Pakistan have maintained close high-level exchanges." He said, "We are ready to work with Pakistani side for the implementation, and turn those important consensus into tangible practices and

fruitful outcomes of our bilateral cooperation." The ambassador said, "We must aim high to deepen high-level strategic cooperation." He added the development of China-Pakistan relations over the past year further indicates that high-level strategic guidance is the fundamental guarantee for the steady and long-term development of our bilateral relations." He said that this year marks the 10th anniversary of President Xi Jinping's historic visit to Pakistan in 2015, and in the next year, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, presenting significant moments and development opportunities for China-Pakistan relations. He said that China is ready to work with Pakistan to fully understand and appreciate the profound significance and valuable insights from President Xi's historic visit and consistently view and develop China-Pakistan relations from a strategic level. "By combining a long-term vision with pragmatic actions, we aim to continuously advance the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the

new era, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of our diplomatic relations with the vivid practice of high-quality CPEC development and other cooperation." He said that China is ready to deepen practical cooperation with Pakistan in various fields, work together to upgrade CPEC cooperation, and help Pakistan consolidate its development foundations and unleash its development potential. "We are prepared to work with Pakistan to ensure effective implementation, focusing on key projects. We'll continue to advance the realignment of the Karakoram Highway Phase II and the upgrade of the Main Line-I railway project, actively promote the comprehensive development and operation of Gwadar Port, and ensure the stable operation of the Khunjerab Pass besides expanding cooperation in agricultural." He said that last year, China-Pakistan agricultural trade exceeded \$1 billion, with Pakistan enjoying a valuable surplus of \$237 million. On February 14 this year, the first batch of 26.5 tons of high-value-added buffalo dairy products arrived in China, which is great significance, showcasing the resilience and prospects of our bilateral agricultural cooperation.

NA committee discusses issues related to PFF

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Sub-Committee of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) met here on Monday at Pakistan Sports Board under the Convenorship of Anjum Aqeel Khan, MNA. Saud Hashmi, Chairman of the Normalization Committee (NC) of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), briefed the Committee on the updated status of the elections being conducted at the district and provincial levels, resulting in the finalization of the formation of district, provincial, and Congress bodies.

However, the elections for the President and Executive body are yet to be conducted. He added that the entire system has been digitized, and all players have been assigned unique IDs through which their activities and performance can be monitored. The Committee discussed the issues related to the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) in detail. The Chairman of the Normalization Committee informed the Committee that a meeting has already been scheduled with the members of Congress by FIFA and AFC. On the direction of the Committee, he assured that

the NC would complete the remaining election process within two months. He also apprised the Committee that the suspended members could submit their review applications, and the NC would address these grievances accordingly. The Chairman NC further added that as per law one third of the Congress members can submit a vote of no confidence for the removal of three women members which can be processed by the NC within 15 days. The Committee was assured by the NC that they would submit reply on the working paper questionnaire by 28th February, 2025.

OIC nations must strengthen water governance: Romina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam here on Monday urged Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states to prioritize water security in their climate action strategies, strengthen intergovernmental collaborations on water governance, facilitate public-private partnerships to invest in water-efficient technologies, and mobilize international climate finance for large-scale water projects. Addressing the opening ceremony of "Networking of Water Centers of Excellence in OIC Member States," Romina stressed the importance of cooperation among nations sharing transboundary rivers, lakes, and underground water reservoirs to ensure regional stability. "Many of our nations share critical water resources, and cooperation in water governance is essential for regional peace and prosperity. No single country can tackle these challenges alone," she said. "The OIC, with its collective strength and shared vision, must step forward as a leader in global water security efforts."

Representatives of water centers from various countries, including Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Morocco, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, and Russia, attended the event. Alam highlighted the challenges OIC nations are facing due to climate change, rapid urbanization, and population growth. "Fifteen of the world's most water-stressed countries belong to the OIC. Large parts of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, which have significant OIC representation, are facing severe water shortages due to declining groundwater levels, extreme weather events, and inefficient water management practices," she stated. Drawing attention to the urgency of the issue, she pointed out the devastating impacts of floods, droughts, and glacial melt on water security and economic stability. "The catastrophic floods of 2022 displaced millions, while prolonged droughts continue to impact our agricultural output," she added. Romina further emphasized that Pakistan has made water security a national priority. She said "Our government has invested in water conservation projects, including rainwater harvesting, smart irrigation, food resilience initiatives, and sustainable water governance policies that align with our climate action commitments."

Security Forum, where governments could discuss water-sharing agreements, exchange expertise, and mobilize financial resources for large-scale water infrastructure projects through institutions like the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). Looking to the future, Alam called for the adoption of nature-based solutions to enhance water security. She said "Investments in reforestation and wetland restoration can improve groundwater recharge." Floodwater harvesting can turn climate-induced disasters into water-saving opportunities, while smart water pricing mechanisms can promote conservation in agriculture and industry." She highlighted Pakistan's implementation of the Recharge Pakistan project, which uses floodwater to replenish groundwater and restore ecosystems. "Such initiatives can be scaled up across OIC countries to create long-term, sustainable water management strategies," she added. "Pakistan stands ready to work with our OIC partners to develop joint solutions, share research, and build a water-resilient future for all," she concluded. "Water is not just a national issue; it is a shared responsibility. If we fail to act now, we risk exacerbating the climate and humanitarian crises unfolding before us. However, if we come together—united in our commitment, innovation, and cooperation—we can secure a sustainable future for generations to come."

