

2 children die as roof collapses
F.P. Report

KARAK: Two children died and others were injured when the roof of an Afghan refugee's house collapsed due to heavy rain in New Colony, Terry City. The room of the house of Afghan refugee Akhtar Zaman, who has been living in New Colony, Terry City for a long time, collapsed due to heavy rain, due to which his two children died, while his wife and son, were injured.



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Trump, Macron display stark rifts on Ukraine war

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron displayed stark differences in their approach to Ukraine, exposing a divide between the United States and Europe over Trump's bid for a quick ceasefire deal with Russia.

During a day of talks between the two leaders, Trump and Macron showed a friendly rapport based on years of good ties. But Macron made clear he disagreed with Trump on some key issues as they marked three years since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Trump refused to refer to Russian President Vladimir Putin as a dictator, after calling Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy a dictator last week. Macron said it was clear that Russia "is the aggressor" in the conflict, a topic Trump wavered on last week. "President Putin violated the peace," Macron said at a joint press conference with Trump. Trump expressed a desire for a ceasefire as soon as possible and said he was trying to arrange one between Ukraine and Russia. He said he could go to Moscow to meet Putin once a deal is reached.

Macron, on the other hand, urged a more deliberate approach, starting with a truce and then a peace deal that includes security guarantees. "We

want peace, he wants peace. We want peace swiftly, but we don't want an agreement that is weak," Macron told reporters.

Any peace deal, he said, must be "assessed, checked and verified." The two leaders did agree, however, on the deployment of European peace-keeping forces once a peace deal is eventually reached. "They would not be along the front lines. They would not be part of any conflict. They would be there to ensure that the peace is respected," Macron said earlier in the Oval Office with Trump.

Trump said he accepts the concept, as does Putin. "Yeah, he will accept that," Trump said about Putin's position on a peacekeeping force. "I specifically asked him that question. He has no problem with it." Macron, the first European leader to visit Trump since he regained power a month ago, called his discussions with Trump "a turning point" in the drive for a more unified approach.

Macron is trying to capitalize on a relationship with Trump built during their first presidential terms. The French leader showed how he has managed to deal with the unpredictable Trump without alienating him. At one point during their Oval Office meeting, Macron touched Trump's arm and carefully corrected

the US president's claim that Europe had delivered all of its aid as loans.

Trump reported progress on reaching a revenue-sharing agreement with Ukraine on Ukrainian minerals as a way to recoup the cost of weaponry pumped into Ukraine by the previous Biden administration. Trump said he expected Zelenskyy to come to the United States this week or next week to seal the agreement. Trump and his team have been negotiating a minerals revenue-sharing agreement with Ukraine to recoup some of the money that the previous Biden administration had sent to Kyiv in the form of weapons to repel Russia.

Zelenskyy last week rejected US demands for \$500 billion in mineral wealth from Ukraine to repay Washington for wartime aid, saying the United States had supplied nowhere near that sum so far and offered no specific security guarantees in the agreement. Trump, asked if it was possible that Ukraine might have to cede some territory to Russia, said, "Well, we're going to see." Macron said any deal should include sovereignty for Ukraine. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer also is to visit Trump later in the week, amid alarm in Europe over Trump's hardening stance toward Ukraine and overtures to Moscow on the conflict.



TASHKENT: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Nigmatovich Aripov visiting Independence Monument.

Independent journalism integral part of democracy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday said that independent journalism was an integral part of democracy and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government fully believed in freedom of expression and free journalism.

This, he said in a congratulatory message to newly elected office bearers of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ). The minister congratulated Afzal Butt on being elected President. Arshad Ansari elected Secretary General, and Saeed Jan elected Finance Secretary of PFUJ.

Tarar also congratulated all other newly elected PFUJ office bearers from across the country. He said that resolution of the problems faced by journalists was top priority of the present government. "PFUJ is a strong voice of journalists which has always raised its voice for the rights of journalists. The election of the newly elected PFUJ office bearers was a testament to their dedication and commitment to journalists", he remarked.

Tarar expressed hope that PFUJ will continue to play proactive role for protection of the journalists' rights and for promotion of responsible journalism.

IHC seeks records on contempt plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has sought records of two petitions in response to a contempt of court plea against the Interior Secretary and Adiala Jail Superintendent for failing to allow former prime minister Imran Khan to meet his friends, despite court orders.

IHC Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas presided over the hearing on Khan's petition, which was initially objected to by the Registrar's Office. Advocate Faisal Chaudhry argued that the Registrar's Office is not authorised to decide the admissibility of petitions, stating that only the court has the jurisdiction to rule on such matters.

Chaudhry asserted that the contempt petition was filed due to a violation of judicial orders. He clarified that a separate petition regarding meetings between Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi is already pending before the Chief Justice's court, while this plea concerns Khan's denied meetings with his friends.

He further noted that the Adiala Jail Superintendent had assured Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq's court that meetings would be facilitated, leading to the dismissal of the initial petition.

PM in Tashkent on a two-day official visit

Shehbaz winds up two-day Azerbaijan visit

TASHKENT (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday arrived here on a two-day official visit, at the invitation of President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Uzbekistan's Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov, Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov, Tashkent's Mayor Shavkat Umurzakov, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Alisher Takhitayev, and Pakistan's Ambassador to Uzbekistan Ahmed Farooq, along with senior diplomatic and government officials welcomed the prime minister at the airport.

A smartly turned-out contingent of the Uzbek armed forces presented the static salute to the prime minister. During the visit, Prime Minister Shehbaz will visit the Independence Monument in Tashkent, where he will lay a wreath to pay tribute to Uzbekistan's great historical figures.

The prime minister will also be given a tour and briefing on the monument's woodwork, depicting Uzbekistan's 3,000-year history. During his visit, the prime minister will hold a bilateral meeting with the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The discussions will focus on enhancing cooperation between Uzbekistan and Pakistan in regional connectivity, trade, investment, energy, defense, security, regional stability, and education. The two leaders will also exchange views on global and regional issues of mutual interest.

Both sides will also sign Memorandums of

Understanding (MoUs) and agreements on bilateral cooperation. He will address a Pakistan-Uzbekistan Business Forum aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investment ties. Besides, he will visit the Techno Park in Tashkent to observe Uzbekistan's construction industry.

The prime minister is accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Investment and Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid a solemn visit to the iconic Independence Monument here as part of his official trip to Uzbekistan. "The visit underscores the shared historical and cultural ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, while reaffirming the com-

mitment to deepening bilateral relations," PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. Accompanied by a high-level delegation, the prime minister laid a floral wreath at the monument, a symbol of Uzbekistan's rich history and its journey toward sovereignty.

He also expressed his admiration for Uzbekistan's progress and resilience, drawing parallels with Pakistan's own struggle for independence and development. "The Independence Monument stands as a testament to the courage and determination of the Uzbek people. Pakistan and Uzbekistan share a common vision for peace, prosperity, and regional connectivity.

This visit is a reminder of our shared values and the need to work together for a brighter future," the press release quoted the prime minister as saying. On the occasion, the prime minister was also briefed about the 3000 year history of Uzbek nation and its heroes.

Denial of rights: Imran seeks CJ's intervention

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Salman Akram Raja has said Imran Khan has been deprived of rights in jail.

Speaking to the media outside Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on Tuesday, PTI secretary general stated that former prime minister Imran Khan was not being given his due rights in prison. "I met Imran Khan in jail. He is in good health," said Raja, adding that he was also allowed a phone call with his children few days ago.

Raja expressed concern that Imran Khan had not been permitted to meet his wife and revealed that Khan asked him to write a letter to the Chief Justice of Pakistan, as he was not receiving his rights despite being a former prime minister. Discussing political matters, Salman Akram Raja briefed Imran Khan about his recent visit to Sindh, highlighting the ongoing protests due to water shortages. He said PTI would fight for Sindh's rights and criticised the increasing dominance of

feudal lords in the province.

He further said that Imran Khan had shown full confidence in Junaid Akbar and stressed the need for strict action against those working against the party's interests. He also confirmed that Omar Ayub met the chief justice with Imran Khan's approval, reassuring him that the party remains united under his leadership.

Additionally, Raja warned that those voting against the party's directives would face expulsion. He affirmed that there would be no change regarding Sher Afzal Marwat's decisions. On a different note, Raja shared that Imran Khan was deeply saddened by the current state of cricket in the country.

Court adjourns bail hearing of Imran, Bushra Bibi until April 15: The court has postponed the bail hearings of former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in six bail pleas and his wife Bushra Bibi in one case.

The hearing took place at the Judicial Complex in

Islamabad, presided over by Judge Afzal Majoka. Advocate Khalid Yousaf Chaudhry represented Imran Khan in court.

During the proceedings, Khalid Yousaf Chaudhry informed the court that Imran Khan's video appearance had not yet been arranged. The judge inquired whether jail authorities had responded regarding the video attendance, to which the court staff replied that no letter had been received from the jail administration.

The defence requested the court to set a fixed date for arguments and ensure the prosecution's presence, suggesting any day during Ramadan.

However, Judge Majoka stated that he would be in training during Ramadan and proposed scheduling the hearing after Eid. Advocate Chaudhry requested not to set it in the first week after Eid, citing prior commitments. Subsequently, the court adjourned the final arguments on Imran Khan's six bail pleas and Bushra Bibi's case, along with the matter of Khan's video attendance, until April 15.

Highway blocked in protest
F.P. Report

MASTUNG: Quetta-Karachi highway was brought to a standstill by demonstrators on Tuesday near Nawab Hotel area of Mastung. The protest, organized against the alleged enforced disappearance of Mir Zahoor Ahmed Sumalani, resulted in long queues of vehicles on both sides of the road. The protest was led by Nawab Mir Ahmed Chaltunwal Sumalani, the central Chairman of Sumalani Quomi Tehreek.

ATC indicts Omar Ayub, other PTI leaders

F.P. Report

SARGODHA: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday indicted National Assembly Opposition Leader Omar Ayub and other senior PTI leaders in connection with the May 9 attack on the Mianwali Judicial Complex.

The hearing was conducted by ATC judge Muhammad Naeem Sheikh. Omar Ayub, Punjab Assembly Opposition Leader Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar, MNA Bilal Ijaz, and several other accused and PTI workers were present.

During the proceedings, the court formally framed charges against the accused, who pleaded not guilty. The defendants rejected the allegations, saying the case was fabricated and politically motivated. They argued that the charges were baseless, alleging that they were being subjected to political victimisation through concocted cases.

Following the indictment, the court summoned witnesses for the next hearing and adjourned proceedings until Feb 28. According to police, the accused face charges of storming the Mianwali Judicial Complex, setting it ablaze, assaulting law enforcement officials, and looting valuables. The Mianwali police had initially registered a case against 57 named and 150 unidentified suspects on May 9.

Fazl meets Hamas officials

LAHORE: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman met with Hamas officials in Qatar, assuring them of Pakistan's full support for the Palestinian cause.

The meeting, took place with Hamas's Shura Council, and discussed the current situation in Gaza and Palestine. Maulana Rehman reiterated Pakistan's commitment to the Palestinian struggle for freedom, stating that Palestine is an independent state and that Israeli occupation cannot be supported.

He also expressed support for the Palestinian people's fight for the liberation of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Palestine. The Hamas leadership thanked Maulana Rehman for his support, reaffirming the strong bond between Pakistan and Palestine. The meeting came at the time when Israel said it was delaying the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners it had planned to free the day before until group Hamas met its conditions, underscoring the fragility of the Gaza ceasefire accord. — Agencies

‘No fundamental rights were available in Ayub era’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Counsel for PTI founder Uzair Bhandari said on Tuesday "practically" fundamental rights were not available at all during the Ayub Khan era.

Advocate Bhandari was replying to a question by Justice Musarat Hilali during the hearing of the intra-court appeal against the trial of civilians in military courts by the constitutional bench of the Supreme Court here.

A seven-member bench, headed by Justice Amin-uddin Khan, and including justices Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan

Azhar Rizvi, Musarat Hilali, Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Shahid Bilal Hassan is hearing the appeal.

Justice Hilali asked the advocate whether people had fundamental rights under the 1962 constitution of Ayub Khan's era. She remarked that according to the Army Act, a military trial can be held if a collaboration is proven. Advocate Bhandari submitted that only a civil court can try under criminal provisions as far as civilians are concerned.

Justice Mandokhail questioned how civilians can be involved under 2(1)(D)? Advocate

Bhandari replied that nothing is given in the FB Ali case as far as 2(1)(D) is concerned. Justice Rizvi observed that there were provisions of terrorism in the Mehram Ali case and the Rawalpindi Bar case. Military installations were attacked. Their security must be under the control of an army personnel. Will a police officer investigate them? Where there is military involved, will military courts be involved? Advocate Bhandari submitted that there are 103 accused who are being tried in the military court. Justice Rizvi remarked that we have seen the footage in the media.

Bangladesh army chief warns country ‘at risk’

DHAKA (AFP): Bangladesh's army chief on Tuesday blamed infighting for deteriorating law and order, warning that the gains of the student-led revolution that toppled the government last August were at risk.

The South Asian nation has been struggling to stem a surge in violent crime, with the security forces arresting thousands this month targeting gangs allegedly connected to the party of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina. "If you can't move beyond your differences and continue meddling among yourselves, the independence and integrity of the country will be at risk — I warn you," said General Waker-Uz-Zaman, without singling out any group by name.

"Since stakeholders are busy accusing each other, miscreants find the situation favourable. They believe they can get away with anything," he said at an army memorial event. Bangladesh has been riven by a surge of crime, as well

as protests this month where crowds smashed buildings connected to Hasina's family.

Last week rival student factions clashed at a university campus, a sign of serious discord between groups instrumental in driving the uprising against Hasina. Security forces have arrested more than 8,600 people since it launched "Operation Devil Hunt" on February 8, which the government has accused of being Hasina loyalists and of wanting to "destabilise" the country.

"The anarchy we have witnessed is manufactured by us," Waker said. Bangladesh has a long history of military coups. While it was Waker who took charge after Hasina fled by helicopter to India on August 5, he had also urged the people to back Nobel Prize-winning microfinance pioneer Muhammad Yunus.

Yunus, 84, vows to institute far-reaching democratic reforms and hold general elections in late 2025 or in early 2026, and Waker has sworn in the interim gov-

ernment. "At the beginning, I said it would take 18 months to hold an election," Waker said. "We are on that path. Professor Yunus is doing his best to keep us united. Let's help him."

Key student protest leader Nahid Islam resigned on Tuesday from the government cabinet — where he headed the telecoms ministry — ahead of the expected launch of a new political party on Friday. Yunus has said he inherited a "completely broken down" system of public administration and justice that needs a comprehensive overhaul to prevent a future return to autocracy.

Waker said security forces accused of a raft of allegations "of enforced disappearances, murder, and torture must be investigated". "Punishment must be ensured," he said. "Otherwise, we will be trapped in the same cycle." The armed forces were granted judicial powers like the police — including making arrests — after the revolution.

counterpart Sergei Lavrov. "Regarding the nuclear negotiations, the position of Iran is very clear. We will not negotiate under pressure, threat or sanctions."

Lavrov arrived in Tehran on Tuesday for talks with Araghchi and other senior officials on a range of topics including bilateral relations, regional developments and the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major powers. — Agencies

Iran rules out ‘direct talks’ with US on nuclear issue

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Tuesday dismissed the possibility of direct negotiations with the United States on his country's nuclear program.

His remarks came a day after Washington announced fresh sanctions on Tehran targeting more than 30 vessels and people, including the head of the national oil company, accused of involvement in brokering the sale and shipment of Iranian oil.

The sanctions were the latest to be imposed since US President Donald Trump reinstated his "maximum pressure" policy towards Iran, reprising his approach during his first term.

"There will be no possibility of direct talks between us and the United States on the nuclear issue as long as the maximum pressure is applied in this way," Araghchi said during a joint press conference with his visiting Russian

Murad’s visit focused on development and strengthening irrigation system to boost agro-economy

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah's day-long visit to Sukkur resulted in several developments, primarily focusing on education, infrastructure development, community safety, and strengthening the irrigation system to boost the agro-economy.

The visit included important inaugurations at Aror University and IBA Sukkur, the announcement of significant scholarship programs, and a strong commitment to improving law and order.

Aror University: The chief minister inaugurated several state-of-the-art facilities at Aror University of Art, Architecture, Design & Heritage, including boys' and girls' hostels, an auditorium, a vibrant art gallery, and a wax museum. "These additions will enrich the learning environment and foster creativity among students," the CM said.

Highlighting the government's dedication to higher education, Murad Shah announced the prestigious "Bhutto Scholarship Program" at Oxford University. This initiative will provide six scholarships each year to deserving students from Sindh - three

for young men in honour of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and three for young women honouring Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. "This initiative will open doors for higher education and encourage the province's youth to excel on a global stage," he said.

In a gesture of support, Mr Shah surprised an AI student with the announcement of a new laptop, which he personally funded through the DC Sukkur. This investment in technology will empower the student to further their studies and innovation in the field of artificial intelligence.

IBA Sukkur: Recognising IBA Sukkur as the 'crown jewel' of Sindh's education sector, Chief Minister Murad Shah praised the institution's role in shaping future leaders.

During his address at the Pakistan Literature Festival (PLF) held at IBA Sukkur, he celebrated the province's remarkable growth in higher education, noting the establishment of 20 new public universities over the past 12 years.

Strengthening Infrastructure & Security: Beyond education, Murad Ali Shah emphasised his government's commitment to protecting the province's rights and

ensuring public welfare. He highlighted the importance of focusing on respective roles to drive overall progress, citing the 'Uraan Pakistan' program as a reflection of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto's vision for a prosperous future.

Police Station: The Chief Minister inaugurated the modernised B-Section Police Station in Sukkur. He directed officials to prioritise community policing, digitise complaint registration processes, and take decisive action against crime, drug trafficking, and violations against vulnerable populations. "I'll not tolerate any high handedness against women, children, and minorities for which the administrations and the police must take necessary measures."

Barrage Repairs: Murad Shah also inspected the crucial repair work at Sukkur Barrage, focusing on the replacement of 18 gates and the lining of the Nara Canal. He stressed the importance of timely completion, directing the Irrigation Department to finalise the barrage repairs by June 30.

The Chief Minister's multifaceted visit to Sukkur underscores the Sindh government's commitment to empowering its youth through education,

strengthening infrastructure, and ensuring a safer, more prosperous future for all citizens.

Murad gives 3 months to Works dept to complete pile works of Ghotki-Kandhkot Bridge

KANDHKOT: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, during his visit to the under-construction Ghotki-Kandhkot Bridge (Kandhkot side), gave the Works & Services Department three months to complete the piling work meanwhile the police and Rangers would provide the necessary security to ensure the project's completion by next year.

The Works & Services Department is constructing a bridge over the Indus River, which will provide a direct road link between Ghotki and Kandhkot. This new bridge is expected to significantly improve connectivity and reduce travel distance by approximately 120 kilometres.

Strategic Importance: Murad Shah highlighted that Ghotki is becoming an emerging industrial hub, while Kandhkot is located along the proposed Pak-China Economic Corridor. Both regions are home to some of the country's largest oil and gas fields, power

projects, and fertilizer plants. "The new bridge will reduce the current travel distance from 151 km to around 30 km, boosting economic activity and regional trade," he stated, emphasising the need to complete the project as soon as possible.

To ensure project safety, security forces have been deployed. Forty personnel from the Pakistan Rangers are stationed at the site, along with two pickets and three patrol vehicles on rotation. Additionally, fifty policemen from the Sindh Police are deployed at four pickets along the project route, equipped with one police vehicle and an armoured personnel carrier (APC).

The Chief Minister ordered the completion of three barracks, with one at KM 20+800 nearly finished and partially occupied. He also directed the completion of 21 police pickets, six of which have been completed and handed over to the district police. However, pickets seven and eight could not be constructed due to the Karro Pattan offshoot of the Indus River. The CM instructed the police department to determine alternative locations for these pickets.

During the visit, the CM was

informed that although the riverbed land is officially classified as state-owned, local residents have encroached upon it for agricultural use and are refusing to vacate the construction corridor, causing delays in the bridge construction. In response, the CM directed the Revenue and Police Departments to vacate the land and allow work to resume.