She also noted Pakistan's ongoing initiatives, such as wastewater treatment, groundwater recharge projects, and climate-resilient agriculture techniques, but called for stronger partnerships among OIC member states' universities, research institutions, and policy think tanks to share knowledge and best practices. Pakistan, she noted, has successfully navigated water-sharing agreements like the Indus Waters Treaty, which serves as a model for other OIC countries dealing with cross-border water challenges. To build on this success, She proposed the establishment of an OIC Water

Romina called for a renewed commitment to water security across the OIC, emphasizing, "Together, we can turn challenges into opportunities and forge a path toward resilience and sustainability."

LESCO delegation visits Parliament House

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 16-member delegation from the Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), led by Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) WAPDA, Husrain Raza, visited Parliament House in Islamabad. The delegation was warmly received by senior Senate officials, who provided an overview of the various departments and their roles. During the visit, the delegation toured the Senate Museum, where they were given a detailed briefing on the history and evolution of the Parliament. A documentary highlighting the Senate's historical background and legislative journey was also screened. Later, the delegation visited the Senate Hall, where they received a comprehensive briefing on legislative procedures, Senate operations, and parliamentary traditions. They were also informed about the proceedings of Senate sessions, including the legislative process, debates, and key parliamentary affairs.

Srinagar Highway sealed amid security measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): In light of law and order considerations, the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has announced the closure of the Srinagar Highway from Zero Point to Serena Hotel in both directions until further notice on Monday. A public relations officer told APP that all other entry and exit points of the Red Zone will remain open for traffic. He said that traffic coming from Faizabad should use Jinnah Avenue. Similarly, vehicles travelling from Club Road towards Aabpara and the Red Zone should take the Faizabad loop and use the Jinnah Avenue underpass to reach Margalla Road. He said that traffic from Bhara Kahu should take Club Road and Faizabad Expressway, while vehicles travelling from Aabpara to Bhara Kahu should use the Shakarparian Road. He said that the Islamabad Traffic Police remains committed to ensuring smooth traffic flow and guiding commuters.

ANF recovers over 169 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover over 169 kg drugs worth over Rs 90 million and arrested 15 suspects including a Nigerian, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 1000 grams hashish was recovered from a vehicle during an operation in Jattial, Gilgit, and two suspects were arrested during the operation. The arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In another operation, 12 kg hashish was recovered from the bag of an accused arrested near Gangal East, Islamabad.

950 grams ice was recovered from a parcel sent to the Netherlands at a courier office near Chandni Chowk Rawalpindi and 19 kg ice was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Sialkot on GT Road from the possession of a suspect arrested. 30 kg hashish, 14.4 kg opium and 10 kg ice were recovered from a vehicle checked near Samundari Motorway Interchange and three suspects were arrested. 33.6 kg hashish, 12 kg opium and 10 kg ice were recovered from a vehicle intercepted in Maridwala Rajana area of Faisalabad and three suspects were arrested. 605 grams cocaine was recovered from a Nigerian

resident netted at Lahore International Airport. 3 kg ice was recovered from a vehicle stopped near Tonmi Mor, DG Khan and two suspects were arrested. 12 kg hashish was recovered from a suspect rounded up near Fateh Chowk, Hyderabad. In 10th operation, 200 grams hashish was recovered from a suspect in DI Khan. In 11th operation, 20,000 intoxicated tablets and 600 grams weed were recovered from an abandoned motorcycle in a non-inhabited area of Gwadar. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: Children sitting on the roof top of the passenger van at tarnol area may cause serious incident. —INP Photo

Ministry team visits Iran

KABUL (BNA): A delegation from the Ministry of Interior, led by Mullah Abdul Haq Akhund, Deputy Minister of Counter-Narcotics, arrived in Iran on Monday, an official invitation aimed at strengthening bilateral efforts in the fight against drug trafficking and abuse. The delegation is scheduled to engage in discussions focused on strategies to increase collaborative efforts in combating drug-related issues.

Taliban publicly flog 18 people

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban flogged 18 people, including four women, in the eastern province of Khost, accusing them of same-sex relations and "illicit affairs," the Taliban's Supreme Court said on Monday. Each person received 39 lashes and was sentenced to prison terms ranging from one to seven years. The public flogging was attended by local Taliban judicial officials, members of the group's civilian and military authorities, and residents of the area.