Progress of the Project: The CM was told that Section I, 10.44 km Ghotki Approach Road, has achieved 63 per cent progress, embankment: 95 per cent, Sub-grade: 94 per cent, Sub-base: 93 per cent, and Aggregate Base 68 per cent. Three bridges (Jari Wah, Ghota Feeder Canal, and Tibbi Minor) are completed, and all 38 pipe culverts have been finished. Construction of three police pickets is underway.

Section II (Indus River Bridge, 12.2 km): The progress of Section -II has achieved 14 progress, with 377 piles, 330 shafts, and 89 transoms cast. Piling resumed post-flood season on October 27, 2024. Six police pickets are complete, while locations for two more are pending district approval.

Section III (Kandhkot

Approach Road, 8.44 km): has achieved 70 per cent progress, embankment 85 per cent, Sub-grade 78 per cent, Sub-base 78 per cent, Aggregate Base 77 per cent, Asphaltic Base 76 per cent. Two bridges- Haibat Shakh and B.S. Feeder Canal - have been completed, along with five pipe culverts. Construction was halted by local residents beyond KM 29+600 but resumed on February 19, 2025, after government intervention. Roadworks face bureaucratic delays due to pending approvals from the National Highway Authority (NHA).

-Thull Link Road (4.548 km) has achieved 81 per cent progress, embankment 98 per cent, Subgrade 94 per cent, Sub-base 94 per cent, Aggregate Base 92 per cent, and Asphaltic Base 90 per cent. One two-cell box culvert and 12 pipe culverts have been completed, along with two pipeline protection structures for PARCO. Delays are occurring due to landowners refusing to vacate land until compensation issues are resolved.

Despite these challenges, the project is progressing steadily and is expected to significantly enhance transportation and foster economic growth in the region once completed.

Govt, Karachi Chamber join forces to tackle fake news online

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government, along with various business organizations in Karachi, including the Karachi Chamber of Commerce, the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry, and the North Karachi Association of Trade and Industry, has agreed to strengthen the fact-checking system to prevent the spread of fake news on social media.

A meeting of the Sub-Committee on Information of the Business Facilitation and Coordination Committee was held in Karachi, chaired by Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon. The meeting was attended by prominent businessman Mirza Ikhtiar Baig, President of the North Karachi Association of Trade and Industry Faisal Moiz Khan, President of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry Junaid Naqi, and Senior Vice



Chairman of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Zia-ul-Arifeen. Information Secretary Nadeem ur Rehman Memon, Secretary IT Noor Ahmed Soomro, and Director P&D Information Moiz Pirzada also participated in the meeting.

The meeting discussed media-related issues faced by the business community, the impact of fake news on business and the economy,

and deliberated on formulating an effective strategy to address these challenges.

Speaking at the meeting, Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the spread of fake news can have serious consequences for business and the economy. He emphasized that the Sindh government is committed to taking effective measures to

tackle the challenge of fake news and misinformation to protect the interests of the business community.

He stated that responsible journalism and the cooperation of relevant parties are essential to combat fake news. Additionally, he emphasized that the links between the business community and the information department must be further strengthened to prevent the spread of misinformation.

Govt collects over Rs710bn through e-Pay Punjab

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has collected a record tax revenue of over Rs 710 billion since its launch in October 2019 through e-Pay Punjab, a digital tax payment solution.

The system, developed by the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) in collaboration with Punjab Finance Department, has also facilitated more than 78 million online transactions to date. This emerged during a progress review meeting presided over by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf, here on Tuesday.

The participants in the meeting were apprised that citizens can conveniently pay 87 different taxes of 18 government departments from the comforts of their homes using e-Pay Punjab. It is pertinent to mention here that over 5.3 million citizens have downloaded the e-Pay Punjab app to date.

Speaking on the occasion, PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf emphasized that the platform has significantly reduced the need for physical visits to government offices and eliminated the influence of middlemen, ensuring transparency and ease of payment. He further stated that new services are being added to the system to enhance user convenience and streamline the digital payment process.

Police arrests 1,324 professional beggars

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Police has intensified its crackdown on organised begging networks, arresting 1,324 professional beggars and registering 1,310 cases this year as part of its ongoing efforts to curb the menace.

According to a statement issued by the Lahore Police spokesman on Tuesday, those arrested include 1,236 men, 78 women and 10 facilitators. The arrests were made across various divisions with 329 in City Division, 257 in Cantt Division, 190 in Civil Lines, 149 in Saddar, 140 in Iqbal Town and 259 in Model Town.

Capital City Police Officer Bilal Siddique Kamyana reaffirmed the department's commitment to dismantling the beggar mafia operating in the provincial capital. He stressed that professional beggars who exploit children and women as shields to solicit alms will not be shown any leniency.

The CCPO directed field officers to intensify operations against those who manage and facilitate begging networks, ensuring that criminals masquerading as beggars are brought to justice. Kamyana also instructed traffic police to continue their crackdown on organised begging at major roads and intersections.

Free treatment right of every patient: CM

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has made significant strides in improving pediatric healthcare, ensuring free treatment for hundreds of children in need.

In a statement, the CM while speaking about the progress at Lahore Children's Hospital, she proudly shared that 150 children have successfully undergone bone marrow transplants in the past year, marking a historic achievement at Pakistan's first government-funded institution dedicated to pediatric care.

The CM said "The right to free treatment belongs to every child," pointing out that the hospital has maintained an impressive

success rate of over 89 percent for these bone marrow transplants, in line with international standards. She revealed that over Rs 4.2 million have been allocated for these procedures, with children not only from across Punjab but also from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, other provinces, and even Afghanistan receiving the life-saving treatments.

The CM announced plans to introduce a bone marrow transplant card, ensuring that parents of sick children will no longer bear the financial burden of treatment.

"Every child is more precious to me than my own," she said, reaffirming her commitment to prioritizing the health of chil-

dren. "There will be no compromise on their health, and we will provide all necessary resources."

In addition to the bone marrow transplants, CM Maryam Nawaz said that 2,000 children have received treatment in the cancer ward, while 25,000 children have benefited from outpatient cancer care at the hospital over the past year.

Dr. Masood Sadiq, Vice Chancellor of the University of Child Health Sciences, noted that, under the Chief Minister's direction, no child in need of a bone marrow transplant is turned away, and post-treatment medicines and follow-up care are provided free of charge.

Youth Chess event concludes at Karachi Grammar School



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan – The 3rd National Youth Chess Championship concluded with resounding success at the Karachi Grammar School (KGS) Saddar Campus, making history as the largest youth chess event ever held in Pakistan.

With over 250 young chess players from across the country, the championship highlighted the rising popularity of chess and the Chess Federation of Pakistan's (CFP) commitment to developing young talent.

Mr Hanif Qureshi, President of the Chess Federation of Pakistan attended as Chief Guest who delivered an inspiring opening speech:

"I have had a dream, but now it is no longer a dream—it is turning into reality right before my eyes. Seeing over 250 talented young chess players from across Pakistan compete at this grand stage fills me with immense pride and optimism for the future of chess in our country."

He commended the exceptional efforts of the organizing committee and team, led by Mr. Saleem Akhtar (Senior Vice President, CFP), Mr. Amer Karim GS CFP, Mr. Aijaz Samra, NM Muhammad Shahzeb and his Karvop Chess Club team, Mrs. Saba Salahuddin, and Mrs. Saira Leghari for successfully executing this historic event.

The championship witnessed overwhelming participation from parents, players, school representatives, and distinguished guests who came together to celebrate and support the young chess talent of Pakistan. Notable personalities present included:

Mr. Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman of the Board, Habib Bank Limited (HBL), Mr. Shahzad Roy, renowned musician, philanthropist, and founder of Zindagi Trust, Mr. Carl P. Lander, Principal of Karachi Grammar School, Mr. Rudiger Lotz, German Consul General, Karachi, Mr. Tariq Pervez, President of Pakistan Scrabble Association, Affan Salman, Reigning World Youth Scrabble Champion, Ali Salman, World Youth Scrabble Champion 2022, Bilal Asher, Reigning World Youth Scrabble Champion.

The event was made possible through the generous support of sponsors, including: Mr. Jamil Mughal, McDonald's Pakistan, Mr. Asad Vohra and Mr. Irfan, GreenO, Ms. Safina Chapra, Brain & Learning Pakistan Dayfresh.

The presence of these esteemed individuals and organizations reflects the increasing recognition of chess as a vital educational and competitive sport in Pakistan.

Adding to the championship's prestige, Mr. Shahzad Roy praised the young participants for their

dedication, encouraging them to strive for excellence. President CFP Hanif Qureshi also acknowledged Mr. Roy's transformative efforts in public education and his advocacy for chess as a powerful mind sport in schools.

The championship provided a platform for young players to hone their skills, develop critical thinking, and embrace the spirit of sportsmanship. The Chess Federation of Pakistan reaffirmed its dedication to expanding grassroots chess initiatives, ensuring wider access to the cognitive and educational benefits of chess across the country.

With Pakistan's youth chess scene flourishing, the future of the sport looks promising, with many of these players poised to compete on national and international stages in the years to come. Here's a summary of the winners and runners-up in each category:

U 8 Open, Winner, Ahmed Sheran Zafar, Runner-up Feras Fehem Hashmi, 8 Girls, winner Amal Abid, Runner-up Aiza Sadiq, U 10 Open, Winner Rayaan Rehman, Runner-up Hashir Muhammad Shaheer, U 10 Girls, Winner Kainat Abid, Runner-up Musfirah Khan, U 12 Open, Winner Amr Iftikhar Hashmi, Runner-up Abubakr Vohra, U 12 Girls, Winner Mysha Furqan Chaudhry, Runner-up Zara Faisal, U 14 Open, Winner Ahsan Feroz, Runner-up Issam Bashir, U 14 Girls, Winner Ayat Asmi, Runner-up Yamna Siddiqui, U 16 Open, Winner Ahmed Moeed Yusuf, Runner-up: Ijtaba Amer, U 16 Girls, Winner Zoya Ahmed Raj, Runner-up Syeda Minahil Abdul Rehman, U 18 Open, Winner: Ijlal Amer, Runner-up Syed Rahim Ahmed, U 18 Girls, winner Mehak Maqbool, runner-up Khadija Anum.

Congratulations to all participants and winners for their outstanding performances at this prestigious event.

SEPA's seminar tackles environmental governance issues



F.P. Report

KARACHI: A significant seminar titled "Environmental Governance and Sustainability Challenges in Sindh" was organized by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Coastal Development at a local hotel in Karachi.

The event was attended by distinguished guests, experts, industrialists, secretaries of various departments of the Sindh government, representatives of civil society, and other government and non-government personalities. Additionally, many esteemed participants joined the seminar via Zoom.

The seminar aimed to discuss the environmental challenges faced by Sindh and pave the way for sustainable solutions. During the event, the Chief Guest, the Advisor to the Chief Minister of Sindh for Environment, Climate Change, and Coastal

Development, Mr. Dost Mohammad Rahimoon, reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening environmental governance. He emphasized the importance of effective enforcement of environmental regulations, policy measures, and public awareness. He stressed the need for effective collaboration among all stakeholders to address issues like plastic waste, solid waste management, marine pollution, and industrial waste.

He also highlighted that air pollution levels in several areas had reached the "unhealthy" to "extremely unhealthy" range, while water quality in many places was found to be unsuitable for human use. He urged industrial establishments to adopt environmentally friendly policies and play their part in eliminating pollution. The Director General of SEPA delivered a key address and presented the results of an environmental survey, revealing

that air and water pollution had become serious issues in Sindh. The Secretary of the Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Coastal Development, Mr. Agha Shah Nawaz, highlighted the efforts of the Sindh government towards environmental protection and sustainability.

During the seminar, it was emphasized that Sindh, rich in natural resources and diverse ecosystems, faces severe challenges such as pollution, excessive noise, industrial emissions, and improper waste management. Experts pointed out that environmental sustainability is not only the government's responsibility but also requires the active involvement of all stakeholders, including industries, citizens, and civil society.

To address environmental challenges, the Sindh government is implementing various measures, including strengthening environmental monitoring systems, improving waste management, protecting coastal areas, and introducing new policies to promote sustainable urban planning. Participants agreed on the need to adopt environmentally friendly practices, adhere to environmental laws, and implement modern and effective strategies for sustainable development.

At the end of the seminar, honorary shields were presented to distinguished speakers and environmental experts in recognition of their services. The event paved the way for a constructive dialogue, highlighting the collaboration between government, industry, and civil society to guide Sindh toward a clean, green, and sustainable future.

Online registration of Benazir Hari Card launched

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh government had announced the inauguration of the online registration for the Benazir Hari Card, an agricultural fair, the inauguration of a new agricultural research institute, and the establishment of an agricultural university in Ghotki. According to a communique here, Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Mahar, the Minister of Agriculture, while inaugurating the online registration for the Benazir Hari Card, a one-day agricultural fair, and the new agricultural research institute, stated that the Agriculture Department has developed a new modern website and app for the registration of farmers in Sindh.

Now, over 1.5 million farmers can register online for the Benazir Hari Card themselves. Farmers will no longer need to visit the offices of the Agriculture Department or Revenue officials; they can register with their documents on the website www.benazirharicard.gos.pk.

The provincial minister, while announcing the establishment of an agricultural university campus in Ghotki, said that the Sindh government will establish an agricultural university in Ghotki district. Once the university is established, people from other provinces will also come here to study.

Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Mahar further stated that through the Benazir Hari Card, farmers will receive subsidies on seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and modern agricultural machinery.

KP Games 2025 conclude with a grand ceremony Fakhar distributes prizes among winning athletes

Shahid Afridi

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games 2025 organized by the provincial sports department concluded with a grand ceremony at the Arena Hall of Peshawar Sports Complex. The closing ceremony was graced by Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jehan as the chief guest. He was accompanied by Secretary sports Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Director General Sports Abdul Nasir Khan, Additional DG Sports Ms. Rasheeda Ghaznavi, Director Operations Sports Nematullah Marwat, Deputy Director Sports Jamshed Baloch along with all Regional Sports Officers (RSOs) and District Sports Officers (DSOs), among other distinguished personalities.

In the final medal tally Peshawar secured first position with 62 gold, 28 silver and 17 bronze medals. Hazara claimed second place with 15 gold, 20 silver and 25 bronze medals, while Kohat stood third with 13 gold, 14 silver and 27 bronze medals. Malakand secured fourth position with 10 gold, 16 silver and 23 bronze medals, followed by Mardan in fifth with 7 gold, 18 silver and 30 bronze medals. Dera Ismail Khan finished sixth with 6 gold, 8 silver and 17 bronze medals.

Addressing the ceremony Provincial Sports Minister Syed Fakhar Jehan announced the establishment of modern and new sports complexes across the province. He also declared that athletes winning gold medals in these games would receive a monthly

stipend. Additionally the gold medalists from these games will compete against the medal winners of the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy.

He acknowledged that Peshawar has better sports facilities compared to other districts and emphasized that the upcoming year will see more sports events in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He assured that all selections and decisions would be made on merit and warned that coaches involved in any injustice towards players would be removed.

The minister advised athletes to keep working hard, learn from their mistakes and avoid taking unnecessary pressure, as success comes with high morale and perseverance. He also mentioned that a committee would be formed to evaluate the performance of underperforming regional teams and the

DG Sports has demanded a report on this matter next week.

Meanwhile Secretary Sports Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq in his speech highlighted that female athletes were given equal opportunities alongside male athletes in the games. He asserted that the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are full of talent and that the province performed well in several events at the recently held Quaid-e-Azam Games. He further stated that had the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy been held in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa might have emerged victorious. He reassured that more sports events will continue to be organized for the youth.

At the end of the ceremony, trophies and other prizes were distributed among the officials and athletes from different regions.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jehan presenting the major trophy to the winning region of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games 2025.

Ramzan relief measures intensified across KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, convened 2nd high level meeting to review and streamline the Ramzan relief efforts across the province.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary Food, Officials of Local Government Department, all Commissioners, and Deputy Commissioners, who participated via video link.

The Chief Secretary took a comprehensive review of the availability of essential commodities, particularly sugar, in markets across all districts. He directed the concerned authorities to ensure an uninterrupted supply of sugar and other

staple food items to cater to the needs of the public during the holy month of Ramzan.

To facilitate the public and prevent any artificial shortages or price hikes, the Deputy Commissioners have been tasked with ensuring the availability of essential commodities, including flour, chicken, meat, milk, ghee, gram flour (besan), rice, gram pulse, potatoes, onions, and tomatoes.

Furthermore, to maintain price stability, the Food Department has been directed to monitor the prices of 12 essential items and submit daily reports to the Chief Secretary. Additionally, in order to ensure uninterrupted electricity and gas supply, the Chief Secretary will engage

with relevant high-level officials, with a particular focus on Peshawar.

To prevent inflationary pressures and ensure transparency in market operations, district price control committees have been activated in all districts to regularly monitor and regulate market prices. Besides this desks have been set up in all tehsils to track commodity prices and ensure compliance with official rates.

The mechanism of Auction Process in Fruit Mandis has been streamlined to prevent price manipulation.

The meeting was told that crackdowns have been initiated against hoarding and artificial shortages and continuous assessments are being conducted to ensure the availability of essential

commodities.

Moreover, dedicated WhatsApp numbers have been established in all districts to facilitate public complaints regarding overpricing and shortages.

The administration in districts have reshuffled staff to ensure efficiency and transparency in market regulation.

The Chief Secretary underscored that all efforts will be made to provide maximum relief to the public. He stressed the importance of accurate reporting from all districts to facilitate evidence-based decision-making. He further directed district administrations to remain vigilant and take strict action against any violations of government directives related to price control and hoarding.

Alkhidmat Women Trust launches Gaza Relief Drive



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Alkhidmat Women Trust in Peshawar, here on Tuesday, launched the "Gaza Packing Drive" to provide aid to women and children in Palestine. Hundreds of students, teachers, and women from various educational institutions and walks of life to assemble relief packages containing essential items for families affected by the ongoing crisis in Gaza.

The initiative, led by Alkhidmat Women Trust Pakistan, aims to deliver and distribute 10,000 gift

packages during Ramadan. Each package includes 18 essential items for women and children.

Nasreen Murad, President Alkhidmat Women Trust Peshawar, and Anjum Moiz, Vice President, oversaw the packaging process and appreciated the participation of women from across the city.

Former Senator and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Mushtaq Ahmed Khan addressed the gathering, acknowledging the hardships faced by Palestinian women and children. "The brave women and children

of Gaza have written an immortal chapter of history with their blood for the cause of Palestine," he said.

Khan condemned the destruction in Gaza, pointing out the targeting of homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals. However, he said that despite the hardships, the people of Gaza continue their struggle for justice.

He commended the efforts of Alkhidmat Women Trust Pakistan, saying that such initiatives provide immediate relief and show solidarity from the people of Pakistan.

29th annual Int'l Plastic Surgery Conference held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 29th Annual Four-Day International Conference of the Pakistan Association of Plastic Surgeons (PAPS) was successfully held in Peshawar, attracting over 350 delegates, including 50 international experts. The conference focused on advancements in surgical techniques, research developments, and fostering global collaboration in the field of plastic surgery.

On the first day, three specialized workshops were conducted, covering cleft surgery, hypospadias surgery, and super microsurgery. These workshops were led by globally renowned experts from the UK, China, Turkiye, Germany, and Oman.

A major highlight of the conference was the research presentation by Prof. Zhigang Zhu (China), who explored the potential of lymphatic surgery in the treatment of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Additionally, dedicated sessions were conducted on burns, aesthetic, and breast surgery, led by international experts, including Mr. Paul McArthur, President of the British Association of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (BAPRAS). Prominent Pakistani plastic surgeons, including Prof. Mamoon, Prof. Fareed, Prof. Tajammal Chaudhry, Prof. Ashraf Ghanatra, and Prof. Ghulam Qadir Fayaz, also shared their expertise with the participants.