Baradar warns of depleting water resources at moot

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan's Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, addressed participants at the International Water Research Conference in Kabul on Monday and emphasized that sustainable water management is essential if the country hopes to compete globally and attain economic success. He stated it was essential to the survival of humans, animals and plants and that Islam mandates the responsible use of water in an Islamic society. Baradar pointed out that although water is a renewable natural resource, it is increasingly becoming scarce due to climate change, rising water pollution, increasing human demand, and improper water usage. He warned that water resources are continuously depleting, which has negatively impacted political

and economic relations among countries. "Afghanistan possesses vast natural water resources and reserves. However, due to various reasons, there has not been a professional and national approach toward this immense blessing throughout the country's modern history. "Therefore, it is now our collective responsibility to take fundamental steps toward effective water management by utilizing all available resources and means," he said. Baradar stated that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) is making efforts to ensure the proper utilization and management of the country's water resources; one such example being the Qosh Tepa Canal and the construction and rehabilitation of several dams. He also acknowledged attending university professors and other experts

for sharing research findings and urged them to continue their work. The International Water Research Conference, which is being held at the Loya Jirga Hall, will run for three days. It is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Higher Education and Kabul Polytechnic University. The primary objectives of the conference include: improving water management in the country, replenishing underground water resources, ensuring proper utilization of water, and preventing water pollution. The conference has brought together officials from government institutions, professors from prestigious foreign universities, representatives of international organizations, and domestic and international experts in water management. A total of 135 research papers will be presented during the conference.

Revival of Herat's silk weaving industry

HERAT (BNA): The silk weaving industry in Herat, renowned for its rich history and craftsmanship, continues to thrive despite facing significant challenges from imported goods. Aminullah, a 60-year-old experienced weaver, shared with a Bakhtar News Agency reporter that silk weaving remains a beloved tradition in the region. "Despite many challenges, people are still interested in this craft," he noted, highlighting the enduring appeal of silk products among local consumers. Ghulam Hazrat, who began weaving at the tender age of seven, echoed these sentiments. He reported a steady demand for their products, stating, "We have many customers from various provinces who purchase our silk." However, the industry faces fierce competition from imports from China and Pakistan, which have reportedly diminished the demand for local silk. Local weavers are voicing concerns that these foreign products have put pressure on their businesses and the market.

In response to these challenges, officials from the Herat Information and Culture Department are stepping in to support local producers. Mawlawi Hamidullah Ghiasi, the Head of Culture and Art at the department, acknowledged the adverse effects of imported goods on local craftsmanship. "We are working to revive this industry by supporting local production," he affirmed.

Herat Security Dialogue opened

MADRID (Amu TV): The 12th Herat Security Dialogue opened on Monday in Madrid, bringing together political figures, former Afghan officials, and representatives from international organizations and various countries to discuss the future of Afghanistan. Organized by the Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies, the two-day conference is themed "Afghanistan: Reviving Hope; Synergic Efforts." According to the institute's statement, discussions will center on Afghanistan's position in global politics, the threat of terrorism, and the role of diplomacy in shaping the country's future. The conference aims to explore strategies for Afghanistan's political stability and international cooperation. The previous Herat Security Dialogue, the 11th in the series, was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, where participants examined the Taliban's consolidation of power and its implications for the country's future.

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan strengthening relations



KABUL(BNA): Deputy Foreign Minister for Administrative and Financial Affairs, Dr. Mohammad Naeem, met with Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Elham Mohammadov, to discuss diplomatic and economic cooperation.

According to a statement from the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening political, economic, and cultural ties. Dr. Naeem expressed gratitude for Azerbaijan's support in facilitating

Afghanistan's participation in the upcoming COP29 climate conference and underscored Kabul's commitment to deepening bilateral relations. Ambassador Mohammadov reaffirmed Azerbaijan's intention to enhance engagement with

Afghanistan, noting the strategic significance of ties between the two countries. He pointed to the recent opening of Azerbaijan's embassy in Kabul and the accreditation of Afghan diplomats in Baku as key steps toward closer cooperation.

Polio vaccination drive begins in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): A four-day polio vaccination campaign has begun in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan. Health officials have announced that during this campaign, more than 1.3 million children under the age of five will be vaccinated. "During the campaign, 914,000 children across all districts of Nangarhar will be vaccinated," said Aminullah Sharif, head of public health in Nangarhar. "Our goal in Kunar is to vaccinate 208,000 children under the age of five," said Muzaffar Mukhlis, head of public health in Kunar. Residents consider the polio vaccine crucial in preventing childhood disabilities and urge families to fulfill their responsibility in this regard.



"Parents must vaccinate their children because vaccination is a vital necessity for children's lives. This step will protect them from disabilities in the future," said Aminullah, a resident of Nangarhar. "Public awareness about vaccination must be increased. We also urge vaccination teams to go

from mosque to mosque and from madrassa to madrassa to ensure all children are vaccinated," said Fazal Khan, another resident of Nangarhar. This campaign has been launched following the recent confirmation of the first positive polio case of 2025 in Bala Murghab district of Badghis province.

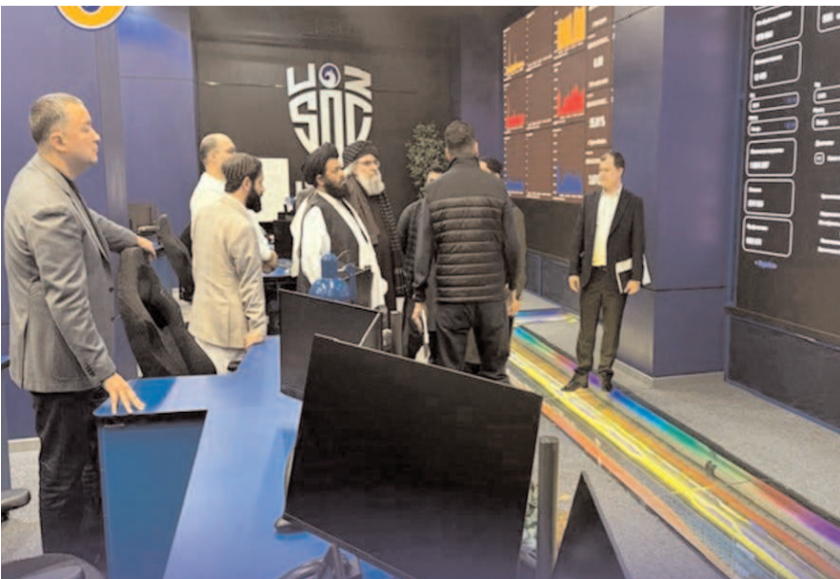
Iran bans Afghan migrants from working

KABUL (Amu TV): Iranian authorities have barred Afghan migrants from working in open-air markets in Zahedan, a city in southeastern Iran, according to a municipal official. Hamid Roshandel, a senior official in Zahedan's municipality, said that 11 Afghan migrants were identified working at the city's Monday Market and handed over to the police. "In accordance with Article 181 of the Labor Law, foreign nationals

without work permits are prohibited from working in Zahedan's open-air markets, and violators will face strict action," Roshandel was quoted as saying by IRNA, Iran's state news agency. He added that authorities have installed 15 informational banners across the markets and distributed 1,500 notices to vendors, shop owners, and street sellers, warning them against employing Afghan migrants. The head of Zahedan's Organization for Urban

Occupation Regulation said the measures were aimed at organizing the city's job market and ensuring order and security in commercial spaces. Officials, he added, would continue monitoring local markets to enforce the restrictions. Iranian authorities have repeatedly stressed their intention to expel Afghan migrants, and many Afghans in the country have expressed concern over increasingly strict limitations on their ability to work and live there.

Top IE team visits Uzbekistan's Techno Park, Mining Museum



KABUL (BNA): Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Mullah Hedayatullah Badri, led a delegation to Uzbekistan, where they toured the country's Techno Park and Mining Museum and held high-level meetings

with Uzbek officials and business leaders. During the visit, Minister Badri held talks with Uzbekistan's Energy Minister, senior oil and gas officials, the rector of Uzbekistan Geological

University, and the deputy minister of information technology. Afghan business representatives also participated in the discussions. In a statement, the Ministry of Mines and

Petroleum described Afghanistan as a resource-rich country and highlighted the improved investment climate under the Islamic Emirate. Minister Badri encouraged Uzbek investors to explore opportunities in Afghanistan's mining sector, stressing the potential for mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Talks with Uzbek officials centered on strengthening technical expertise among Afghan engineers and exploring mineral reserves. The delegation also toured various industrial sites as part of their visit. The acting minister reaffirmed the Afghan government's commitment to supporting both domestic and foreign investors. He also urged Afghan entrepreneurs to invest in the country's mining sector, positioning it as a key driver of national development.

High internet costs spark complaints in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): Residents of Kabul have complained about the high cost of internet packages in the country and have called on the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to reduce internet prices. They believe that the price of the internet does not match its poor quality and are demanding improved services along with lower costs. "The price of the internet has increased and should be reduced slightly because the economic situation of the people is weak. If the price goes down, internet

usage will increase," said Shoaib, a resident of Kabul. "In other countries, the internet is both cheap and high-quality, but in Afghanistan, it is expensive and performs poorly. My request is that prices should be reduced," said Abdul Malik, another resident of Kabul. While internet prices in Afghanistan are high, neighboring countries offer better quality at lower costs. "One GB of internet in Turkey costs 35 lira, which is approximately equivalent to 1 dollar or 70 to 73 afghani," Feroz Aydin Mohammadi, an Afghan

migrant in Turkey. "Access to the internet in Pakistan is very easy. Packages of 200 GB and even 1500 GB can be purchased for 500 Afghanis," said Malik Aul Shinwari, an Afghan migrant in Pakistan. However, the Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA) has announced that it is working to improve accessibility and reduce internet costs in the country. Jalaluddin Shams, ATRA's spokesperson, said: "After analyzing the revenues and expenses of telecom companies, ATRA has set a specific price,

which has been implemented since the beginning of 2025. Competition among companies has also increased, and they are now lowering their internet package prices to attract more customers." Previously, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology announced the approval of a project to lay 488 kilometers of fiber optic cable across Afghanistan. The ministry also stated that the connection of the fiber optic network is ongoing in some provinces, while in others, the work has recently begun.