Addressing the conference, PAPS President Prof. Tahmeed Ullah emphasized that this event would provide young Pakistani plastic surgeons with advanced medical training and global collaboration opportunities. He also appreciated the efforts of the organizing team, including Dr. Shadman, Dr. Qazi Amjad, Dr. Nasir Hayat, Dr. Waqas Hayat, and Dr. Adeeba, for their dedication in making the event a success.

Deputy Director (Polio) Gates Foundation meets Chief Secretary

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy Director (Polio) Gates Foundation, Michael Galway, met with Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah here on Tuesday, to discuss polio eradication efforts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They agreed to enhance collaboration through sustained vaccination campaigns and improved community access. The meeting was attended by Secretary Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Coordinator Provincial EOC, and other officials. Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah assured full support and commitment to polio eradication.



Meeting directs PDA to construct speed breakers on Palosai Road

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsud has directed Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) to construct speed breakers on Palosai Road.

Decision to this effect was taken in a meeting that was chaired by Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud. He directed Director General PDA to construct speed breakers and install road lights on the road to reduce incidents of overs speeding and road mishaps. It is worth mentioning that Palosai road was recently extended under Peshawar Uplift Program and various incidents of mishaps and over speeding were reported. Two days back three persons lost their lives due to collision of two cars due to over speeding.

NCS University System students donate blood

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Hospital and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar organized one day blood donation camp at NCS University System Peshawar, with the help and cooperation of Mr. Amir Waleed sahib Director NCS University Systems, Department of Health and Sciences Mr.Shabeer jan sahib and BIRDSS committee members.

On that occasion, Resource Mobilization officers of Hamza Foundation Mr. Ateeq ur Rehman & Ibrarullah Jan & gave detail motivational lectures to the Students regarding welfare services of Hamza Foundation,

awareness and prevention of Thalassemia disease and also about importance of Blood donation.

After motivational speech, 47 healthy volunteers donors Students donated their blood for saving precious lives of 1505 registered poor patients of Thalassemia and Hemophilia patients.

Founder Chairman Hamza Foundation Mr. Ijaz khan & Dr Tariq khan(Medical director)

thanked and appreciated the sincere cooperation of the Entire Management of the said University and volunteer students blood donors for the arrangements of such a successful blood donation camp.



KP to introduce new Five-Year Industrial Policy

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to introduce a new five-year industrial policy to promote industrialization and provide essential facilities to the sector. In this regard, consultations with all stakeholders have been formally initiated.

The new industrial policy, covering the period from 2025 to 2030, will incorporate lessons learned from previous policies, successes and challenges. Efforts will be made to make the policy more effective and beneficial for the province's industrial growth.

As part of the consultation process, the first stakeholder meeting was held on Tuesday in Peshawar. The session included representatives from the provincial government, relevant departments and institutions, industrialists, and other key stakeholders to gather their insights on the proposed policy.

The meeting was attended by Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Industries,

Abdul Karim Tordher, as the chief guest. Other key attendees included Special Assistant for Technical Education Tufail Anjum, Secretary for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Aamir Afaq, Special Secretary Anwar Khan, MD SIDB Habibullah Arif, CEO KP Economic Zones Management and Development Company (KPEZDMC) Adil Salahuddin, Director Business Facilitation Board of Investment and Trade Iqbal Sarwar, senior officials from the Energy, Industry department and Bank of Khyber.

Additionally, President of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce Fazal Muqem, President of Peshawar Industrial Association Ayub Zakori, prominent industrialist and former President of Sarhad Chamber Fawad Ishaq, SMEDA Chief, MD TEVTA, and several other business figures participated in the discussion.

During the session, participants provided their recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the upcoming industrial policy for the rapid

development of the sector. Provincial departments also gave presentations on their respective responsibilities.

Speaking at the session, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Industries Abdul Karim Tordher emphasized that the new industrial policy will focus on sectors of local significance. He assured that the policy will be developed with the mutual consultation of industrialists, business communities, and other stakeholders.

He highlighted the potential of untapped resources in the province and stressed the need to incorporate these economic sectors into the new policy.

The five-year policy will be framed considering the outcomes and challenges of previous policies, ensuring an inclusive approach by engaging all stakeholders. Additionally, he directed all Chambers of Commerce to integrate with the KP Board of Investment and Trade through an online platform. He also proposed the inclusion of a Self-Enterprise Development Fund in the new policy.



Recognizing the importance of industrialists, he acknowledged their resilience in operating businesses under challenging conditions. The government aims to introduce policies that facilitate and uplift the industrial sector. He further urged stakeholders to submit their suggestions in writing for incorporation into the final policy draft.

Special Assistant for Technical Education, Tufail Anjum, emphasized the necessity of a skilled workforce for industrial growth. He elaborated on TEVTA's role in providing job-specific and on-campus training through various modules and courses.

He highlighted efforts to transform training colleges into model institutions and enhance the capabilities of trainers. He urged industrialists to support TEVTA's placement of skilled trainees in industries by providing local accommodation and food, while TEVTA continues to offer monthly stipends to these trainees.

Secretary Industries, Aamir Afaq, stated that economic growth and development are key priorities and the new policy is a step towards modernizing the sector. He stressed that stakeholder input is essential for making the policy more effective.

CEO of KPEZDMC, Adil

Salahuddin, provided an overview of past policies, mentioning that policies introduced between 2007 and 2014 faced uncertainty due to the province's security situation. However, from 2015 onwards, business conditions improved.

He explained that the 2016 policy focused on industrial revival and attracting investors, while the 2020 policy achieved significant success by addressing key industrial priorities. The upcoming policy will introduce new aspects to make the industrial sector more facilitated, business-friendly, and profitable.

Director of Business Facilitation at the KP Board of

Investment and Trade highlighted the establishment of an "Ease of Doing Business" portal to streamline industrialization and investment processes in the province. He emphasized that simplifying investment procedures will remain a central focus of the new policy.

Senior officials, including Sher Muhammad from Bank of Khyber, President of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce Fazal Muqem, President of Peshawar Industrial Association Ayub Zakori, industrialist Fawad Ishaq, and Additional Secretary Energy Shah Fahad, also shared valuable insights and recommendations for the proposed policy.



In brief

Boys Scouts takes oath F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: A prestigious oath-taking ceremony was held at the District Boy Scouts Association Hafizabad, where Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq officially assumed charge as the District President of the association. The event was attended by notable dignitaries, including CEO Education Akram Ashraf, Muhammad Imran Habib member of the Provincial Council, Sheikh Muhammad Najam-Ul-Islam, who is a Member of the National Training Team and member of the Provincial Council and Afzal Chatha District Scout Secretary. In his address, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq emphasized the importance of scouting in character-building, discipline, and community service. He expressed his commitment to strengthening scouting activities in Hafizabad and providing better opportunities for youth engagement.

TC Gadezai passes resolutions F.P. Report

BUNER: A special meeting of Tehsil Council Gadezai Salarzai Silarzi was held on Monday under the chairmanship of Convener Salman Khan Yousafzai. Nazim Sher Alam Khan TMO Anwar Shamim Khan and male members of the council participated in the meeting. Four resolutions were unanimously approved in the meeting, including releasing NFC award fund from the center to the province, issuing PFC award fund from the province to the local council, extending the tenure of the village council for another four years and TMA sub office in Salarzai approved. In the meeting, the members discussed the resolutions and other regional issues in detail. In which the absence of government officers from the meeting, long load shedding of electricity, indiscriminate deforestation, lack of afforestation, prices hike and shopkeepers, cleanliness and responsibility of the public and shopkeepers as well, the lack of facilities for 1600 students in Girls Higher Secondary School Pacha as only 12 rooms for them and the poor conditions of Sultanwan Primary School and Charamar Primary School were mentioned and it was demanded that every government office should be established in the tehseel Gadezai Salarzai and have an authorized officer present in the council meeting. So that practical steps can be taken for the immediate solution of the problems, otherwise the district administration will be responsible for any mishap. In the meeting, the opposition complained that only the PTI village chairman and presidents were registering poors for the Ramadan package of the provincial government. They criticized the system that ignoring the opposition for making a list of the names of the beneficiaries.

Two alleged robbers held F.P. Report

LARKANA: The police foiled the robbers who were standing with the intention of the incident, while during the encounter between the robbers and the police, as a result of two-way firing, two robbers, Morre Jalbani and Qazi Jagirani, were arrested. Police recovered weapons and bullets were recovered from their possession. While a search operation is being conducted in the said area along with a blockade for the arrest of some escaped robbers, SSP Larkana Ahmed Chaudhary has issued orders for rewards and honors for the police team that thwarted the robbers in their nefarious purposes.

Tehsil office inaugurated in Munda

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Assistant Director (AD) Local Government office in Tehsil Munda was formally inaugurated on Tuesday at the Munda Community Center. The ceremony was attended by MNA Bashir Khan, MPA Ubaid-ur-Rehman, Tehsil Chairman Inayatullah, AD Local Government Asif Khan, local administration officials, prominent community members, and a large number of citizens.

Addressing the gathering, MNA Bashir Khan and MPA Ubaid-ur-Rehman hailed the new office as a milestone in local governance, emphasizing that it would play a crucial role in addressing public grievances efficiently. They stated that the local government was committed to public welfare and that the establishment of this office would enhance service delivery.

The lawmakers announced the approval of Rs 150 million for the construction of the Munda to Samarbagh road, with the tender expected to be issued within two to three days. They assured that construction would begin immediately. They also highlighted the resumption of work on the long-stalled Balambat Irrigation Channel, with water restoration anticipated soon. Additionally, Rs 660 million was approved for the expansion of the Munda Road.

Tehsil Chairman Inayatullah and other speakers commended the initiative, expressing optimism that the office would strengthen local governance. They reaffirmed the government's commitment to resolving public issues at the grassroots level and ensuring essential facilities for the region.

Tehsil council meeting: The Tehsil Council Munda unanimously approved three key resolutions during its session held on Tuesday, presided over by Tehsil Chairman Inayatullah. The council expressed serious concern over the murder of Khalilullah, a resident of Musaabad, and called for immediate action. Presenting the resolution, Chairman Village Council Musaabad, Samiullah, demanded the swift arrest of the culprits. The council passed the resolution unanimously, urging law enforcement agencies to ensure justice.

In the second resolution, Tehsil Chairman Inayatullah Khan highlighted discrepancies in the Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) records. He pointed out that Tehsil Munda was mistakenly recorded as Tehsil Samarbagh,

depriving the local population of its true identity. The council unanimously approved the resolution, calling on NADRA to rectify the error at the earliest.

The third resolution, presented by Chairman Village Council Munda, Shakirullah, proposed the formation of a committee to oversee the auction of outdated items stored at the TMA Munda warehouse. The council approved the resolution and constituted a four-member committee, including the chairmen of Village Councils Musaabad, Munda, Qila Shalkandai, and Khazana.

Former minister talk: Former provincial minister and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) leader, Muzaffar Said Advocate, has urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to seek a cooperative approach with the federal government instead of adopting a confrontational stance. Speaking to journalists in Timergara on Tuesday, he emphasized that the province had fallen behind in development and security due to the provincial government's ineffective policies.

Reflecting on his tenure as the provincial finance minister, Muzaffar Said stated that he had initiated numerous development projects in Lower Dir. However, he lamented that the PTI-led provincial government neglected the district, resulting in the shifting of approved projects—such as Dir University—to other areas. He expressed frustration over the abandonment of major projects like the Koto Hydropower Project, Timergara Medical College, and the Timergara Beautification Plan, which remain incomplete, causing public disappointment.

He urged opposition parties, legal professionals, and journalists to stand alongside PTI lawmakers from Lower Dir in demanding the district's rightful share of development funds. He criticized the provincial government for failing to allocate resources and authority to local government representatives, leaving the system dysfunctional and ineffective.

Muzaffar Said called on Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur to allocate development funds for Lower Dir, accusing him of prioritizing Dera Ismail Khan over other regions. He recalled that during his tenure as finance minister, he had secured Rs 70 billion from the PML-N-led federal government. He advised the PTI government to negotiate with the center to secure the province's rights instead of pursuing a confrontational approach.

Spring plantation kicks off in Shangla

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: The Watershed Department officially launched a tree plantation campaign in Bisham Tehsil. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Assistant Commissioner Bisham, and Divisional Forest Officer Watershed Forest Division Shangla and Kohistan, Bilal, who both planted saplings to kick off the event.

The ceremony saw participation from government officials, teachers, students, civil society representatives, and notably, Civil Defense volunteers. Local residents also joined in, appreciating the purpose and significance of the plantation drive.

Addressing the gathering, Assistant Commissioner Adnan Khan

emphasized the environmental and ecological benefits of trees, stating, "Trees are the beauty of the earth and a precious gift of nature. They provide oxygen, reduce air pollution, prevent soil erosion, and conserve water resources. Climate change is a major global challenge, and tree plantation is essential to combat its effects."

Adnan Khan urged the public to actively participate in the campaign, highlighting that governmental efforts alone would not suffice without public engagement. He particularly called upon the younger generation to plant more trees and contribute to making their region green and lush.

Divisional Forest Officer Bilal Ahmad highlighted the broader benefits of tree plantation, including eco-

nomics stability and biodiversity promotion. He noted that trees help balance the earth's temperature and increase rainfall, and mentioned a new strategy to provide fruit-bearing plants to landowners to ensure better care and protection of the trees.

The event also underscored the significance of tree plantation from an Islamic perspective, with references to the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraging the planting of saplings even in the face of the Day of Judgment. Speakers appealed to the public to adopt the habit of planting trees at homes, schools, offices, and other places, emphasizing that tree plantation is not only a natural act but also a form of continuous charity.

Students obtain training on fake news

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: To impart knowledge to the students pertaining to the importance of peace, fake news and disadvantages of drugs training sessions were held in various colleges and universities of Peshawar.

Under the theme of "Aman Kar" United Nations Office of Drugs Control (UNODC) and Sharp, organized awareness sessions in different colleges and universities of Peshawar and sensitized the students of the significance of peace, fake news and use of drugs.

The learners exhibited their keen interest in the



sessions and vowed that with creative minds and positive activities they would actively participate in the development of the country. The awareness sessions were jointly sponsored by National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and European Union while City University and Superior group of colleges hosted the program.

sored by National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and European Union while City University and Superior group of colleges hosted the program.

Dialysis machine setup at DHQ hospital Hangu

F.P. Report

HANGU: Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Hangu Shah Turab Khan MPA and MNA Yusuf Khan have along with the Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah and Deputy Commissioner Hangu Gohar Zaman Wazir formally inaugurated the Dialysis Machine at the District Headquarter Shaheed Farid Khan Hospital Hangu on

Tuesday. MNA Yusuf Khan and MPA Shah Turab Khan while talking to the media on this occasion, said, earlier there was no Dialysis Machine in the Hangu district due to which the local people had to go to Peshawar or other cities for dialysis. With the installation of Dialysis Machine in Shaheed Farid Khan Hospital, this facility has been made available to the people at local level.

They in this regard,

appreciated the tireless work and efforts of the MS DHQ Hospital Dr. Haleem who made the installation of Dialysis Machine possible in a short span of time. They announced that the said hospital will very soon be included in Category B.

They vowed that it is their vision to provide the best health facilities to the people of Hangu and Orakzai districts and we will try our best to provide maximum facilities in every sector during their tenure.

Dr. Sultan appointed as Dean Natural Sciences F.P. Report

BANNU: Professor Dr. Sultan Mahmood has been appointed as the Dean of Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Science and Technology, Bannu. He has also served as the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Bannu University.

According to the announcement issued, Professor Dr. Sultan Mahmood, who hails from Mangal Mela area of Bannu, has been appointed as the Dean of Natural Sciences of Bannu University. Professor Dr. Sultan Mahmood has previously served as the Dean and Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Science and Technology, Bannu. He has participated in conferences at the national and international levels under the auspices of Jamia Bannu and as Pro-Vice Chancellor, has succeeded in bringing Bannu University to the top of the universities ranking of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

The Central Vice Chairman of FUPASA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter, Dr. Nasir Gul and former Secretary Press Club Karimullah Khan welcomed the appointment of distinguished educationist Professor Dr. Sultan Mahmood as the Dean of Natural Sciences and termed it a milestone for the universities and students of the southern districts. They said that Professor Dr. Sultan Mahmood, as Pro Vice Chancellor of Bannu University, not only led the university on the path of educational development, but also made thousands of students here PhD and MPhil, who are today making the country famous at the national and international levels.

Action against hoarders directed Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Syed Motasim Billah Shah has warned that stern action will be taken against the hoarders and illegal profiteers during the Holly Month of Ramadan and the provision of essential commodities to the public will be ensured at fixed rates at all costs.

He issued this warning, while chairing a meeting of the Divisional Price Review Committee via video link in his office on Monday. The meeting was convened to review preparations for the Ramadan. All the Deputy Commissioners, PESCO, TESCO and authorities concerned of the related departments attended the meeting. The meeting discussed in detail the hoarding, artificial inflation, supply and demand of essential commodities, law and order and other issues and certain important decisions were taken in this regard.

Commissioner Kohat directed all the Deputy Commissioners to hold Price Review Committee meetings in their respective districts at the tehsil level also. He further directed to involve the local administration and other partners in organizing Ramadan Dastarkhwan at the district and tehsil levels.

Commissioner Kohat urged the WAPDA and Gas authorities to avoid unnecessary load shedding during the month of Ramadan. He stressed that small shopkeepers and cart drivers should be treated with respect and dignity during Ramadan and in case of any violation, action should be taken in amicable manner as per the law instead of damaging their goods. It should be noted that the mockery of these poor people will definitely be investigated, he said.

The Commissioner Kohat directed the district administrations to ensure daily inspection of butcher shops adding that the public should be provided with quality meat at fixed rates. Furthermore, he suggested setting up a special control room at the tehsil level so that any issue could be addressed in a timely manner. He also directed to take all necessary steps to maintain law and order during the Ramadan.

KP government distributes financial aid to special people



Anees Takar

MARDAN: Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru announced today that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is taking significant steps to empower special people and integrate them as productive members of society. Speaking at an open katcheri held at the Special Education Complex in Mardan, the minister revealed that financial assistance of Rs. 10,000 per person is being provided to 37,000 special people across the province with a total budget allocation of Rs. 37 crores.

The event, organized to distribute cheques to 850 special people in Mardan, was attended by Deputy Commissioner Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, District Social Welfare Officer Muhammad Shoab, Deputy Director of the Special Education Complex Aneeq Ahsan and other government officials. Provincial Minister Toru emphasized the importance of education and training for special people, stating that the Special Education

Complex in Mardan is playing a pivotal role in this regard.

"Allah has blessed these individuals with unique abilities, and it is our duty to provide them with the necessary resources and opportunities to thrive," said Toru. He also directed the Deputy Commissioner to ensure transparency in the procurement of equipment for special people and warned of strict action against any misuse of funds allocated for their welfare.

In response to concerns raised during the open katcheri, the minister pledged to include disabled individuals in the Benazir Income Support Program and establish special desks in hospitals to cater to their needs. He further instructed the Deputy Commissioner to enforce the two percent quota for people with disabilities in government offices.

To enhance the facilities at the Special Education Complex, Toru announced a grant of Rs. 1 crore for solarization and assured the construction of additional rooms in the hostel to

address accommodation issues. The event concluded with the distribution of cheques to the beneficiaries, marking a significant step toward the province's commitment to inclusivity and support for special people.

In response to a question raised by special persons during the Khuli Khachari, he said that necessary steps will be taken to include disabled people in the Benazir Income Support Program while special desks will be established in hospitals for special people. He directed the Deputy Commissioner to ensure the implementation of the fixed two percent quota for people with disabilities in government offices. He announced a grant of Rs.1 crore for Solarization of Special Education Complex. He also assured the construction of more rooms in the hostel of the complex and solving their problems. In the end, Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Azmatullah Wazir distributed cheques among the special people.

KKKUK holds innovation in recycling competition

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, (KKKUK) in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Green Youth Movement (PGYM), successfully concluded a vibrant recycling competition themed "Don't Waste It, Recycle It." The event, witnessed enthusiastically participation from male and female students across various departments, demonstrating their commitment to environmental sustainability and creative innovation.