Fitrat: Ex-govt politicians no longer trusted by Afghan people

KABUL (TOLONews): Fasihuddin Fitrat, the chief of staff of the Ministry of Defense, commented on the fifth meeting of political figures from the former government held in Vienna, stating that these individuals are no longer acceptable to the people of Afghanistan. Speaking to reporters in Badakhshan, Fitrat highlighted the caretaker government's engagement at various levels with countries around the world, emphasizing that the Islamic Emirate seeks to expand its relations with the international community. The chief of staff of the

Ministry of Defense said: "With these meetings, they aim to confuse public opinion. They are well-known individuals whom the Afghan people no longer trust. It would be better for them to stop conspiring and spreading propaganda against the Islamic Emirate." He further added that the caretaker government is taking a serious approach to fostering closer ties with other countries, and currently, many nations are engaged in some form of interaction with the Islamic Emirate. Fasihuddin Fatrat stated: "Although no country has officially declared its recognition of the Islamic Emirate, the interactions taking place so far indicate that the Islamic Emirate holds its position in the world, and countries are engaging with it." Meanwhile, Amanuddin



Mansoor, commander of the Omar Army Corps, dismissed claims of internal disagreements among Islamic Emirate members and stressed that no government will exist in Afghanistan after the 'Taliban'. Commander Mansoor stated: "There are no fundamental disagreements among Taliban leaders. Just as they fought under one flag during the jihad, today,

the same unity remains among them. There has been no change, and there will be no post-Taliban government; such a thing does not exist." Additionally, the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defense rejected reports of ISIS presence and recruitment in northern Afghanistan, asserting that the group does not have the capability to disrupt the country's security.

Development projects boost employment

LAGHMAN (BNA): The Laghman Municipality has announced the ongoing implementation of numerous construction and development projects in Mehtarlam, the provincial capital, creating job opportunities for 450 local residents. Lal Agha Ebrahimi, head of media for the Municipality of Mehtarlam, reported to Bakhtar News Agency that these projects, which have a total cost of 60 million Afghanis, are being executed in collaboration with partner organizations. Local laborers involved in these projects expressed their satisfaction with the employment opportunities generated. They noted that since the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, there has been a noticeable increase in rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts throughout the country, allowing thousands to participate in these vital projects.

Restoration of national archives reaches 40%

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials from the Ministry of Information and Culture said that the restoration work of the National Archives of Afghanistan has progressed to 40%. The purpose of this restoration is to protect historical documents and the existing collections in the National Archives from damage caused by climate change. The National Archives of Afghanistan, recognized as a treasure trove of the country's historical documents, was originally built over 130 years ago by Shah Abdul Rahman Khan as a guesthouse for his son, Amir Habibullah Khan. "This project, which includes the restoration and preservation of historical artifacts, the renovation of deteriorating buildings, and

improvements to the infrastructure of the National Archives, will be completed in about six months at a cost of 4.6 million Afghanis. So far, 40% of the work has been completed," stated Khobaib Ghufuran, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture. The restoration work on this complex began more than two months ago by the Ministry of Information and Culture. Najibullah Bahad, a university professor, spoke about the importance of this center, saying: "The National Archives essentially safeguard historical artifacts, and restoring and displaying these items is of great significance to the public and tourists." Some cultural figures

consider the restoration of the National Archives a significant step in preserving Afghanistan's historical documents. "The National Archives of Afghanistan, the National Radio and Television Archives, and the Kabul Public Library are among the most important cultural, historical, and literary repositories of the country," stated Faqir Maiwand, a former advisor to the Ministry of Information and Culture. The National Archives of Afghanistan houses manuscripts adorned with gold and lapis lazuli, historical documents, and antique items such as the desk, chairs, and cabinets of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, which hold great historical value.

Sindh government to fight for water rights

Murad highlights economic transformation, infrastructure, and population challenges at ‘Uraan Pakistan’ workshop

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has emphasised the need for unity, strategic economic planning, and infrastructural development to achieve Pakistan's vision of a trillion-dollar economy.

This he said while speaking at the "Uraan Pakistan" workshop, hosted by the Sindh government at CM House on Monday. He outlined the challenges and opportunities for sustainable growth. The programme was attended by Federal Minister of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives (MoPDSI) Ahsan Iqbal, Senior Minister Sharjeel Memon, P&D Minister Nasir Shah, CM Special Assistant Syed Qasim Naveed, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Chairman P&D Najam Shah and provincial and federal secretaries.

CM Murad Shah emphasised the decline in exports, stating that energy and infrastructure development are crucial for economic progress. "We cannot increase exports without reliable energy and modern infrastructure," he remarked. He pointed out that ports are underutilised due to logistics constraints and suggested that heavy traffic should be redirected to the Lyari Expressway to facilitate smoother goods transportation.

Infrastructure & Economic Development: CM Shah announced that Shahrah-e-Bhutto will be completed by the end of this year, providing an alternative route for heavy traffic. He also

stressed the need for a Ring Road to enhance transport and stimulate economic activity and highlighted the potential of the Dhabaji and Khairpur economic zones, urging stakeholders to support export-oriented industries.

Mura Shah said that Thar Coal remains underutilised, and despite the Jhimpir Corridor's capacity of 50,000 MW, Pakistan is only producing 2,000 MW. He called for increased investment in renewable energy to reduce reliance on imported fuels.

Digital & Technological Growth: Talking about digital and technology growth, the chief minister asserted that Pakistan's youth possess immense talent, but the lack of high-speed internet and digital infrastructure is hindering their ability to compete globally. He acknowledged Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's concerns regarding digital connectivity and called for greater investment in the IT sector.

Population Growth: Murad Ali Shah, talking about population growth, identified population [growth] as Pakistan's biggest challenge, stating that if the country had followed regional trends, its population would be around 130 million rather than its current levels. He noted that neighbouring countries have effectively controlled population growth, whereas Pakistan has failed to implement similar strategies.

Climate Change: Discussing climate change, Mr Shah reminded that Benazir Bhutto's 2008 manifesto included climate action, which has gained signifi-

cant importance following recent floods. He announced that the Sindh government is heavily investing in water conservation projects but called for federal support in large-scale water infrastructure initiatives.

Murad Shah reiterated the need for unity and collective action to lead Pakistan toward a prosperous future. "We must leave a country for our next generation where they can truly soar," he stated.

Press Conference: Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah & Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal, addressing a Joint Press Conference, highlighted Sindh's vulnerability to climate disasters, stating that the province suffered the worst impact of the 2022 floods. They stressed the urgent need for climate resilience, noting that coastal areas of Sindh are being eroded by rising sea levels. "To counter this crisis, we must implement Green Revolution 2.0," Murad Shah and Ahsan Iqbal said.

Energy & Infrastructure Development: Referring to Pakistan's energy future, Ahsan Iqbal pointed out that Sindh has a 400-year coal reserve, which, in collaboration with the Sindh government, is being utilised to make the province an energy hub. He also announced that the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway project will begin this year, along with the reconstruction of the Karachi-Hyderabad Motorway, making it more efficient for port connectivity.

Ahsan Iqbal expressed concern over Pakistan's rising population growth rate

of 2.55 per cent, warning that if left unchecked, it could collapse the economy. He emphasised that developed nations, both Muslim and non-Muslim, have controlled their populations to achieve economic progress.

Referring to Pakistan's economic history, Ahsan Iqbal said, "In 77 years, we have crashed three economic take-offs. Now, we are in our fourth attempt, and we are seeing progress." He highlighted improvements in exports, energy, inflation control, and stock market indicators but stressed that Pakistan's key to success lies in political stability. "Right now, we don't need a political long march—we need an economic long march," he stated. He also praised the Sindh government for its full cooperation in national development projects and invited the private sector and civil society to join efforts for economic growth.

Murad talks about water crisis: Sindh CM Murad Shah addressed concerns about water shortages in Sindh, clarifying that despite reports of the Chulistan Canal's approval, there is no water available in the system to support new canals. He reassured that the Sindh government will fight for its water rights through legal and constitutional means rather than protests. "We do not need to take to the streets; we can prove our case with facts and figures," the CM said, adding that the telemetry system will ultimately reveal the true water distribution data.

Social Media Regulations: To a ques-

tion, Ahsan Iqbal reaffirmed the government's commitment to media freedom but warned against misusing social media for harassment and hate speech. "Freedom of expression does not mean harassing mothers and sisters online. Even in the UK, defamation can lead to a £50,000 fine within a month," he said, recalling his own experience as a victim of violence with a bullet still lodged in his body.

Ahsan Iqbal acknowledged past injustices against Sindh during the PTI government and appreciated CM Murad Ali Shah's data-driven approach in advocating for Sindh's rights. "On Sindh CMs request, we have included several Sindh projects in the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP)," he said.

Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal stated that in every coalition government, differences arise, but they are also resolved. He assured that the alliance between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is stable, as both parties have a mechanism to address concerns.

"There is no threat to the government's coalition," he emphasised, adding that a committee led by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar is actively maintaining communication between both parties. He also confirmed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will soon convene the Council of Common Interests (CCI) meeting. Ahsan Iqbal reassured that all provinces will receive

their fair share of resources and that no province will be deprived of its rights by another. "Pakistan's Situation Changed After May 9" He recalled that before May 9, no attacks on defence institutions had ever occurred.