The competition aimed to raise awareness about the importance of recycling and promote eco-friendly practices among the youth. Participants showcased their ingenuity by transforming discarded materials into beautiful and functional items, including intricately designed, handbags, table lamps, mirrors and a range of other creative projects.

Dr. Shad Muhammad, the Focal Person for the Green Youth Movement,

expressed his profound appreciation for the students' exceptional work and dedication. "The creativity and commitment displayed by our students are truly inspiring," Dr. Shad Muhammad stated. "We are fully committed to supporting their future endeavors and working together to advance the goals of the PGYM. This movement is significant in fostering a sustainable and environmentally conscious generation."

The judging panel, comprised of esteemed faculty members, including Director ORIC, Dr. Muhammad Zubair, and Dr. Anwar Khan, Head of the Department of Political Science, evaluated the projects based on creativity, functionality, and environmental impact. Director Academic and Research, Dr. Fasih ur Rehman, also graced the occasion, adding to the event's significance.

Dr. Muhammad Zubair commented on the high

standard of the submissions, highlighting the students' ability to transform waste into valuable resources. Dr. Anwar Khan echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of such initiatives in promoting environmental stewardship.

The competition provided a platform for students to demonstrate their skills and contribute to a greener future. All participants were awarded certificates in recognition of their efforts and contributions to the "Don't Waste It, Recycle It" initiative.

The event underscored Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak's commitment to promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among its students, aligning with the broader vision of the Prime Minister's Green Youth Movement. The university plans to continue organizing such events to foster a culture of environmental responsibility and innovation.

Almost 20 women took Master Baking training

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: In a dynamic and inspiring collaboration, renowned culinary expert Madiha Slaman conducted an exclusive Master Baking Class for 20 aspiring women, with sponsorship by Shama Banaspati & Cooking Oil and collaboration with Madiha's Artistry and Bint-e-Hawa Forum. The event, part of the Bint-e-Hawa Learning Skill Program, provided an enriching learning experience, focusing on a range of savory recipes and delectable desserts.

The program aimed to enhance the culinary skills of women, empowering them with the knowledge and confidence to turn their passion for baking into a professional pursuit or a rewarding hobby. The participants gained valuable insights into advanced techniques, including the preparation of sophisticated pastries, cookies, cakes, and savory delicacies, while also learning about the importance of quality ingre-



dients and health-conscious cooking methods.

Madiha Slaman, a distinguished chef and baking expert, guided the participants through hands-on sessions, sharing her extensive experience and tips for baking perfection. Her passion for food and dedication to fostering culinary talent was evident as she worked closely with the participants, ensuring they gained the skills necessary to succeed in the kitchen and beyond.

Bint-e-Hawa Forum, an organization dedicated to uplifting and empowering women, partnered with Madiha's Artistry to create a

learning environment that promotes self-sufficiency, creativity, and entrepreneurship. The forum's vision aligns with their mission to provide women with the tools they need to become leaders in their communities.

Ms. Mah Noor-BHF(Event Manager) shared, "Through the Bint-e-Hawa Learning Skills Program, we've already trained girls in digital skills, beauty, cooking and baking, as well as art and design. Now, we are excited to announce the addition of driving skills to our program to further help women break barriers and gain greater independence."



Japan and Philippines agree to deepen defense ties

MANILA (AP): Japan and the Philippines agreed to further deepen their defense collaboration and talk about protecting shared military information in the face of mutual alarm over China's increasing aggressive actions in the region.

Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani and his Philippine counterpart, Gilberto Teodoro, forged the agreements in a meeting in Manila where their concern over China's actions in the disputed South China Sea and East China Sea was high in the agenda. Japan and the Philippines are treaty allies of the United States, and the three have been among the most vocal critics of China's assertive actions in the region, including in the contested waters.

At the opening of his meeting with Nakatani, Teodoro said the Philippines was looking forward to boosting defense relations with Japan "against unilateral attempts by China and other countries to change the international order and the narrative." Nakatani said after the meeting that he agreed with Teodoro "to strengthen operational cooperation," including joint and multinational defense trainings, port calls and information-sharing. "We also agreed to commence discussion between defense authorities on military information protection mechanism," Nakatani said.

The Philippines signed

an agreement with the United States, its longtime treaty ally, last year to better secure the exchange of highly confidential military intelligence and technology in key weapons to allow the sale of such weaponry by the US to the Philippines. Then-Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Teodoro signed the legally binding General Security of Military Information Agreement in Manila at a time when the US and the Philippines were boosting their defense and military engagements, including large-scale joint combat drills, largely in response to China's increasingly aggressive actions in Asia. Nakatani said that he and Teodoro "firmly concurred that the security environment surrounding us is becoming increasingly severe and that it is necessary for the two countries as strategic partners to further enhance defense cooperation and collaboration in order to maintain peace and stability in Indo-Pacific."

Japan has had a longstanding territorial dispute with China over islands in the East China Sea. Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy ships, meanwhile, have been involved in a series of increasingly hostile confrontations in the South China Sea in the last two years. Also high in the agenda of Nakatani and Teodoro, a copy of which was seen by The Associated Press, was the

"expansion of bilateral cooperation, especially in the context of the Reciprocal Access Agreement." Last year, Japan and the Philippines signed the agreement allowing the deployment of Japanese and Philippine forces for joint military and combat drills in each other's territory. The Philippine Senate has ratified the agreement, and its expected ratification by Japan's legislature would allow the agreement to take effect.

The agreement with the Philippines, which includes live-fire drills, is the first to be forged by Japan in Asia. Japan signed similar accords with Australia in 2022 and with Britain in 2023. Japan has taken steps to boost its security and defensive firepower, including a counterstrike capability that breaks from the country's postwar principle of focusing only on self-defense. It's doubling defense spending in a five-year period to 2027 to bolster its military power. Many of Japan's Asian neighbors, including the Philippines, came under Japanese aggression until its defeat in World War II, and Tokyo's efforts to strengthen its military role and spending could be a sensitive issue. Japan and the Philippines, however, have steadily deepened defense and security ties largely due to concerns over Chinese aggression in the region.

Kim says arms without ideology are 'ironware'

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said the country has come a long way in building a powerful army but weapons without ideology are simply "ironware", as he stressed loyalty to some of its most elite military cohorts, state media reported on Tuesday.

Kim's remarks at the Kim Il Sung University of Politics come at a time of political uncertainties at home with many of the more than its 10,000 troops fighting for Russia against Ukraine reportedly suffering heavy losses. As the Korean People's Army (KPA) aims to become the world's strongest military, and the focus of the mission should be "none other than the political, ideological, spiritual and moral advantages of the army of the Party and the people," Kim said.

"Saying that arms without ideology are little short of ironware ... he clarified building the KPA should be invariably and thoroughly oriented toward giving priority to making the army politically, ideologically and morally strong," KCNA news agency reported. The school is the training ground for officers who go on to serve in the powerful political apparatus of the country's more than 1 million active-duty military, exerting political control directed by the ruling Workers' Party.

Kim said the party highly appreciates "the matchless loyalty and heroism of overcoming hardship and sacrifice cheerfully if the country calls," adding the "ideological and moral superiority of the army means the qualitative superiority of the army." Kim did not specifically mention the United States or South Korea in the speech, but has said the allies are responsible for raising regional tensions and vowed countermeasures including building more nuclear weapons, despite US President Donald Trump saying that he would be reaching out to Kim. North Korea has also not formally acknowledged its military support for Russia in the Ukraine war.

China woos Bangladesh in Beijing trip

BEIJING (BBC): A 22-member Bangladeshi delegation of political leaders, civil society activists, academics and journalists have begun a 10-day visit to China. They will be having talks with Chinese government officials and senior members of the ruling Communist Party, a delegation leader confirmed with the BBC.

Analysts say China is making overtures while diplomatic tensions have risen between Bangladesh and India on a range of issues. This includes ousted Bangladeshi leader Sheikh Hasina living in exile in India. Dhaka has requested her extradition but Delhi has refused. Abdul Moyeen Khan, a senior official from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) who's leading the delegation in Beijing, told the BBC: "It's basically a goodwill visit, initiated by Beijing."

"It is unique because China this time has invited a team representing various groups in Bangladesh." Many of the delegation members are from the BNP and its allies. The BNP, headed by former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia, is one of the main parties in Bangladesh, besides the Awami League led by Hasina. The delegation also includes several representatives from the student movement that began the mass uprising against Hasina that eventually ousted the prime minister in August last year. An interim government, led by the Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus is currently in charge.

It has been urging India to repatriate Hasina to face charges of crimes against humanity and money laundering, among other allegations. The UN says Hasina's government's crackdown on protesters during the uprising killed about 1,400 people. So far India has showed no sign of extraditing Hasina, who denies the charges.



MANILA: Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro instructs Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani during signing the guestbook in Makati city, Philippines.

Ukraine, US in 'final stages' of agreeing minerals deal, Kyiv says

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine and the United States are in the final stages of negotiating a minerals deal considered central to ending Russia's three-year-old war in Ukraine, a senior Ukrainian official said. Kyiv and Washington are both interested in US access to Ukraine's undersoil riches, but President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said any such deal must involve concrete security guarantees.

"Ukrainian and US teams are in the final stages of negotiations regarding the minerals agreement. The negotiations have been very constructive, with nearly all key details finalized," deputy prime minister Olha Stefanishyna wrote on X. "We hope both US and UA leaders might sign and endorse it in Washington (at) the soonest to showcase our commitment for decades to come."

Trump has said Ukraine should give the US \$500 billion in critical raw materials as payback for aid which Kyiv has already received from the previous Joe Biden administration. Zelenskyy said this week Washington had supplied his country with \$67 billion in weapons and \$31.5 billion in direct budget support, and that he will not acknowledge Biden-supplied aid as loan.

Zelenskyy refused to sign an initial draft deal earlier this month, sparking frustration in the White House. Senior Trump administration officials said they expected an agreement would be signed this week. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump's abrupt reversal of three years of American policy toward Ukraine has raised concerns China might become emboldened to push its territorial claim on Taiwan, though experts say Beijing is most likely in a wait-and-see mode right now to see how the situation in Europe plays out.

In the past two weeks, Trump has falsely claimed Ukraine "should have never started the war," said Ukraine "may be Russian someday" and questioned the legitimacy of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government, while upending the longstanding American position of isolating Russia over its aggression by beginning direct talks with Moscow and voicing positions sounding remarkably like the Kremlin's own. Before heading to Washington for talks with Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron said he would emphasize "you can't be weak in the face of President Putin."

"It's not you, it's not your trademark, it's not in your interest," Macron said he would tell Trump. "How can you, then, be credible in the face of China if you're weak in the face of Putin?" Like Moscow's claim Ukraine is rightfully Russian territory, China claims the self-governing island of Taiwan as its own. Chinese President Xi Jinping has not ruled out taking it by force. Trump appeared to walk back his earlier comments inaccurately blaming Ukraine for starting the war, but his administration's overall abrupt shift in policy on the conflict could cause some in Taiwan to question "whether the United States could pull the rug out from underneath them as well," said Russell Hsiao, executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute in Washington.

Still, while Beijing is certainly paying close attention to Trump's comments, it is unlikely to act in haste, he said. "I don't think Xi Jinping will be so brash as to roll the iron die on the conclusion that just because Trump acted in a certain way concerning Ukraine he would do the same over Taiwan," Hsiao said. "Trump is too unpredictable." Daniel Russel, who served in senior positions on the National Security Council and in State Department during the Obama administration, said the shift would strengthen Beijing's efforts to discredit the US.

"Beijing's campaign against Taiwan is built around showing them that US support is unreliable and that Chinese domination is inevitable and Trump has already reinforced this by signaling he's not locked into support for Taiwan," said Russel, now vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York. "For China, an America feuding with the West is a weak America," he said. US allies in Asia might also rethink their reliance on the US nuclear umbrella, Russel said.

Trump was quite popular in Taiwan when he left office in 2021 and was widely credited with bringing the US and the democratically governed island closer together. By American law, the US is obligated to supply Taiwan with sufficient hardware and technology to fend off invasion from the mainland, but maintains a policy of "strategic ambiguity" on whether it would come to Taiwan's defense. Recently, Trump has been more critical of Taiwan, saying it should pay the US for its military defense.

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Finnish President to Trump: If Putin wins in Ukraine, US loses

KYIV (Reuters): The United States will lose if Russia wins its war in Ukraine, Finland's president said, as fears mount in Europe about President Donald Trump's intentions three years after Moscow's invasion.

"The war in Ukraine is not only about Ukrainian independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity - it is about European security, and it is about American leadership," President Alexander Stubb told Reuters in an interview in Ukraine's capital. He spoke on the sidelines of an event attended by 11 foreign leaders to commemorate three years since Russia invaded its neighbor, as Kyiv seeks to consolidate support from its allies while its relationship with its largest backer, the

US, hangs in the balance. Stubb said he had no concerns about the strength of the alliance, which his country joined in 2023 after decades of balancing its foreign policy between East and West, adding that Finland was a "security provider, not a security consumer". "We just doubled NATO's border with Russia. We have one of the largest militaries in Europe. We've always kept our defence expenditure up, and for an obvious reason, and that reason is not Stockholm, it's Moscow."

"If there's an iota or an inkling of understanding that Putin wins this peace, then the United States will have lost, so I think we need to fight this to the bitter end," he said when asked what his message to

Trump would be. Trump, who controls NATO's most powerful military force, has questioned existing US military commitments to the alliance, accusing Europe of not spending its fair share on defence.

"There is definitely a shift in the transatlantic alliance ... the United States, I think correctly, is putting some demands on Europe of taking more responsibility for its own security." "It's time for the Europeans to step up to the plate and have some skin in the game, so there's definitely a shift. I am not worried," he said. In the interview, Stubb put forward a broad vision for a peace plan in Ukraine in several phases.

The first would be a pre-negotiation strengthening of Ukraine's hand and

pressuring of Russia, the second would be a ceasefire with security guarantees for Ukraine supported by Europe and backstopped by the US, and the third would be a peace process which discusses issues such as territory, finances and reconstruction. Stubb said that Ukraine's EU and NATO membership, as well as Europe's security, should be treated as non-negotiable. Asked about Finland's potential role in any peacekeeping operation in Ukraine, the Finnish president said it was far too early to talk about boots on the ground.

"In any case, I'd much rather see drones in the air. So I think European support will essentially come more from the air and the sea than the land."

around Goma recorded 572 rape cases, including 170 children, said Lianne Gutcher, chief of communications for the UN children's agency in Congo. That is up from 95 cases of rape per week in 2024 in the same facilities, she said. "Rapes were perpetrated by armed men. It is suspected that all parties to the conflict committed sexual violence," she said.

A medical worker in Goma who treats sexual violence survivors said there had been an increase in "serious" cases. "There were women and girls who were raped to the point of destroying their bladders," the worker said, speaking on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. "We haven't seen anything like that in a long time." Gang rapes of young girls have been reported in both Goma and Bukavu, though data were still being collected, Vahard said.

The recent hostilities have brought an increase in the sexual violence that has long plagued the region. In the week after Goma fell, 42 healthcare facilities in and

West Bank Palestinians fear Gaza-style clearance

JENIN, West Bank (Reuters): Israeli bulldozers have demolished large areas of the now virtually empty Jenin refugee camp and appear to be carving wide roadways through its once-crowded warren of alleyways, echoing tactics already employed in Gaza as troops prepare for a long-term stay.

At least 40,000 Palestinians have left their homes in Jenin and the nearby city of Tulkarm in the northern West Bank since Israel began its operation just a day after reaching a ceasefire agreement in Gaza after 15 months of war. "Jenin is a repeat of what happened in Jabalia," said Basheer Matahen, spokesperson for the Jenin municipality, referring to the refugee camp in northern Gaza that was cleared out by the Israeli army after weeks of bitter fighting. "The camp has become uninhabitable."

He said at least 12 bulldozers were at work demolishing houses and infrastructure in the camp, once a crowded township that housed descendants of Palestinians who fled their homes or were driven out in the 1948 war in what Palestinians call the 'Nakba' or catastrophe at the start of the state of Israel. He said army engineering teams could be seen making

preparations for a long-term stay, bringing water tanks and generators to a special area of almost one acre in size. No comment was immediately available from the Israeli military but, Defence Minister Israel Katz ordered troops to prepare for "a prolonged stay", saying the camps had been cleared "for the coming year" and residents would not be allowed to return.

The month-long operation in the northern West Bank has been one of the biggest seen since the Second Intifada uprising by Palestinians more than 20 years ago, involving several brigades of Israeli troops backed by drones, helicopters, and, for the first time in decades, heavy battle tanks. "There is a broad and ongoing evacuation of population, mainly in the two refugee camps, Nur Shams, near to Tulkarm and Jenin," said Michael Milshtein, a former military intelligence official who heads the Palestinian Studies Forum at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies.

"I don't know what the broad strategy is but there's no doubt at all that we didn't see such a step in the past." Israel launched the operation, saying it intended to take on Iranian-backed militant groups

including Hamas and Islamic Jihad that have been firmly implanted in the refugee camps for decades, despite repeated Israeli attempts to root them out. But as the weeks have gone on, Palestinians have said the real intention appears to be a large scale, permanent displacement of the population by destroying homes and making it impossible for them to stay. "Israel wants to erase the camps and the memory of the camps, morally and financially, they want to erase the name of refugees from the memory of the people," said 85-year-old Hassan al-Katib, who lived in the Jenin camp with 20 children and grandchildren before abandoning his house and all his possessions during the Israeli operation.

Already, Israel has campaigned to undermine UNWRA, the main Palestinian relief agency, banning it from its former headquarters in East Jerusalem and ordering it to stop operations in Jenin. "We don't know what is the intention of the state of Israel. We know there's a lot of displacement out of the camps," said UNRWA spokesperson Juliette Touma, adding that refugees enjoyed protected status regardless of their physical location.

Ukraine marks Russia invasion anniversary

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine hosted European leaders to mark three years of all-out war with Russia since Moscow's invasion, while top US officials stayed away in a clear illustration of President Donald Trump's lurch towards Moscow since returning to power. Still reeling from Trump falsely calling President Volodymyr Zelenskyy a "dictator", Kyiv said it was in the final stages of reaching a deal with Washington to provide US access to its mineral wealth.

After meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron at the White House, Trump said Zelenskyy could travel to Washington this week or next to seal the minerals agreement, which he called "very close," and suggested the war in Ukraine could end within weeks. But he did not elaborate. "Our focus is on achieving a ceasefire as soon as possible, and ultimately a permanent peace," Trump said during a joint press conference with Macron.

Macron, in a later interview with Fox News, said he believes a truce in Ukraine is feasible in the next few weeks. A US minerals deal with Kyiv would be one of the best ways to ensure a commitment from Washington, he said. Trump stopped short of saying, however, that the minerals agreement would contain the explicit US security guarantees that Ukraine has sought and put the onus on Europe for the "central role" in assuring the country's long-term security. A Ukrainian government source said the US did not like the idea of including wording about providing security guarantees.

The minerals deal is at the heart of Kyiv's bid to win US support, but officials have negotiated in the shadow of an extraordinary war of words between Trump and Zelenskyy, who said the US leader was living in a "disinformation bubble". Trump's rush to impose an end to Russia's war in Ukraine - and his seeming

embrace of part of the Kremlin narrative - have stoked fears of far-reaching US concessions to Russian President Vladimir Putin that could undermine security in Ukraine and Europe and alter the geopolitical landscape. Zelenskyy refused to sign an earlier draft of a minerals agreement as Washington sought rights to \$500 billion in Ukraine's natural wealth. Kyiv protested it had received far less than that in US aid and the deal lacked the security guarantees Ukraine needs.

Macron said Europe was prepared to send peacekeepers to monitor a truce in Ukraine and increase defence spending. Trump said Putin had said he was willing to accept European peacekeepers. In Kyiv, Zelenskyy welcomed a slew of European and other leaders to a summit to commemorate Moscow's 2022 invasion, the start of the biggest conflict in Europe since World War Two.

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Make-believe beautiful to some but painful for all

With a firm belief in tariffs being "the greatest thing ever invented", the levy-happy US President Donald Trump has undoubtedly made almost all his foreign leader guests over the past month or so have their respective bite of the saying "One man's meat is another man's poison".

Despite what Trump once called "unbreakable" relations between the United States and France, as well as those between himself and Emmanuel Macron, the visiting French president has not been exempted his share of that Trump treat in the face of what he called the "game-changer's" staunch stance on weaponizing tariffs to ensure "America first".

The Trump administration has pledged sweeping tariffs targeting the European Union, raising wide concerns among its EU allies. Were it not for the more pressing Ukraine crisis, the tariff disputes would have been top of the agenda for the meeting between the French and US leaders in Washington.

It was against this backdrop that the French president said in his interview with US media on Monday that the US' priority is its tariffs on China and warned, "Come on. You cannot have a trade war with China and Europe at the same time" insinuating the EU was being wrongly treated.

Yet in a move to show his tariff threats are real, Trump said during their joint news conference at the White House on Monday that sweeping US tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico "will go forward" when a month-long hold on their implementation expires next week.

Since Trump reiterated his plan to impose so-called reciprocal tariffs in the presence of his French guest, be it Macron or any other leader from the countries and regions targeted by the US' tariff war, they should be awakened to the fact that the US won't bite their China-baited hooks until the Trump administration extorts what it wants from them.

So it is ridiculous that some US pundits have tried to comfort the US allies and partners by claiming that China is the real target, not them. For instance, Kate Kalutkiewicz, who was senior director for international trade policy at the National Economic Council during Trump's first term, told the Canadian Broadcasting Corp on Monday, the tariffs Trump has threatened to levy on Canada and Mexico "almost entirely relate to China, and China's nonmarket policies and practices which have enabled this global glut".

The former trade adviser for Trump even admitted that Trump's goal of imposing "maximum pain" on Canada and Mexico is to ensure that the US gets the best deal, indicating he is not happy with the trade pact between the US, Mexico and Canada, which was renegotiated during the first Trump administration and made law in 2020. The short shelf life of such trade deals with the US means weaponizing tariffs to reduce the trade deficit or secure a new deal more favorable to the US is a normalized practice of the incumbent US administration.

But it should be reminded, the US has no longer maintained trade balance since the 1970s as an important economic principle, and that its trade deficit is deliberately created by itself, so the tariff war is a false move from day one.

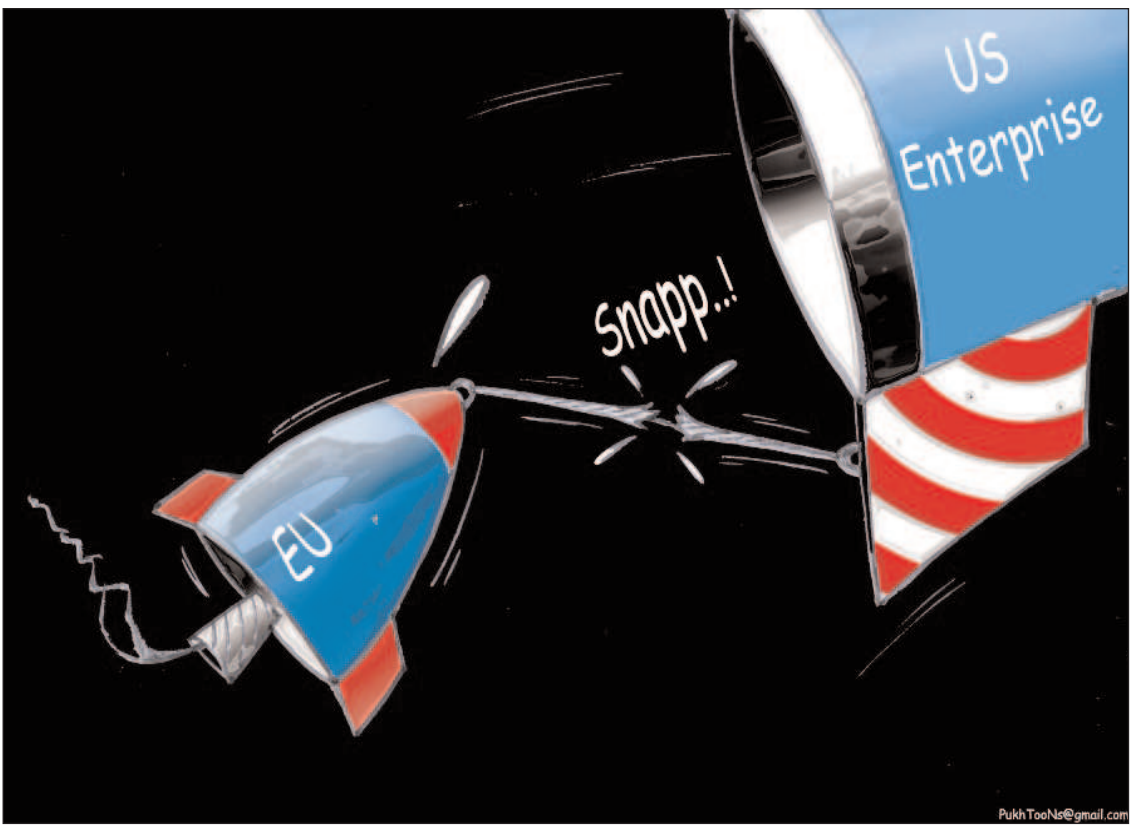
It is no exaggeration to say that the trade deficit is an indispensable part of the US economy, ensuring its capital closed-loop can continuously reap increasing development dividends from the rest of the world. It is through the dollar-dominated trade settlement and trade deficit that the US dollar circulates around the world. The US then absorbs surplus dollars from various countries by issuing Treasury bonds, thereby filling the trade deficit under the current account. The US thus obtains low-cost financing, and then uses this foreign capital to invest abroad to make capital gains.

The only reason why the US administration still obstinately weaponizes tariffs is that it cannot figure out any better approach that can pull the nerve of the world with the lowest input while effectively distracting domestic attention from the US' real challenges at home, which include belated institutional reforms, widening political and social divides, and rising debts.

No matter how "beautiful" the US leader tries to convince his domestic audience his tariffs are, they are still a tax that must be paid by the US public. There are no winners in any tariff war, there won't be this time either.

Important Notice

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



The Kurram conundrum

Laiba Khan

AFTER a long 80-day road blockade in the troubled district of Kurram, peace committees comprising local and tribal leaders were established under the January 1 peace agreement. With their guarantee, convoys carrying essential supplies were to be allowed to pass. However, things turned ugly soon after the agreement.

On Monday (Feb 17), over 30 trucks carrying food supplies to Kurram were looted, while 19 trucks were set on fire after a convoy came under attack in the Bagan, Charkhel, Ochat, and Mandori areas. This brazen act of violence has once again highlighted the fragile security situation in the region. The growing uncertainty and chaos necessitate an in-depth analysis of the origins of the conflict that has long troubled Kurram.

At the heart of the Kurram conundrum lie unresolved disputes that frequently escalate into sectarian conflicts. Disputes over land, water, and resources have existed for decades, but in recent years, these issues have increasingly been viewed through a sectarian lens. Though tribal conflicts are prevalent in nearly all parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the absence of sectarian underpinnings has ensured that they remain localized. Kurram, however, stands apart due to its deep-rooted sectarian tensions, making every local conflict a potential flashpoint for wider violence.

Significant land disputes exist between rival villages like Pewar (Shia) and Gido (Sunni), as well as Ghaz Garhi (Sunni) and Kunj Alizai (Shia). Likewise, Kharoti and Pewar are engaged in a water dispute, while Badama (Shia) and Parachamkani (Sunni) have

a longstanding conflict over forest resources. These disputes are further aggravated by the lack of a formalized conflict resolution mechanism, allowing grievances to fester and turn violent.

Kurram's unique geography and demographic makeup have also played a significant role in exacerbating tensions. The region's proximity to Afghanistan has made it particularly vulnerable to cross-border influences, including the influx of militants, illegal arms, and foreign funding. Kurram has long been a strategic location, serving as a gateway between Pakistan and Afghanistan. As a result, it has not only been affected by sectarian conflicts but also by broader geopolitical struggles.

Additionally, the region's demographic composition has fueled tensions. The Shia majority is concentrated in Upper Kurram, particularly in Parachinar, while access to the rest of the province is through Lower Kurram, which has a predominantly Sunni population. During periods of unrest, this critical route is often blocked, leading to severe shortages of essential goods, medical supplies, and fuel. Such blockades have led to humanitarian crises, further deepening sectarian divisions and perpetuating cycles of violence.

The reckless use of arms and the failure to disarm warring factions, despite multiple peace agreements, have complicated the situation in Kurram. The region remains heavily weaponized, with armed groups controlling strategic locations, setting up bunkers, and engaging in periodic skirmishes. Even in times of relative peace, the mere presence of these weapons serves as a constant

reminder that violence can erupt at any moment.

The February 17 attack on food convoys is a stark example of how armed groups continue to operate with impunity. The failure to secure key transport routes underscores the inability of peace committees and government forces to enforce agreements on the ground. Without a concerted effort to disarm local militias and enforce state writ, Kurram will remain vulnerable to such violent flare-ups.

In addition to the physical threats on the ground, a new and dangerous dimension of the conflict has emerged—digital propaganda. Hardline digital activists and sectarian agitators are exploiting social media to spread misinformation, deepen sectarian divisions, and incite violence. Fake news, conspiracy theories, and manipulated narratives are fueling unrest, making it increasingly difficult to achieve peace.

The unchecked spread of misinformation has turned social media into a battleground where sectarian narratives are amplified. Hate speech, inflammatory videos, and fake reports often incite further violence, leading to real-world consequences. Without a concerted effort to counter this digital radicalization, misinformation will continue to inflame tensions and disrupt reconciliation efforts.

Government authorities and civil society must actively work to monitor and curb the spread of sectarian propaganda before it causes further damage. Under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), the clause of collective responsibility once mandated that local tribes ensure security on roads and in their respective territories.

However, with the merger of the tribal areas into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the responsibility for maintaining law and order has shifted entirely to the government and security forces. While this transition was essential for mainstreaming the region, it has also created a power vacuum.

Traditional tribal structures that once upheld local security are no longer functional, and the state's mechanisms are still adapting to the region's complex dynamics. The weakening of tribal jirgas and local governance systems has removed a critical conflict-resolution mechanism, leaving many disputes unresolved. Meanwhile, the government's law enforcement agencies have struggled to fill the void, resulting in a situation where neither traditional nor state institutions can effectively maintain order.

The Kurram conundrum is a complex mix of historical disputes, sectarian tensions, geographical challenges, and governance failures. While peace agreements and tribal interventions have provided temporary relief, they have failed to address the root causes of conflict. The persistence of armed groups, the growing influence of digital propaganda, and the lack of strong governance continue to fuel unrest.

As of recently, nearly 50 miscreants have been apprehended, and the crackdown against perpetrators of violence continues. For lasting peace to take hold, there must be a collective effort from both the government and local communities. Community leaders must actively promote reconciliation and dialogue. Disarmament, economic development, and countering sectarian narratives must be prioritized to break the cycle of violence.

What Germany's election means for the Western left

Bartosz M. Rydlinski

GERMANY'S Social Democrats are one of the West's oldest political parties, with a legacy of advocating parliamentary democracy, opposing Nazism and leading the modernization of postwar Germany. In addition to the many notable labor, economic and human rights reforms that the party has implemented over the years, former Social Democratic Party leader and West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's "Ostpolitik" in the 1970s laid the groundwork for Germany's reunification in 1990.

But today's party is a shadow of its former self: it won only 16.4 percent of the vote in Sunday's federal election, putting it behind both the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and the far-right Alternative for Germany. It is worth considering how this defeat came about and what it means for the future of Western social democratic forces.

Support for the SPD began to fall toward the end of the 2000s. In the 2005 and 2009 federal elections, the party received 34.2 percent and 23 percent of the vote, respectively — a drastic decline from the 1998 federal election, when it won nearly 41 percent.

This drop-off can be largely attributed to the "Agenda 2010" and "Hartz" reforms that Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder introduced in the early 2000s. Schroeder's neoliberal project, which sought to revive a

stagnant German economy by deregulating the labor market and reducing welfare benefits, put the SPD at odds with its working-class base, organized in powerful trade unions. It also led the charismatic finance minister and former party leader Oskar Lafontaine to defect to a left-wing alliance, taking the SPD's socialist faction with him.

Despite this exodus of voters, the SPD could rest on its laurels as the junior coalition partner to the CDU/CSU — its main competitor — under Angela Merkel. When Merkel retired in 2021, the SPD won that year's election with a quarter of German votes. But party leader and Chancellor Olaf Scholz had to form a "traffic-light coalition" (so named for the parties' colors) with the Greens and the liberal, market-oriented Free Democrats. This led his government to pursue conflicting goals, such as advancing social justice and lowering taxes; constructing social housing and boosting support for entrepreneurs; and combating climate change and protecting Germany's automotive industry. Such a wide-ranging agenda did little to win back the trust of workers, especially with fear of globalization on the rise.

In the lead-up to Sunday's election, neither Scholz nor his party seemed to gauge German voters' primary concerns accurately. According to one survey, 37 percent of Germans consider

immigration to be the most important problem facing the country — an issue on which the SPD has been ambivalent and indecisive.

The party tacitly supported Merkel's "open-door policy" in 2015, when Germany accepted more than 1 million asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. And yet, Scholz has advocated deporting "serious criminals" to Syria and Afghanistan following terror attacks. Instead of winning over voters, this muddled approach to migration and security has bolstered the anti-immigration AfD.

The second most important issue for voters, according to the recent survey, is the economy, with 34 percent of respondents agreeing that it should be the government's top priority. As an article about Scholz in Der Spiegel recently pointed out, the German economy contracted for the second consecutive year in 2024, the number of unemployed people is rising, industry is cutting jobs and consumer confidence has tanked.

The fact that this occurred on Scholz's watch undermined his image as a successful economic steward, tarnished during Merkel's term. This resulted in a devastating loss of working-class support for the SPD. According to Infratest dimap's exit poll, the AfD won 38 percent of workers' votes, compared to just 12 percent for the SPD.

Scholz fell short in other areas, too. The much-heralded turning point ("Zeitenwende") in foreign policy and national security after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has not materialized. Germany barely meets NATO's 2 percent defense spending target and has not honored its commitments to Ukraine. As Benjamin Tallis concluded in his German Council on Foreign Relations report titled "The End of the Zeitenwende," Scholz's project has been a failure. The SPD's electoral disaster is reminiscent of the Democrats' defeat in the 2024 US presidential election. Both parties failed to formulate an effective response to migration concerns, win over working-class voters and adopt major progressive economic reforms. Instead, they chose to emphasize cultural liberalism, which appealed to the winners of globalization — people who do not fear for their future. But fear of being left behind economically and socially proved to be potent fuel for both Donald Trump and the AfD.

So long as social democrats fail to address this fear, the far right will continue to exploit it. If center-left parties want to regain their relevance, they must confront and analyze their electoral failures and declining support while finding new ways to make inroads with workers and shield them from the effects of deindustrialization, automation and artificial intelligence.

— Arab News

Kanju Cantonment controversy Addressing Public Concerns and Misconceptions

Palwasha Aftab

THE narrative surrounding the Kanju Cantonment in Swat has become dangerously distorted, fueled by misinformation and political opportunism.

A recent report in the Dawn newspaper, alleging that local jirga members have refused to provide land for cantonment expansion, is categorically false. Security sources have confirmed that no new land acquisition is planned. This fabrication, however, serves a larger, more insidious agenda: to incite public unrest against the state.

The Kanju Cantonment Board, established in 2014 with the approval of the then-PTI provincial government, exists for the welfare and development of the area.

As part of its routine operations, the Board periodically conducts surveys to define boundaries and update maps.

These surveys, a standard practice for cantonments nationwide, have been deliberately misrepresented as a prelude to expansion and land grabbing.

To quell any genuine concerns, the district administration and senior Cantonment Board officials have repeatedly met with local residents, offering clear and unambiguous assurances:

1) The Kanju Cantonment Board will not alter existing local tax laws or impose new taxes, mirroring the practice in other cantonments across Pakistan.

2) No new walls will be constructed to demarcate the Cantonment Board's boundaries. The existing boundaries, established with the community input, will remain unchanged.

The facts regarding these land acquisitions have been repeatedly communicated to the

Cantonment Board, local military authorities, and public representatives. Despite this, certain individuals continue to peddle misinformation, deliberately misleading the public and fanning the flames of partisan politics. This reckless manipulation of public sentiment poses a grave threat to the region's stability and undermines efforts to maintain peace and security. This is not simply a matter of local politics. It is a dangerous game being played with national security. Swat, a region that has already endured its share of turmoil, cannot afford to be plunged back into chaos by those seeking to exploit local grievances for political advantage. The public must be vigilant against such manipulative tactics and refuse to be pawns in a political chess game that jeopardizes the well-being of the entire community. The Kanju Cantonment Board was established in 2014 at the request of the then-PTI provincial government, with the foundation stone laid by then-Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. This historical fact underscores the irony of the current PTI stance. The routine annual surveys conducted in and around Kanju Cantt and Swat are essential for updating maps and reflecting ground realities. These are standard procedures, not precursors to expansion. The people of Swat must recognize the difference between legitimate concerns and politically motivated propaganda. They must reject the siren calls of those who seek to exploit their anxieties for personal gain.

3) There are no plans to acquire additional land for the expansion of the Kanju cantonment. The current boundaries are fixed.

4) Local residents will continue to have unrestricted access to areas within the Cantonment Board's jurisdiction. No new restrictions on movement or access are contemplated.

These assurances, consistently reiterated in numerous meetings, should have dispelled any legitimate doubts. Yet, a narrative of apprehension and distrust persists, carefully cultivated by those with vested interests in destabilizing the region.

A small, localized organization calling itself "Samaa Laar," with limited grassroots support, has emerged as a key player in this campaign of misinformation.

Allegedly funded by the PTI, this group has been actively engaged in spreading rumors and inciting public anger. The involvement of prominent PTI politicians, including Sohail Khan (MNA), Sultan Rumi (MPA), Akhtar Khan (MPA), Ayub Khan (former MPA), Rehmat Khan (former MPA), and Akbar Khan (former Commissioner), further underscores the political

motivation behind this orchestrated campaign. Their participation in protests and meetings with "Samaa Laar" reveals a calculated strategy to exploit local anxieties for political gain, even at the cost of national security.

The historical context of land acquisition in Swat is crucial to understanding the current situation. Prior to 1947, the army acquired 995 acres of land in the region. In 2016, an additional 673 acres were acquired in various locations, including Khwazakhela, Shangla, and Kanju, for specific operational needs. These acquisitions, transparent and legally sound, are now being twisted to create a false narrative of ongoing land grabs.

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The public must be vigilant against such

The lived experiences of communism should serve as a cautionary tale

IN Sunday's general elections in Germany, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) came second for the first time since World War II. Its electoral success is part of a Europe-wide trend of far-right resurgence that has worried many. As a university lecturer, I have observed that as a reaction to this phenomenon, many young people are becoming interested in far-left ideologies, such as communism. Students study Karl Marx as a key political thinker and often admire the old ideas of Marxism and the writings of other communist ideologues for their critique of class relations and capitalism.

As young people engage with these ideologies, it is important for them to be aware that they did not remain just theories. Communism was applied as a political ideology of the Marxist-Leninist parties in dozens of countries in Europe and Asia, which resulted in repressive totalitarian regimes.

The communist regime in my country, Czechia, which in the 1940s was part of an entity called Czechoslovakia, has left a horrific legacy. Today, on the 77th anniversary of the election that brought the communists to power in Prague, I cannot help but think about how the regime scarred the lives of many families, including my own.

I was born soon after the 1989 Velvet Revolution and grew up hearing about what it was like to live under communism for Czechoslovaks. It was a bleak and oppressive world in which the nationalisation of the means of production in reality meant stealing factories and homes from wealthier citizens so that the state could turn them into farmhouses or residences for top communist state officials. The concepts of fair elections and freedom of speech were mere dreams.