He accused former President Arif Alvi of harming Pakistan's global image, saying "Arif Alvi is spreading propaganda, claiming that the situation in Pakistan is worse than in Kashmir and Gaza." He further alleged that writing letters to the IMF against Pakistan is a form of economic terrorism. "PTI is Running a Bigger Anti-Pakistan Campaign Than RAW"

Ahsan Iqbal criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), stating that despite holding numerous rallies before May 9, the government never created any obstacles. However, he claimed that PTI is now running a campaign against Pakistan that is more damaging than that of RAW (India's intelligence agency). Referring to financial corruption, Ahsan Iqbal said that money recovered in London was meant to be returned to the people of Pakistan, but instead, PTI returned it to the original thief. "Today, the entire PTI is defending that criminal," he remarked, adding that PTI executed the world's most transparent theft, leaving behind a complete money trail. He concluded by accusing PTI of stealing £190 million from the public and then playing the victim, stating, "They give stolen public money back to the thief and then claim political persecution."



SARGODHA: President Asif Ali Zardari visiting remount depot, Mona.

Ramazan to begin on Mar 2, Eid to fall on 31st

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) on Monday forecasted that the holy month of Ramazan would begin on March 2 (Sunday) while Eidul Fitr would be observed on the 31st of the month.

A press release issued today said the commission had released its forecast for the moon's visibility based on scientific assessments, astronomical calculations and modern observational data.

However, it emphasised that the Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee would examine testimonies from across the country and formally announce the holy

month's official start since the unaided observation of the crescent moon with the naked eye was a religious obligation for determining the month's beginning.

"According to precise astronomical models, the new moon (conjunction) for Ramazan will occur on February 28, 2025, at 05:45 PST. However, the visibility of the crescent depends on key factors such as the moon's age, its angular separation from the sun, altitude at sunset, and atmospheric conditions," Suparco said.

It said the probability of the moon's visibility on Feb 28 was "not visible even with optical aid" and thus the likelihood of a moon sighting on the date in

Pakistan is "extremely low". "Consequently, Sha'aban is expected to complete 30 days, and the first day of fasting will likely be observed on March 2. In Saudi Arabia, the new moon is also expected to be born on Feb 28. However, due to the moon's position relative to the horizon, and atmospheric clarity, the crescent is expected to be visible leading to the commencement of Ramzan on March 1. In Pakistan, however, it will begin a day later.

"According to astronomical models, the Shawwal moon will be visible on March 30, indicating that Eidul Fitr will likely be observed on March 31 in Pakistan," the press release said.

Torkham border remains suspend

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: On the third consecutive day, Torkham border remained suspended for traffic and pedestrian movement, border security said on Monday.

Due to blockade of the crossing, bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has halted besides hundreds of passengers including women and children have been stranded at the both sides of the border.

Parking lots in Landi Kotal and Torkham are packed with export loaded vehicles, however, trucks laden with export perishable commodities have been sent back to Peshawar to avoid financial loss on exporters. The local traders viewed that repeated blockade of the crossing has been suffering their business whereas the Afghan businessmen have started turning towards other countries including Iran and the Central Asian countries for business.

Suspension of the border has left hundreds of daily wagers and laborers jobless and their families have been compelled to starvation, laborers said. It is to be stated here that in the last one and half years the border has been closed almost ten times on petty dispute, erupted at the border.

Meanwhile a joint meeting of Pak-Afghan border officials was held on Monday afternoon to discuss the border closing issue but ended without any result, officials informed.

PHC extends PTI MNA bail

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has extended the protective bail of Member National Assembly (MNA) Yousaf Khan from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), until March 5. The court has also directed that Yousaf Khan should not be arrested in any case until then.

On the previous day, Justice Fazal Subhan and Justice Qazi Jawad Ihsanullah heard the petition. During the hearing, the lawyer, Alam Khan Adenzai, informed the court that the petitioner is a member of the National Assembly from Hangu and has filed a petition seeking details of cases registered against him.

The lawyer requested the court to extend Yousaf Khan's protective bail, which was granted until March 5. The court also directed the federal government to submit a report on the cases registered against Yousaf Khan.

In the previous hearing, the Peshawar High Court had directed the federal government to submit a report on the cases registered against Yousaf Khan but had not extended his protective bail. Therefore, Yousaf Khan's lawyer requested the court to extend the protective bail. The court accepted the request and extended Yousaf Khan's protective bail until March 5, directing that he should not be arrested in any case until then.

Understanding purpose behind Army Act key to solving half issue: SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail on Monday said that understanding the purpose of the Army Act would solve half the military trials issue.

The remarks came as a seven-member constitutional bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, including Justice Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Naeem Afghan, Justice Musarrat Hilali heard intra-court appeals regarding the trial of civilians in military courts.

In its order on the hearing of the appeals against civilians' military trial, the constitutional bench had said judgments of military courts would be conditional to the top court verdict on the cases pending before it.

During Monday's hearing, Uzair Bhandari, the lawyer representing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, presented his arguments. He argued that stated that even if the Army Act is annulled, the anti-terrorism law remains in place. He added that when multiple legal forums existed, it must be determined where the fundamental rights of the accused could be best ensured. He further argued that Article 245 of the Constitution did not grant judicial powers to the military.