In that world, individuals' opportunities to study, travel, or secure good jobs were often determined by their "unblemished political profile" rather than their abilities. As a result, it was common to find qualified people who disagreed with the regime working in poorly paid and stigmatised jobs, while active members of the Communist Party, despite poor academic performance or lack of experience, occupied top positions. "This all became normal for us. No one believed the totalitarian

regime would fall," my mother told me recently.

Those who disagreed with or confronted the regime paid a heavy price. There are many accounts in academia and the media of the brutal practices of the State Security (StB) directed at Czechoslovak citizens deemed "enemies of the state": mass surveillance, blackmail, arrests, torture, execution, and forced emigration. The stories of high-profile dissidents, such as the executed lawyer Milada Horakova or the imprisoned writer Vaclav Havel, who became the first democratically elected Czech president, are well known.

But there are many other stories of people who faced repression that remain unknown to the public. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes has documented

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Despite the brutal violence and crimes, the Communist Party still considered the Warsaw Pact armies to be Czechoslovakia's allies. So the court condemned my father for "being against the Communist Party and society, damaging relations between the Czechoslovak Army and the Warsaw Pact forces due to his selfish reasons, and being a huge disappointment, given his promising working-class background". He was just 22 years old and was about to get married to my mother. When I asked my father about the document and his time in prison, he fell silent. Only my mother shared a few insights: "I was heavily pregnant and lost the baby. Your dad came to see me at the hospital and said he would be leaving for work for some time. Later, I found out he was in prison." My mother sent my father dozens of letters, but the prison guards did not deliver them. She tried to visit him several times but was not allowed to see him. She would wait outside the prison, hoping to catch a glimpse of him when the prisoners returned from their forced labour. "I saw him once for a few seconds. He was just a thin figure with no hair. He looked exhausted. We waved at each other," my mother recalled. My father was released after 10 months for good behaviour. Recently, I finally managed to persuade my father to visit, with me, the National Security Archive in Prague. We hoped to find more information about who had led his case and who had spied on him – perhaps a friend or even a family member? To our disappointment, the staff handed us a thin file with a note: "The majority of the documents with your father's name were destroyed by the State Security." To hide as much of what it did as possible and make people forget, the communist regime destroyed documents just before its collapse.
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the cases of about 200,000 people arrested in communist Czechoslovakia due to their social class, status, opinions, or religious beliefs. Of these, 4,495 died during their time in prison.

My father belongs to this mass of prisoners who are largely unknown. He was labelled "dangerous to communist society" in 1977 and sentenced to 18 months in prison.

When I was in my 20s, I found an old, yellowed paper file hidden in a drawer of the living room table, with the title "Verdict in the Name of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic". The fading typewritten text revealed that my father, along with his friend, was found guilty of avoiding military service and spreading negative political opinions.

My father strongly disagreed with the Communist Party leading the country, and he refused to serve in the army because it had failed in its primary duty to protect the country and its civilians

Karolína Benghellab-Augustová

during the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

In the summer of that year, 200,000 soldiers from the Soviet Union and other communist European countries invaded to suppress the democratic reform movement that was emerging – what came to be known as the Prague Spring. By the end of the year, 137 Czechs and Slovaks were killed. To maintain control in Prague, the Soviet Union permanently stationed troops as an occupying force in the country. Until they withdrew in 1991, Soviet soldiers killed 400 people and raped hundreds of women.

Despite the brutal violence and crimes, the Communist Party still considered the Warsaw Pact armies to be

returned from their forced labour. "I saw him once for a few seconds. He was just a thin figure with no hair. He looked exhausted. We waved at each other," my mother recalled. My father was released after 10 months for good behaviour.

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My mother sent my father dozens of letters, but the prison guards did not deliver them. She tried to visit him several times but was not allowed to see him. She would wait outside the prison, hoping to catch a glimpse of him when the prisoners

nist regime destroyed documents just before its collapse. What we did find was a document from a prison guard who had tried to coerce my father into spying on other prisoners.

"The prisoner is friendly and very popular in the collective, making him a good candidate for delivering information to us. He is emotionally dependent on his fiancée, which can be used against him," the document read. Perhaps his refusal to become a spy was the main reason why my father was never given any of the letters from my mother and was threatened with solitary confinement.

Many people, however, collaborated with the regime, which makes it difficult for families to reconcile with loved ones who happened to be on the other side.

This collaboration was driven either by belief in political propaganda or by fear of having a "poor political profile", which could result in job loss or a lack of good prospects for

their children. Simply put, families were confronted daily with a horrible choice; their lives were riddled with betrayal and the paranoia of being spied on.

This also happened in my own family. For example, while my father was a political prisoner, my mother's brother was a notorious StB officer who blackmailed people to obtain information on dissidents and contributed to the arrest of many citizens – probably even my father.

My paternal grandfather tried to flee the country to West Germany, while one of my uncles from my mother's side worked in a border guard unit known for shooting and killing people trying to escape the Eastern bloc. My paternal grandmother was an active member of the Communist Party, writing propaganda columns for one of the party newspapers Rudé právo (Red Law) and denying any wrongdoing by the regime, including the arrest of her own son.

My father was rehabilitated by a democratic court in 1993 and his criminal record was expunged. My family members who had worked in the security forces were expelled from their positions. However, the choices, beliefs and deeds of the past continue to affect the present.

There are many families like mine whose relations continue to be marked by traumatic experiences of communism. Many lost family members or relatives to various forms of political violence, including imprisonment in harsh conditions and executions.

People who read theoretical Marxist and Leninist texts or embrace communist ideas in the Western context – where there is no direct experience with communist regimes – often fail to acknowledge these real histories.

This lack of acknowledgement helps sanitise the flaws inherent in communist regimes – which promised to eliminate economic and social inequalities but introduced new ones and, in the process, engaged in grave human rights violations.

When searching for a genuine alternative to the current social and political climate, we must learn from the experiences of those who lived under totalitarian regimes. Major political theories do affect our society, and thus, the lived experiences of those who suffered under such political systems should inform our understanding of them. Only then can we prevent the repetition of historical wrongdoings.

Who 'owns' the Palestine discourse?

WE have long argued that the Israeli war and genocide in Gaza must catalyze a change in the overall political discourse on Israel and Palestine, particularly regarding the need to free Palestine from the confines of victimhood. This shift is necessary to create a space where the Palestinian people are seen as central to their own struggle.

It is unfortunate that centering a nation in a conversation about its own freedom from colonialism and military occupation requires years of advocacy. But this is the reality Palestinians face – often due to circumstances far beyond their control.

As outrageous as US President Donald Trump's comments about taking over Gaza were, they were a crude interpretation of an existing culture that viewed Palestinians as marginal actors in their own story. While previous US administrations and their Western allies did not use such blatant language as Trump, they did treat Palestinians as irrelevant to how the West perceived the "solution" to the "conflict" – language that rarely adhered to international and humanitarian laws.

For many Palestinian intellectuals, the fight for justice has been waged on two fronts: one to challenge global misconceptions about Palestine and the Palestinian people, and the other to reclaim the narrative altogether.

Recently, I have argued that reclaiming the narrative by centering Palestinian voices is not enough. Many of these supposedly "authentic" Palestinians do not represent the collective aspirations of the Palestinian people. This argument responds to the Western exposition of certain types of Palestinians whose narratives do not directly challenge Western complicity in the Israeli occupation and war.

These voices often focus on highlighting the victimization component of the "conflict," often indicating that "both sides" should be equally supported – or blamed.

This is why it was refreshing to talk with the iconic Norwegian emergency medicine doctor Mads Gilbert, who is fighting to decolonize the concept of solidarity in medicine – and, by extension, Western solidarity as a whole.

Gilbert has spent much of his career working in Gaza, as well as among Palestinian doctors and communities in the West

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

Bank and Lebanon. Since the start of the latest war, he has remained one of the most tireless voices in exposing the Israeli genocide in the Strip.

Our conversation touched on many subjects, including a term he coined: "evidence-based solidarity." This concept applies evidence-based practice in medicine to all aspects of solidarity, both within and beyond Palestine.

It means that solidarity becomes more meaningful when it is supported by the kind of information that guarantees the support does more good than harm.

A good example was his explanation of the field hospital as a strategy to cope with human-made crises, such as the genocide in Gaza. Our discussion elaborated on an article written by Gilbert and his colleagues that was published this month in the medical journal BMC, entitled "Realizing

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Health Justice in Palestine: Beyond Humanitarian Voices."

The article was a critical response to another piece, published last May by Karl Blanchet and others, entitled "Rebuilding the Health Sector in Gaza: A l t e r n a t i v e Humanitarian Voices." Gilbert found the original article reductionist for failing to recognize that the crisis in Gaza was "entirely manufactured" and for overlooking the centrality of "Palestinian perspectives."

This conversation may seem rhetorical until it is placed within its practical context.

In Gilbert's view, field hospitals, which could be seen as the ultimate act of solidarity, often deplete local resources and exacerbate the challenges facing Palestinian healthcare.

He pointed out how the establishment of these temporary foreign-run facilities can contribute to a "brain drain," while simultaneously

exhausting the local healthcare system by creating parallel structures that, despite being well funded, do not integrate with the native system.

According to Gilbert, these efforts divert critical resources away from the urgent task of rebuilding and restoring Palestinian hospitals and providing fair wages for the dedicated healthcare workers – doctors, nurses, paramedics and midwives – who are integral to the local medical infrastructure.

It must be frustrating for Palestinian medics, hundreds of whom have been killed in the Israeli genocide on Gaza, to watch others have a conversation about helping Gaza without acknowledging the vital role of the Palestinian Ministry of Health and local hospitals and clinics. They fail to recognize the unmatched experience – let alone the resilience – of the Gaza medical community, which has proven to be one of the most durable and

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For many Palestinian intellectuals, the fight for justice has been waged on two fronts: one to challenge global misconceptions about Palestine and the Palestinian people, and the other to reclaim the narrative altogether. Recently, I have argued that reclaiming the narrative by centering Palestinian voices is not enough. Many of these supposedly "authentic" Palestinians do not represent the collective aspirations of the Palestinian people. This argument responds to the Western exposition of certain types of Palestinians whose narratives do not directly challenge Western complicity in the Israeli occupation and war. These voices often focus on highlighting the victimization component of the "conflict," often indicating that "both sides" should be equally supported – or blamed. This is why it was refreshing to talk with the iconic Norwegian emergency medicine doctor Mads Gilbert, who is fighting to decolonize the concept of solidarity in medicine – and, by extension, Western solidarity as a whole.
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resourceful anywhere in the world.

This is a manifestation of a much larger issue: the West, whether as "evil-doers" or "good-doers," insists on seeing the Palestinian as an outsider – either to be removed from Gaza altogether or treated as a person with no relevant input, no worthy experience and no agency.

Many often engage in this thinking, while assuming they are helping the Palestinians.

But this genocide should serve as a watershed moment for these conversations to escape the academic realm and enter the public sphere, where the centrality of the truly representative Palestinian experience becomes the litmus test for any outside proposals, plans, solutions or even solidarity.

As for the last of these, decolonizing solidarity is now an urgent task. There is no time to waste when the very existence of Palestinians in their historic land is at stake.

Removing of financial sanctions on Syria is important

SYRIAN Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani has been touring Arab and European capitals pleading for an end to sanctions which are obstructing the country's reconstruction and recovery after years of war and mismanagement. This has been given urgency by the return to their homes of a million Syrians, the majority of whom have been displaced within Syria but also 280,000 from outside the country.

While some sanctions have been removed or eased, the comprehensive regime imposed before and during the Assad era are crippling efforts by Hay 'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) to rebuild infrastructure, restore financial services, and provide for the population.

The most destructive of the series of US sanctions imposed on Syria was the Caesar Syrian Civilian Protection Act adopted by the US Congress in 2019 during the first Trump administration.

This act barred nearly all foreign businesses from dealing with Syria. Essentials like wheat which are normally exempt from sanctions have been adversely affected.

During 14 years of conflict and insecurity, Syria's economy shrank by 84 per cent, driving 90 per cent of Syrians into

poverty, the UN reports. The World Bank says between 2011 and 2023, the value of the Syrian pound dropped from 47 pounds to the dollar to more than 12,500 to the dollar. Electricity is a major problem with major cities experiencing daily outages and the countryside suffers near total deprivation due to the lack of fuel for power plants. Government revenue has fallen from 20 per cent to five per cent from sale of Syria's oil as the northeastern oil fields are occupied by US-backed, Kurdish dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

It controls one quarter of Syrian territory and demands autonomy in a decentralised Syria. While HTS has not agreed, Turkey has threatened to use force to prevent Kurdish self-rule in Syria as Ankara is fighting Turkish Kurds who aim to achieve this longstanding goal in southeastern Turkey.

Last week, Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a report condemning sanctions and demanding their urgent removal. HRW researcher Hiba Zayadin stated, "Syria is in desperate need of reconstruction and Syrians are struggling to survive. With the collapse of the former government, broad sanctions now stand as a major obstacle to restoring essential services such as health

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HTS's success in Syria's northwestern Idlib province which had a population of four million cannot be repeated easily in the whole of Syria.

Before the war, Syria had a population of 23 million; 13 million have been either displaced

within the country or become refugees in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Sanctions could also be used to discourage HTS from imposing its brand of religious fundamentalism and ruling

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with an iron fist, marginalising, arresting and eliminating dissidents as it did in Idlib. Syria is not Idlib.

HTS's efforts to control all Syrian territory are not only challenged by the Kurds but also by Israel's occupation of the demilitarised UN-buffer zone between Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. The buffer zone was established in 1974 after the 1973 Syrian-Egyptian war against Israel waged to regain territory of both countries conquered by

Israel in 1967.

Thanks to an infusion of US weapons, the Egyptian and Syrian armies were forced by the Israeli army to retreat from territory they had captured, and the demili-

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tarised buffer zone was created.

As soon as HTS ousted the Assad's on December 8th, Israel moved into the UN-supervised buffer zone and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu unilaterally revoked the 1974 disengagement agreement which established the buffer zone.

The Israeli army also took control of the summit of Jabal Shaikh (Mount Hermon) on the Syrian side of the border and bombed Syrian military installations and

arsenals.

Israel has since consolidated its presence in the buffer zone, erecting prefabricated housing for troops. Agricultural land was proclaimed military zones, and a curfew was imposed after residents of the zone's villages protested.

Syria's new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa responded by saying Damascus would not threaten Israel or allow Iran, the ally of the Assads, to reestablish itself in Syria.

He argued that Israel had no legitimate right to occupy Syria. It must be remembered that as HTSD commander Sharaa took the nom du guerre Abu Mohammed al-Julani.

This identifies him as a member of the large Syrian refugee community from the Israeli-occupied Golan.

Israel subsequently ordered the surrender of weapons and temporarily displaced villagers. While Israeli troops have conducted home searches Israeli bulldozers have torn up roads and disrupted electricity supplies with the aim of evicting villagers.

On February 11th, the Israeli army announced that it would permanently occupy the buffer zone and seized territory in Syria while boosting the number of illegal settlers in the occupied and annexed Syrian Golan Heights.



Governor calls on banks to harness technology

— to significantly increase financial deepening

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, Jameel Ahmad reiterated the need to significantly increase financial deepening in the country, adding that no country can achieve sustainable economic growth with low levels of private credit. Speaking at the Pakistan Banking Summit 2025, he said that “our banks need to rethink their current business model, reassess their priorities, and play a more active role in financial intermediation.”

He stated that SBP’s Strategic Vision 2028 “mainly focuses on promoting inclusive and sustainable access to financial services; building an innovative and inclusive digital financial ecosystem; and enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, fairness and stability of the financial system.” He added that “the explicit addition of financial inclusion as one of SBP’s core functions in the

amended SBP Act underscores its importance for the SBP.”

Highlighting the significant strides in financial inclusion over the past decade, he mentioned that “bank account coverage has reached close to 64 percent of the adult population, from 47 percent in 2018, while the gender gap has also been narrowed from 47 percent to 34 percent.”

Referring to the latest National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028, he highlighted that the central bank has set a target to increase bank account coverage to 75 percent of the adult population and reduce the gender gap to 25 percent by 2028. Mr. Ahmad stated that “to achieve these ambitious targets, we want to enhance the depth, breadth, and quality of financial services, particularly for low-income individuals, the microfinance sector, SMEs, and agriculture.”

While appreciating the

role of the banking and financial system in the economic development of the country, he stated that “for achieving a more inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the country would require a significant increase in depth and breadth of the financial sector. Governor SBP noted that “the composition of banks’ lending portfolio in Pakistan is highly skewed towards established corporates at around 74%, and only 5% goes to SMEs.” He called on the banking industry to reassess its business strategy to “focus on mobilizing deposits and increasing credit to the private sector particularly the SMEs and agriculture sectors.”

Governor SBP urged the industry to increase their usage of artificial intelligence, based on alternate data sources such as cellular, and satellite data to provide “cost-effective alternative delivery channels to enhance the access, usage, and quality of financial services, par-

ticularly to SMEs, agriculture and our female population.” He also reiterated the need to “work on a war footing” to help businesses digitize their payments by providing digital transactional access, preferably via secure portals.

Governor SBP also urged financial institutions to “improve their ability to assess the impact of climate change across credit, market, liquidity, and operational risks.” Underlining the pivotal role of businesses and academia in tackling sustainability challenges, he stressed the need for research, policy recommendations, and fostering collaborations.

Ahmad expressed hope that the participants of the Pakistan Banking Summit would engage in thoughtful discussions and idea sharing that may serve as a cornerstone for the policies and initiatives that can drive the country toward a more sustainable and equitable future.



FAISALABAD: Ambassador Embassy of Socialist Republic of Vietnam Pham Anh Tuan addressing a meeting in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

PSX stays bullish, gains 197 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining, 197.98 points, a positive change of 0.17 percent, closing at 114,528.09 points as compared to 114,330.10 points on the last trading day.

A total of 495,984,234 shares were traded during the day as compared to 455,533,414 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs29.362 billion against Rs25.888 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 444 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 169 of them recorded gains and 223 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 52 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Fauji Cement with 61,091,991 shares at Rs.41.46 per share, Maple Leaf with 33,825,226 shares at Rs.51.13 per share and Al-Tahur Limited with 23,908,285 shares at Rs.29.08 per share.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.194.00 per share closing at Rs.3,194.00 whereas runner-up was The Thal Industries Cooperation Limited with Rs.34.70 rise in its share price to close at Rs.386.04.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.42.75 per share price, closing at Rs.9,323.00, whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Services Limited with Rs.25.17 decline in its share price to Rs.1,080.21.

Beware of fake job advertisement

F.P. Report

LAHORE: It has come to our attention that a fraudulent job advertisement is circulating on social media under the name Orea Pakistan regarding Job Opportunities in SNGPL.

We hereby inform the general public that SNGPL has no connection with this or any similar advertisements.

Any official job postings (if any) are exclusively published under the name of SNGPL in national newspapers and on the company’s official website: www.sngpl.com.pk.

The public is advised to disregard such fraudulent advertisements and report any suspicious activity to the nearest SNGPL office or the company’s helpline at 1199.

LOSS OF SHARE CERTIFICATE

7000 shares of First Tri Star Modaraba, in the name of Mr/Kausar Wali bearing certificate numbers from 79688 to 79757 and distinctive numbers from 7933851 to 7940850, 70 Shares certificate numbers from 93550 to 93550 and distinctive numbers from 9221462 to 9221531, 2669 shares certificate numbers from 144511 to 144511 and distinctive numbers from 20081509 to 20084177, have been lost. Anyone having any claim thereon inform Company’s Share Registrar, Hameed Majeed Associates (Pvt) Limited 4th Floor, Karachi Chambers, Hasrat Mohani Road, Karachi within 07 days hereof, after which no claim shall be entertained.

PSX, BSE sign MoU for cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) & Baku Stock Exchange (BSE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in an online ceremony, marking a significant step towards increasing bilateral collaboration between Pakistani and Azerbaijan Capital Markets.

The MOU aimed at establishing robust communication channels and strengthen the relationship between the capital markets of Pakistan and Azerbaijan, fostering mutual growth and development in the financial services sectors of both countries, said a press release received here.

The MOU was signed by Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Stock Exchange, Farrukh H. Sabzwari and CFA, Chairman of the Management Board, Baku Stock Exchange, Ruslan A. Khalilov.

The virtual signing ceremony was attended by senior

officials from Pakistan Stock Exchange & Baku Stock Exchange, highlighting the commitment of both institutions to strengthening ties and also help to further develop their respective capital markets.

Under the partnership, PSX and BSE will exchange expertise in market operations, product development, and regulatory best practices.

The collaboration will explore cross-border investments and initiatives to enhance market efficiency and liquidity. Key areas of cooperation include facilitating dual listings and investment fund trading, jointly developing products, sharing insights on market operations and regulations, supporting staff secondments, and engaging in capacity-building initiatives for mutual benefit.

Speaking on the occasion, Farrukh H. Sabzwari said the MOU represents an important milestone to strengthen cooperation

between the capital markets of Pakistan & Azerbaijan.

“We believe that by sharing knowledge and expertise, both exchanges can create more dynamic & competitive capital markets, ultimately benefiting investors and businesses in both countries,” he added.

Ruslan A. Khalilov echoed similar sentiments and said the collaboration reflects shared vision for advancing capital markets in our regions.

“This MOU opens doors to innovative opportunities, cross-border investments, and knowledge exchange, paving the way for a stronger financial future for both Azerbaijan and Pakistan,” he added.”

This strategic partnership is expected to pave the way for closer ties between Pakistan & Azerbaijan in the financial sector, contributing to the overall economic growth and investment climate in both countries, the PSX statement added.

ICAO Training Instructors Course conducted at CATI



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The ICAO Training Instructors Course (TIC) was successfully conducted at the Civil Aviation Training Institute (CATI), Hyderabad from February 17 to 21, 2025. The course was led by ICAO instructor Ms. Pamela Johnson, marking the first time in 17 years that an ICAO instructor conducted

a course at CATI.

This prestigious training will serve as a foundation for developing international courses at CATI in the future. A total of twelve officers participated in the course, including ten from Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), one aviation officer from Saudi Arabia, and one officer from Fly Innah. The participants engaged actively and gained valuable

knowledge through this high-quality and rigorous training program.

The ICAO Training Instructors Course (TIC) is a specialized program designed to enhance the instructional skills of aviation trainers.

It ensures that trainers adopt effective teaching methodologies in line with ICAO’s global standards for aviation.

Exports up by 7.22%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 7.22% during the first seven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

Exports during July – January (2024–2025) were recorded at Rs. 5,448,181 million as against Rs.5,081,403 million during the corresponding period of last year, according to provisional figures released by PBS.

According to the provisional figures compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, exports from Pakistan during January, 2025 amounted to Rs.822,732 million (provisional) as against Rs. 809,554 million in December, 2024 and Rs. 782,642 million during

January, 2024 showing an increase of 1.63% over December, 2024 and of 5.12% over January, 2024.

On year-on-year (YoY) basis, the exports from the country increased by 5.12 percent During January 2025 as compared to the corresponding month of last year.

The exports in January 2025 were recorded at Rs. Rs.822,732 million against the export of Rs. 782,642 million recorded during last January.

LOSS OF SHARE CERTIFICATE

100 shares of M/s Hameed Majeed Associates (Pvt) Ltd, in the name of Mrs. Munaza Kousar bearing certificate numbers from 24681 to 24681 and distinctive numbers from 2468001 to 2468100, 800 shares bearing certificate numbers from 49058 to 49065 and distinctive numbers from 4905701 to 4906500, 300 shares bearing certificate numbers from 49769 to 49771 and distinctive numbers from 4976801 to 4977100, 300 shares bearing certificate numbers from 44638 to 44640 and distinctive numbers from 4463701 to 4464000, 200 shares bearing certificate numbers from 46971 to 46972 and distinctive numbers from 4697001 to 4697200, 100 shares bearing certificate numbers from 48321 to 48321 and distinctive numbers from 4832001 to 4832100, 100 shares bearing certificate numbers from 48352 to 48352 and distinctive numbers from 4835101 to 4835200, 200 shares bearing certificate numbers from 76214 to 76215 and distinctive numbers from 7586601 to 7586800, 100 shares bearing certificate numbers from 76219 to 76219 and distinctive numbers from 7587101 to 7587200, 100 shares bearing certificate numbers from 93818 to 93818 and distinctive numbers from 9239464 to 9239463, 100 shares bearing certificate numbers from 93820 to 93820 and distinctive numbers from 9239564 to 9239663, 200 shares bearing certificate numbers from 93822 to 93823 and distinctive numbers from 9239764 to 9239963, 1000 shares bearing certificate numbers from 93829 to 93838 and distinctive numbers from 9240464 to 9241463, 100 shares bearing certificate numbers from 98067 to 98067 and distinctive numbers from 9644116 to 9644215, 855 shares bearing certificate numbers from 144507 to 144507 and distinctive numbers from 19907761 to 19908615, 2072 shares bearing certificate numbers from 144509 to 144509 and distinctive numbers from 20078612 to 20080683, have been lost. Anyone having any claim thereon should inform Company’s Share Registrar, Hameed Majeed Associates (Pvt.) Limited, 4th Floor, Karachi Chambers, Hasrat Mohani Road, Karachi within 07 days hereof, after which no claim shall be entertained.

Islamic Asset Management in Pakistan 2025:

ABL Funds wins Cambridge Excellence Award



F.P. Report

KARACHI: ABL Asset Management Company Limited (ABL Funds), one of Pakistan’s leading asset management companies, has been awarded the prestigious Cambridge Excellence Award for Islamic Asset Management in Pakistan 2025 at the Cambridge Islamic Funds Awards (CIFA) 2025 held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The recognition highlights ABL Funds’ outstanding

performance in delivering innovative Shariah Compliant investment solutions that resonate with investors’ values.

The Cambridge Islamic Funds Awards celebrate exceptional achievements in the Islamic finance sector, recognizing institutions that demonstrate remarkable growth, product innovation, and commitment to ethical investing principles. ABL Funds secured this distinguished honor through its consistent

market performance and ongoing efforts to democratize Shariah compliant investing in Pakistan.

“This recognition represents more than just an award - it validates our unwavering commitment to excellence in Islamic asset management,” said Naveed Nasim, Chief Executive Officer of ABL Funds. “We have worked diligently to create investment solutions that not only adhere to Shariah principles but also

deliver strong returns for our investors. This achievement reinforces our role in advancing Pakistan’s Islamic finance sector.”

Operating as a wholly owned subsidiary of Allied Bank Limited since 2007, ABL Funds has established itself as a pioneer in innovative investment management. Through its ABL Emaan Funds platform, launched in 2010, the company offers one of Pakistan’s most comprehensive Shariah-compliant investment portfolios, successfully bridging traditional Islamic finance principles with contemporary investment strategies.

The company’s commitment to excellence is further reflected in its PACRA AMI rating - the highest asset manager rating available. As of January 31st, 2025, ABL Funds manages total twenty-two mutual funds and pension funds, along with various administrative plans, with total Assets under Management (excluding Fund of Funds) reaching approximately Rs. 317 billion.

PEL entered into a strategic partnership with Electrolux AB

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pak Elektron Limited (PEL), a pioneer in Pakistan’s home appliance industry, has entered into a strategic partnership with Electrolux AB, a global leader in multi-category home appliances with operations in over 120 countries and annual sales exceeding SEK 120 billion (approximately USD 11 billion). This collaboration aims to redefine Pakistan’s home appliance market by introducing innovative, sustain-

able, and premium-quality solutions that cater to the evolving needs of Pakistani consumers.

The partnership combines PEL’s local manufacturing expertise, extensive distribution network, and deep market understanding with Electrolux AB’s global reputation for cutting-edge technology, energy efficiency, and premium brand experience. Together, the two companies will focus on capturing the growing demand for high-end home appliances in Pakistan,

driven by rising consumer aspirations for advanced, eco-friendly, and stylish products.

Murad Saigol of PEL stated, “We are thrilled to partner with Electrolux AB, a global leader known for its innovation and quality. This partnership will redefine the home appliance market in Pakistan, offering consumers premium products that elevate their everyday lives.” Mr. Siraj Colombo from Electrolux AB added, “Collaborating with PEL, a trusted name in

Pakistan, aligns with our mission to bring innovative and sustainable solutions to consumers worldwide. Together, we aim to set new benchmarks and deliver exceptional value to the Pakistani market.”

This partnership marks a transformative step for Pakistan’s home appliance industry, blending PEL’s local strengths with Electrolux AB’s global expertise to create a new era of premium, sustainable, and technologically advanced home appliances.

Hashoo Group & Neelishang Hills launch ultra-luxury mountain retreat



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Hashoo Group, Pakistan’s premier hospitality and real estate powerhouse, has partnered with Neelishang Hills, the country’s largest hill station

development, to unveil Pearl Resorts, an exclusive ultra-luxury mountain retreat. Spanning 100 acres at an elevation of 7,000 feet along the Karakoram Highway, this landmark project will redefine elite

tourism and high-value real estate investment in Pakistan. Featuring Pearl Signature Villas, Pearl Serviced Apartments, and a five-star Pearl Continental Hotel, Pearl Resorts will offer an unparalleled high-

altitude living experience with breathtaking 360-degree views, world-class amenities, and seamless integration with nature.

Strategically located just two hours from Islamabad via the CPEC Hazara Motorway, Pearl Resorts is set to become a global destination for elite travelers and investors, attracting foreign direct investment and high-net-worth individuals seeking an extraordinary lifestyle. With its combination of exclusivity, natural beauty, and sustainable development, this project cements Pakistan’s position on the world map of luxury tourism and high-end real estate. Hashoo Group and Neelishang Hills’ visionary partnership marks the dawn of a new era for Pakistan’s hospitality and investment sectors, setting new benchmarks for sophistication, elegance, and global appeal.



In brief

Afridi's picture with Imran's son goes viral

KARACHI (Web Desk): Former Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi's picture with jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's son Kasim Khan is now going viral on social media. The viral picture is from the India vs Pakistan Champions Trophy 2025 clash at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium that took place on Sunday (February 23). The picture of Shahid Afridi posing with Imran Khan's son has come as a surprise for the fans as Afridi has many times criticised former prime minister Imran Khan. In another picture, Afridi is sitting beside Indian politician Anurag Thakur from the BJP. One of the users said, "Anurag Thakur with Afridi, but if Rahul Gandhi or any Congress leader sits with Muslims then BJP leaders, then make a huge and cry."

Waqas, Ayyan bag men's double title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Waqas and Ayyan lifted men's double title of 17th National Tenpin Bowling Championship here at the Leisure City Bowling Club, Safa Gold, F-7 Markaz. Ayaz Ijaz and Faheem obtained 2nd position in the double's event. Waqas and Ayyan lifted men's double title of 17th National Tenpin Bowling Championship with 802 points while Ayaz Ijaz and Faheem obtained 2nd position with 765 points. Zeeshan and Ali Noman scored 3rd position with 686 points. Similarly, Danyal Shah and Ali Suria bagged 4th position with 669 points. President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Ijaz ur Rehman and Secretary General, Muhammad Hussain Chattha were also present on the occasion. Around 200 men and women players have featured in the Championship in competitions including men's singles, men's doubles, ladies singles, team event, Amateur, Deaf men' singles and media event.

Asim Qureshi trains youngsters

KHANEWAL (APP): National Table Tennis legend Asim Qureshi spent a busy day at the sports gymnasium during an ongoing 15-day coaching camp Tuesday where he supervised youngsters' rigorous training sessions and delivered a lecture on game basics, physical training, psychological aspects and different techniques. The veteran maestro, one of the oldest active player in the international table tennis arena, told newsmen, he was delighted to witness kids demonstrating talent with immense potential to shine at national and international level. The 59 years old rose to fame in national table tennis arena when he was just sixteen, and represented Pakistan in two editions of commonwealth games, sixteen world table tennis championships, 55 international tournaments. He bagged seven silver and eight bronze medals in South Asian Federation (SAF) games. The table tennis icon who was above 50 when he competed in the 2018 SAF games, said, he would be more than happy to visit Khanewal anytime whenever youngsters needed his guidance. He declared youngsters from Multan and Khanewal as immensely talented and hoped such training camps, if organized regularly, can make Pakistan shine in the international table tennis arena.

Rain washes out Australia-South Africa Champions Trophy match

RAWALPINDI (AFP): The Champions Trophy clash between Australia and South Africa was abandoned without a ball being bowled because of rain at the Rawalpindi Stadium on Tuesday.

Rain began to fall from early morning and despite being relenting into light drizzle the weather continued to worsen with bad light, delaying the toss scheduled for 1:30 p.m. local time (0830 GMT).

With rain not stopping and the ground staff unable to remove pools of water from covers protecting the playing surface, umpires took the decision to abandon the Group B match.

A handful of spectators with South African and Australian flags waited anxiously for the start of the match but had to leave without watching any action.

With one point each from this match, Australia

and South Africa are both well placed for the semi-finals, having both won their opening fixtures in the tournament.

South Africa, who beat Afghanistan in their first match by 107 runs, are top of the table with three points and a net run-rate of 2.14. Australia are second on the same number of points and a net run-rate of 0.475.

England face Afghanistan in Lahore on Wednesday in a must-win match for both teams after they lost their opening games.

Australia captain Steve Smith said the rain-out at least left his team knowing that a victory over Afghanistan on Friday would secure their place in the semi-finals.

"I did look at the Apple weather and it showed rain for the next few days but didn't expect it to be a wash-out, you can't do

much about it," said Smith.

"The equation is pretty simple now, on to the next one against Afghanistan and if we win we are locked into top four."

South African skipper Temba Bavuma said the abandonment was disappointing for all involved.

"Yeah, it's frustrating, we wanted to have some cricket and so did the fans, also wanting to watch two sides in confidence," said Bavuma, adding that batter Heinrich Klaasen had fully recovered from a sore elbow.

"Klaasen is fit and adds value to our team. We will watch England play Afghanistan (in Lahore on Wednesday) to have an idea against them in our last match (in Karachi on Saturday)."

India and New Zealand qualified for the semi-finals from Group A on Monday as title-holders Pakistan and Bangladesh crashed out of the tournament.



RAWALPINDI: Ground staff swiftly cover the field during a downpour to safeguard the pitch as rain delays the ICC Champions Trophy clash between Australia and South Africa at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

HEC All Pakistan Women's Handball C'ship starts

SIALKOT (APP): After a colorful ceremony at Government College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS), the HEC All Pakistan Women's Handball Championship began in which ten teams, including HEC, Punjab, KPK, Azad Kashmir, WAPDA and Army were participating.

The chief guest of the ceremony was Vice Chancellor GCWUS Prof Dr Shazia Bashir, while the guests of honor were Director Sports HEC Javed Memon, Olympian and former player of Pakistan Hockey Team Junaid Khawaja and President Pakistan Handball Federation Haji Shafique.

Olympian and former player of Pakistan Hockey Team Junaid Khawaja said that he was very happy to be at this event. He announced that soon, in collaboration with the HEC, I will establish a academy for students of the university so that they can further brush up their talent.

President Pakistan Handball Federation and Secretary Asia Handball Federation Haji Shafique spoke about the performance of Pakistan Handball team in Olympics and Asian Games. The ceremony was attended by Secretary of the Pakistan Handball Federation Saqlan Kousar.

Buttler chases 'perfect game' against Afghanistan in CT

LAHORE (AFP): England captain Jos Buttler on Tuesday said his team is confident despite their opening defeat in the Champions Trophy as they chase a "perfect game" against Afghanistan.

The clash in Lahore on Wednesday has become a virtual knockout after Tuesday's Group B match between Australia and South Africa was washed out with the two teams sharing one point each.

England lost their opener to Ashes rivals Australia in the eight-nation tournament after they failed to defend their total of 351-8 at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium.

South Africa hammered Afghanistan in their first match. "Pretty much from the start of the tournament every game is a 'must win'," Buttler told reporters.

"We've got two games left to progress further. We have to win those games so that's a very clear situation for us to be in."

Buttler also said he had faith in his pace bowling attack in spite of the injuries they received at the hands of Australia. "We've got great confidence in those guys," said Buttler.

"Level of performance was good and as always there's little areas we want

to improve and chase that perfect game.

Jofra Archer went for 82 off his 10 overs as Josh Inglis hammered an unbeaten 120. Mark Wood conceded 75 and Brydon Carse, who will miss the rest of the tournament because of a toe injury, went for 69 off seven.

"The debrief (to the quicks) was pretty easy, to be honest. We all felt that we did good things in places and probably just weren't quite consistent enough in a couple of areas."

"And also sometimes you've got to give credit to someone who plays an outstanding innings."

Buttler said his team has put the defeat aside to focus on the Afghanistan game.

"We've parked that now," he said. "We're looking forward to the game tomorrow. The guys have all prepared really well, we've turned up with a lot of positivity and trying to impart our style of playing."

Positive captain Buttler hasn't had the best of results as captain of the white-ball team since he led the team to a T20 World Cup title in 2022.

Buttler's England won only three of their nine matches as defending champions at the 50-over

World Cup in India in 2023.

The team faltered in the semi-final of last year's T20 World Cup and recently suffered a 3-0 ODI whitewash in India ahead of the Champions Trophy.

"At any time as a captain you want to perform and you want to perform well and you want to lead your team to winning games in cricket. We haven't been doing that enough in the recent past," said Buttler.

England suffered a shock loss to Afghanistan in the 2023 ODI World Cup in New Delhi and Buttler said he "respects" the opposition and their top-class spinners, including Rashid Khan. But he insisted England would be eliminating the negative and accentuating the positive.

"As soon as you catch yourself thinking about any negative things, you just try and completely forget that and focus on all of the positive things that could go right and where you can take the team," he said.

England will be forced to make at least one change for Wednesday's match after Carse was ruled out of the tournament and replaced in the squad by leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed.

Afghan women plight "saddening": English captain

LAHORE (AFP): England cricket captain Jos Buttler on Tuesday said the "plight of women" in Afghanistan is "saddening", as the teams prepare to meet in their second group-stage match of the Champions Trophy.

Ahead of the contest, more than 160 British politicians have called for England to boycott the game in protest against the Taliban government's restrictions on women's rights in Afghanistan. "It's very saddening the plight of women and girls in Afghanistan at the moment and the struggles that they're facing," the English skipper said addressing a press conference in Lahore.

"But we hope that the game tomorrow can be a source of hope and enjoyment. "It's obviously a tough time at the moment, so I think we're really excited about the match," added the 34-year-old. Female participation in sport has effectively been outlawed since the Taliban returned to power in 2021. That puts the Afghanistan cricket board at odds with International Cricket Council (ICC) rules, though the men's team are still allowed to compete.

The England and Wales Cricket Board resisted the demand to boycott their Champions Trophy group game but said they would not schedule a bilateral series against Afghanistan.

Both teams need a win on Wednesday in Lahore to keep alive their hopes of reaching the semi-finals in the 50-over tournament after losing their respective openers. "Sport has a great power to unite people and give hope and that's what we hope this game will do," Buttler added.

Earlier Afghanistan's English coach told media Afghan players are facing a "tricky situation" and know there are "things that are not correct" in their country. "They know the difference between right and wrong. It is a real tricky situation for them," head coach and former England batsman Jonathan Trott told the BBC from Lahore.

"They know who they are playing for and representing. "We work hard to bring joy to the country and the guys are passionate, brave and proud of being able to do that, but knowing full well that there are things that are not correct." Afghan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi sidestepped

direct questions on Tuesday, also addressing a presser in Lahore, regarding the boycott calls against his team. "We are cricket players, we are sportsmen," said Shahidi. "What we control is what we do on the ground, we don't worry about what is happening off the ground. So our confidence is good."

Last month South Africa Sports Minister Gayton McKenzie backed demands from British politicians for a playing boycott of Afghanistan. Australia which is set to face Afghanistan on Friday have cancelled a Twenty20 international series and a Test against Afghanistan in the last two years, but also plans to play their Champions Trophy game. "Everyone likes to see everyone play... we are only cricket players we can control things in the ground and we are always trying to give our best when we play," Shahidi said when asked about support for female cricket.