At this, Justice Mandokhail questioned: "Is court martial not a judicial proceeding?" In response, Bhandari said that the court martial is indeed a judicial authority but only for military personnel, not for civilians.

Meanwhile, Justice Amin-ud-Din marked that a category of civilians also fell under the Army Act and questioned

how it would be determined which civilians came under its jurisdiction and which did not. Justice Mandokhail here noted that the Constitution granted the military two types of powers — one for defence and the other for assisting the civil government.

Justice Amin-ud-Din further stated that if the argument based on Article 245 is accepted, then how would the military defend its own institutions? He questioned whether, in the event of an attack on the General Headquarters (GHQ), authorities would have to wait for an Article 245 notification. At this, Imran's lawyer responded that if someone is firing bullets, no permission is needed for defence. In case of an attack, all institutions, including the police and military, take action, he added.

"The Supreme Court has already settled this point in the Liaquat Hussain case, ruling that if the military arrests an attacker, they must hand them over to civil authorities. However, the military can assist civil authorities regarding the detainee," he contended. Justice Afghan questioned: "If a military officer and a civilian together violate the Official Secrets Act, where will the trial take place?"

Lawyer Bhandari replied that the trial would be conducted in an anti-terrorism court in such a case. This was the point when Justice Mandokhail remarked: "If we understand the purpose of the making the Army Act, half the issue will be resolved." He added that the Constitution clearly stated that it was a law related to the armed forces. He noted that in disciplinary action against a civilian officer, the power to impose punishment had not been granted, whereas military courts had been given this authority.

Maritime security exercise Sea Guard-25 commences

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Opening Brief of Exercise SEA GUARD-25 was conducted under the auspices of Pakistan Navy. Commander Coast, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

The second in its series, Exercise SEA GUARD is a Pakistan Navy initiative aimed at bringing together representatives from Pakistan's diverse maritime sectors; including shipping, fisheries, law enforcement agencies, private entities, and NGOs under one platform to collectively address multifaceted challenges in the maritime domain. In addition to prominent figures from private sector and fishing community, representatives from various organizations, including the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, Pakistan Coast Guards, Pakistan National



Shipping Corporation, Anti-Narcotics Force, Federal Investigation Agency, Karachi Port Trust, and Port Qasim Authority, attended the session.

During the opening brief, participants were apprised of the aims and objectives of Exercise SEA GUARD, as well as the critical role of the Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC) in ensuring maritime safety and security along Pakistan's coastline. The exercise seeks to enhance coordination among national stakehold-

ers while operating within their respective legal frameworks, using JMICC as a common platform to strengthen security of Pakistan's maritime zones. It includes a series of practical scenario-based exercises at sea, along with table-top discussions, to refine and improve existing security mechanisms.

Commander Coast, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin, expressed his gratitude to all national stakeholders for their participation and commended their contributions towards fostering a safer maritime environment.



HYDERABAD: Secretary general of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Salman Akram Raja along with other leaders addressing a press conference.

Indian Hindu pilgrims due in Pakistan

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A group of 109 Hindu pilgrims from India arrived in Pakistan via the Wagah border on Monday to participate in the religious rituals of Maha Shivratri at the historic Shri Katas Raj temple.

The delegation is led by Jatha Party leaders Trilok Chand and Raghu Kant. The pilgrims were warmly welcomed at the border by senior officials of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), including Additional Secretary (Shrines) Saifullah Khokhar, Deputy Secretary Umar Javed Awan, members of the Pakistan Hindu Mandir Management Committee, and local Hindu leaders. The guests were greeted with flower petals and presented with bouquets as a gesture of goodwill.

To ensure a smooth visit, the Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, under the special directives of Chairman Syed Ata-ur-Rehman, has made comprehensive arrangements for the pilgrims, including security, accommodation, and transportation.

The Hindu pilgrims have traveled from various Indian states, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana, and Rajasthan. Speaking to the media at the Wagah border, Jatha leader Raghu Kant expressed his delight at visiting Pakistan again. "I have been here before, and every time I come here I feel immense happiness. We are treated with great respect and hospitality," he remarked.

Following their arrival, the pilgrims were transported to Gurdwara Dera Sahib in Lahore for their stay. On February 25, they will depart for the revered Shri Katas Raj temple, where they will perform religious rituals in observance of Maha Shivratri on February 26. The annual pilgrimage to Katas Raj is a significant event for Hindu devotees, as the temple complex holds great historical and spiritual importance in Hindu mythology.

Imran only ex-PM to face jail trial: Omar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and PTI leader Omar Ayub has stated that Imran Khan is the only former prime minister undergoing a trial in jail.

Speaking to the media outside the Judicial Complex Islamabad, Omar Ayub revealed that Chief Justice had invited him for a meeting as Opposition Leader. He further stated that when he met Imran Khan, he sought permission three times before engaging in discussions with the Chief Justice.

Imran Khan permitted the meeting, and PTI shared its agenda with the Chief Justice, which focused on human rights and judicial reforms. He added that Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi's fundamental rights were being deliberately violated in jail, as neither he nor their sons are allowed to meet them.