Memories of World Cup shock boost Afghanistan for England clash: Afghanistan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi warned England on Tuesday that memories of their famous 2023 World Cup win over the then holders gives them the confidence to pull off a Champions Trophy surprise. Both teams need a win on Wednesday in Lahore to keep alive their hopes of reaching the semi-finals in the 50-over tournament after losing their respective openers.

The match is a virtual knockout after Tuesday's Group B fixture between Australia and South Africa was washed out without a ball being bowled and the teams shared a point each. Afghanistan shocked England in 2023 when they humbled the defending world champions by 69 runs in New Delhi. Afghanistan's rise in white-ball cricket has been rapid.

"Obviously a really competitive side, they've been performing really well, getting better and better over the years and I give them lots of respect," said Buttler. "They have a unique style in some senses, some great spin options, Rashid (Khan) and Noor (Ahmad) obviously two standout guys that we need to prepare really well for, but as much as we look at the opposition, it's focusing on ourselves, bringing the best version of our cricket."

Afghanistan started the eight-nation Champions Trophy with a 107-run hammering by South Africa in Karachi. Their bowlers took a beating in South Africa's impressive total of 315-6. Ace leg-spinner Rashid went wicketless and conceded 59 runs from his 10 overs. In turn Afghanistan were bowled out for a meagre 208.

Afghan spin threat Shahidi, however, expects a much better show from his side at the Gaddafi Stadium and believes the Afghan spinners could be the difference on what he expects to be a turning pitch. "When we bat first that gives us more chance. At the same time in the last World Cup we beat teams batting second," Shahidi told reporters. "But in the South Africa game the wicket was supportive for fast bowling and there was no support for spinners. I didn't see even one ball turn. "The world knows we have quality spinners. Hopefully we have some support for our spinners in tomorrow's game."

Buttler praised the Afghanistan spinners but said with a mix of spin and the pace bowlers at his disposition that he is "comfortable with the balance of his team". England came under pressure from British politicians to boycott Wednesday's game over the treatment of Afghan women by the ruling Taliban.

The England and Wales Cricket Board resisted the demand but said they would not schedule a bilateral series against Afghanistan. Shahidi batted away questions about it on the eve of the match. "We are cricket players, we are sportsmen," said Shahidi. "What we control is what we do on the ground, we don't worry what is happening off the ground. So our confidence is good."

Yahya Sardar wins senior Mr. Physique Islamabad title

F.P Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Bodybuilding Association organized its annual bodybuilding competition at the Aabpara Community Center, where athletes showcased their strength and dedication. Yahya Sardar clinched the Senior Mr. Physique Islamabad title, while Shayan secured the Junior Mr. Physique title.

Under the patronage of Chaudhry Shafiq and Chairman Syed Nauman Shah, the event witnessed an enthusiastic turnout. The community center was packed with spectators and supporters, reflecting the growing popularity of bodybuilding in the capital.

The chief guest praised Yahya Sardar for his hard work and commitment. Senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) and Member of the National Assembly Tariq Fazal Chaudhry distributed cash prizes, shields, and certificates to the winners. Former Deputy Mayor of Islamabad Chaudhry Riffat Javed Advocate was also present at the event.

Renowned bodybuilders Shaukat Shehzad, Muhammad Azeem, and Zahid Nadeem served as judges for the competition.

Speaking on the occasion, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry expressed his full support for the devel-



opment of a sports city in Islamabad, particularly for bodybuilding. He commended the efforts being made to promote the sport.

Earlier, Syed Nauman Shah highlighted the importance of fitness, stating that "A healthy mind thrives in a healthy body." He emphasized that bodybuilding in Islamabad has grown from humble beginnings into a well-established sport, and efforts will continue to provide a positive and healthy platform

for the youth.

Chaudhry Muhammad Shafiq noted that Islamabad now has nearly 1,000 fitness centers, playing a vital role in keeping the youth fit and contributing to their character development.

Prominent personalities, including former Federal Secretary Habib ur Rehman, Colonel Ubaid Raja, Fawad Malik, Ahmed Ali, Dr. Ali Shozeb Kazmi, and Imran Randhawa, presented medals to the successful bodybuilders.

Injured champion Martin to miss MotoGP season opener

PARIS (AFP/APP): World champion Jorge Martin will miss the opening MotoGP race of the season in Thailand at the weekend after suffering several fractures in a fall in training, his Aprilia team said.

The Spaniard was already recovering from fractures to his right hand and left foot sustained in a horror crash on his Aprilia during the opening day of pre-season testing in Malaysia earlier this month.

Martin has now suffered multiple fractures in his left hand and also in his heel in an unrelated incident.

He is to have surgery in Barcelona on Tuesday.

"Jorge Martin suffered a complex fracture of the radius, some carpal bones on the left side and an ipsilateral calcaneal fracture of the left hand during a training session," said an Aprilia team statement on Monday.

"After a surgical consultation, it was decided to proceed with surgery, which will take place tomorrow (Tuesday) at the Dexeus Clinic in Barcelona to stabilise the fractures of the radius and



the left scaphoid.

"Martin will miss the Thailand Grand Prix and recovery times will be determined after the surgery."

Martin had been thrown off his Aprilia at turn two of the Sepang circuit on February 5, having already escaped unscathed from an earlier crash.

The 27-year-old spent 24 hours under observation in a Sepang hospital before travelling to Barcelona for successful surgery two days later.

At the weekend it had been reported that Martin would be fit to take his place on the grid for the

season-opener at the Buriram circuit in Thailand, plans left in tatters by this latest setback.

Martin made the move to the Aprilia factory team on a two-year multimillion-dollar contract after winning the 2024 championship for Pramac Ducati.

The Spaniard has endured a disastrous pre-season, completing only 13 laps at Sepang when he lost control of his new machinery and was flipped high into the air, landing hard on his left foot before his head banged onto the asphalt.

Italy's Lorenzo Savadori will replace Martin in Thailand.



In brief

Brother shoots dead sister

RAWALPINDI (APP): A person on Tuesday shot dead his sister and a man in the limits of Wah Saddar Police Station, a Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. On receiving information about the incident, the police reached the spot and arrested the accused Rait Gul. The police cordoned off the crime scene for collecting evidence. The bodies were shifted to the hospital for post-mortem. Meanwhile, City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani has taken notice of the double murder and directed the Superintendent of Police Pothohar to investigate the incident.

4 accused held with charas

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Tuesday continued the crackdown against drug dealers and arrested four accused with more than 8 kilograms charas. According to a police spokesman, the Pirwahai Police recovered 4.8 kg charas from accused Adil, while the Taxila Police nabbed two suspects Zulqamain and Basit recovering 1.65 kg and 1.1 kg of the contraband item from them respectively. Similarly, the Ratta Amral Police held accused Usman with 520 grams charas.

PFA up for assuring quality foods

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has prepared comprehensive plan to ensure supply of quality food items in the markets during the holy month of Ramadan. The authority conducted a major operation on Tuesday in areas of Ganj Mandi and Bajaur Tower in which Rs.450,000.0 worth of banned energy drinks seized. According to the spokesman PFA, 500,000 ml of energy drinks were destroyed in a drain. Energy drinks loaded on carts were being taken to a warehouse when PFA raided the area. The spokesman informed that the warehouse owner was fined Rs.50,000.0 for keeping banned energy drinks. It is worth noting that the provincial government has launched a grand crackdown against the banned drinks. "Citizens should contact the helpline 1223 in case of any complaint", said the spokesman.

Heavy machinery used to demolish encroachment

RAWALPINDI (APP): The non stop anti-encroachment operation in the cantonment areas used heavy machinery to carry on demolishing the concrete encroachments. A large number of sheds and concrete ramps were demolished in Tench Bhatta bazaar by the encroachment cell of the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) here on Tuesday. Under the supervision of Additional CEO Arshad Khan and Deputy CEO Nasir Kamal, the enforcement team visited the main bazar starting from Octroi No. 22 where many encroachments had already been demolished and were intimated to refrain from repeating the illegal installation/ construction. Being the largest bazaar of the Cantt areas, Tench Bhatta has turned to one of the most congested and thickly populated locality. Citizens were seeking strict action by RCB to maintain it a smooth route for traffic as well as for the pedestrians. The board has already issued notices to the shopkeepers for removing the trespasses. The recent operation has helped in widening the road, however the residents further called for regular presence of the enforcement personnel and the traffic wardens in the bazaar for swift response to any congestion, specially caused by moving vendors.



ISLAMABAD: Commuters on their way during light rain that experienced in the twin cities. —APP Photo

Rana asks PTI to shun ego politics for national interest

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Prime Minister's Coordinator, Rana Ihsan Afzal Tuesday appealed to PTI to set aside arrogance and adopt a conciliatory approach, emphasizing that engaging in constructive talks is the only viable path forward to address grievances.

In an interview with a private news channel, he stressed that instead of resorting to undemocratic measures, PTI leaders should refrain from portraying themselves as victims.

He emphasized that PTI should prioritize the nation's well-being over

political interests, considering the welfare of Pakistan and its innocent citizens.

By adopting this approach, PTI can work towards finding solutions that benefit the country as a whole, rather than perpetuating political polarization, he warned. Rana Ihsan Afzal strongly condemned PTI's involvement in the 9th May and 26 November incidents, terming them as undemocratic steps that undermined the country's stability and rule of law.

He emphasized that such actions were unacceptable and went against the principles of democracy, which

PTI claims to uphold. "It is imperative for PTI leaders to respect the democratic process and refrain from inciting violence and chaos," he stated.

Rana Ihsan Afzal also expressed his admiration for the policies of his party, praising their efforts to steer the country out of default and put it on the path to economic stability.

He acknowledged the challenging circumstances under which the government was operating, but expressed confidence in their ability to navigate these difficulties and implement effective solutions.

CDA chairman meets Turkish envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): CDA Chairman Ali Randhawa, met with the Turkish Ambassador, Irfan Neziroglu on Tuesday at the CDA Headquarters.

The chairman, warmly welcomed the Turkish Ambassador to the CDA Headquarters. The meeting highlighted the strong fraternal and historical relations between Pakistan and Türkiye. Randhawa, emphasized the need to further strengthen bilateral relations and explore opportunities for cooperation.

He stated that the newly constructed interchange in Islamabad has been named after the president of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan which is an honour for us. Turkish Ambassador Irfan Neziroglu stated that after Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's recent successful visit, cooperation between the two countries in various sectors will further enhance.

Muhammad Ali Randhawa, affirmed that the people of Pakistan and Türkiye are like real brothers who always stand shoulder to shoulder in tested times. The meeting also discussed the establishment of a Turkish Garden in Islamabad and enhancing relations between the municipalities of Islamabad and Ankara through an MoU.

He expressed Islamabad's intent to benefit from Ankara's experiences, development, and expertise. The importance of exploring opportunities for people to people contact and cultural exchanges between the two nations was also emphasized. At the end of the meeting, Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, assured full cooperation in promoting mutual collaboration between the two countries.

ANF recovers over 199 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations managed to recover over 199 kg drugs worth over Rs 20 million and arrested five suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday.

He informed that 600 grams hashish and 160 intoxicated tablets hidden in secret cavities of a vehicle were recovered near a university in Lahore and an accused was arrested.

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

160 kg hashish hidden in the secret cavities of a vehicle was recovered from the Yaro area of Pishin in Balochistan and two accused including an Afghan national were arrested.

36 kg hashish concealed in a truck was recovered near Ring Road Peshawar and three kg heroin was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near RCD Road in Hub and two accused were arrested.

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

Ashrafi condemns profiteering ahead of Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, along with religious scholars, held a press conference on Tuesday, urging traders across the country to lower prices and reduce profit margins in light of the holy month of Ramadan.

Ashrafi emphasized that profiteering and hoarding are not permissible in Islam. "Anyone involved in hoarding or unlawful profiteering must be held accountable by the government," he said, citing an Islamic ruling.

Ashrafi also called on the authorities to ensure uninterrupted electricity and gas supply, especially during Sehri, Iftar, and Taraweeh prayers, so that people can observe Ramadan without difficulties. Regarding Hajj arrangements, Ashrafi lauded the Saudi government for initiating timely preparations. He further noted

that Pakistan's Ministry of Religious Affairs had also commenced arrangements for government-sponsored Hajj pilgrims. "It appears that the official Hajj scheme will be well-managed this year, but efforts must also be made to ensure smooth operations for private Hajj schemes," he added.

Speaking on the Palestine issue, Ashrafi reiterated that the Muslim Ummah has a clear stance that Palestine belongs to the Palestinians and Gaza to the people of Gaza. He urged Muslim nations to step forward in assisting the oppressed people of Gaza during Ramadan.

Ashrafi also expressed full support for the stance taken by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Riyadh, stating that the voice of the Muslim Ummah has echoed from Riyadh. Additionally, he appreciated the role of Jordan and Egypt in advocat-

ing for Palestinian rights.

Commenting on Pakistan's political and economic situation, Ashrafi emphasized the need to give dialogue a chance for national stability. He noted that with the assistance of Islamic nations, Pakistan's economy is improving, but long-term economic stability is only possible through political stability.

Furthermore, Ashrafi announced that the Pakistan Ulema Council would observe 'Yom Al-Quds' and 'Protection of Haramain Sharifain' during the last ten days of Ramadan.

Ashrafi also reaffirmed his commitment to writing a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif regarding blasphemous content on social media. He revealed that Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has so far blocked more than 100,000 websites containing blasphemous material.

Ramazan preparations hit high gear in twin cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the holy month of Ramazan approaches, the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi were abuzz with preparations.

Markets, mosques and community centers were bustling with activity as residents stock up on groceries, decorations and other essentials for the 30-day fasting period. In Islamabad, major shopping centers were witnessing a surge in customers, with shopkeepers offering discounts and promotions on Ramazan-related items.

Similarly, in Rawalpindi, markets like Raja Bazaar, Moti Bazaar, and Saddar were filled with people buying dates, fruits, and other food items for iftar and sehri. The city adminis-

trations have also geared up to ensure smooth supply of essential commodities.

The district administrations have set up price control committees to monitor prices of essential items.

Meanwhile, mosques and community centers were being decorated and renovated to accommodate the large number of worshippers during Taraweeh prayers. A resident of Islamabad, Maria Khan expressed her eagerness for Ramazan said as the holy month approaches, residents were gearing up to welcome Ramazan with renewed faith, devotion, and a sense of community.

"The city is taking on a festive look, and the excitement is palpable and that I'm looking forward to

spending quality time with my family and friends during iftar and Taraweeh prayers, she said.

She said with just a few days left before the start of Ramazan, the twin cities were bracing for a month of spiritual reflection, charity, and community bonding.

Another resident Qadir Rehman said "I have been shopping for new clothes and accessories for Ramazan and the markets are offering great deals, and I'm excited to try out some new recipes."

He was grateful for the opportunity to fast and reflect on his faith adding that Ramazan is a time for spiritual growth, and he was excited to embark on this journey with his community, he stated.

Over 4,500 missing children cases reported: NA told

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly's Committee on Parliamentary Affairs was informed on Tuesday that a total of 4,591 cases of missing children have been reported to date, out of which 3,869 cases have been successfully resolved, while 722 cases remain open.

While briefing the committee, the Secretary of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs highlighted that Section 3 of the Zainab Alert, Response, and Recovery Act, 2020, mandates the establishment of the Zainab Alert, Response, and Recovery Agency (ZARRA)

to ensure a prompt and effective response to cases of missing children.

To facilitate the safe recovery of missing children, ZARRA has established a toll-free helpline, 1099, where legal advisors and officers provide free legal assistance and coordinate administrative measures.

The committee recommended that ZARRA collaborate with provincial authorities to develop effective strategies for expediting cases of missing children. It also stressed the need to sensitize police departments across Pakistan to ensure the time-

ly and consistent sharing of data with the agency.

Additionally, the committee was informed that for the swift resolution of public grievances, it is essential to integrate the Prime Minister's Public Affairs and Grievances Wing and the Pakistan Citizen Portal (PCP) with the Chief Minister's grievance system, as well as the grievance mechanisms of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK). This integration is considered crucial for ensuring the timely and effective redressal of public concerns.

PCHR organises capacity building workshop on media freedoms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR), in collaboration with Media Matters for Democracy (MMFD), and supported by European Union, organized a capacity building workshop on 'Media Freedoms and Journalists Safety' at the local hotel here on Tuesday.

The training session was attended by individuals from Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, NCHR, NCWS, media professionals, Police and prosecution, and member of the civil society organizations.

The main objective of the training session was to strengthen the capacity of journalists, civil society members, and Bar representatives by deepening their understanding of both international and constitutional frameworks related to freedom of expression.

Moreover, the session aimed to equip participants with the knowledge and tools necessary to develop effective strategies to navigate and combat the challenging circumstances surrounding press freedom and journalist safety.

While conducting the

session on national and international human rights frameworks in relation to freedom of expression, Aftab Alam, ED, IRADA and renowned media rights activist, expressed his deep concerns regarding the dismal state of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists in the country.

Through an engaging and interactive session, Alam guided the participants in exploring both local and international human rights frameworks that can be utilized to address issues related to journalist freedom and safety.

The second session on 'Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration for Effective Implementation' was facilitated by Asad Baig, Executive Director of Media Matters for Democracy (MMFD).

Through interactive dialogue, the facilitator discussed the role of national human rights institutions, such as the National Commission for Human Rights, in addressing the issue of journalist safety.

He explained that the safety of journalists can only be ensured through effective liaison and collaboration with the exist-

ing available avenues.

The concluding session of the training, led by Shafique Chaudhry, Executive Director of PCHR, placed a significant focus on the pivotal role that media organizations and journalist unions and federations play in safeguarding the overall interests of the journalists in general and their safety in particular. These institutions are important and can play an instrumental role in devising strategies for effective collaboration and advocacy.

He shared that individual journalist are vulnerable to harassment, intimidation, and even violence, hence the journalists' unions and federations must be aware of the international mechanisms as well.

He cited and shared the salient features of the UN plan of action on the safety of journalist and the issue of impunity.

The training session concluded with a certificate-awarding ceremony, Afzal Butt, President of the Federal Union of Journalists, presented certificates to the participants and extended his congratulations to PCHR for organizing this training.



ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Portugal in Pakistan Frederico Silva on Tuesday called on the Managing Director, Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) Muhammad Asim Khichi, and discussed news exchange cooperation between the official news agencies of the two countries.

The ambassador expressed his keenness to enhance cooperation between the two countries on multiple fronts including education, art and culture, tourism, business and news exchange agreement between Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) and LUSA, the national news agency of Portugal.

The ambassador said it is an era of media and information technology and both

the official news agencies should cooperate on exchange of news and information beneficial for people of the two countries.

He highlighted that both the countries have much more to share with each other, especially to enhance people to people contacts. He said communication linkages between the two countries would pave way for future contacts including media, cultural, business, tourism and other sectors for bringing the two nations more closer.

Managing Director APP assured the Portuguese envoy that signing of Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the field of news would be expedited for benefits of people of the

two countries. The envoy was accompanied by Portuguese author and journalist, Teresa Nicolau, who is on a visit of Pakistan from February 25 to 27.

Sharing her engagements in Pakistan, Teresa Nicolau said she had a wonderful engagements in Pakistan where she attended a literary festival in Lahore and other events in Islamabad. She was all praised for diverse and rich culture and spicy food of Pakistan. Teresa Nicolau evoked the cultural richness and diversity of Pakistan, emphasized the need to value the literary heritage and advocated the need to make concerted efforts to connect the people of the two friendly countries through culture.

Educational packages donated

PAKTIA (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Wakil Khalid, head of Paktia Education Department, announced the donation of 3,956 educational packages. The packages, which include essential stationery for students and educational materials for teachers, are set to make a substantial impact on local education. Khalid emphasized the importance of these donations, particularly in remote areas where access to educational resources is severely limited.

Tourists visiting historical sites

KABUL (TOLOnews): NSIA said that nearly 200 foreign tourists have visited historical sites in the past month. The entry and exit of more than 2,400 foreign nationals to the country over the past month. "Our figures show that in the month of Dalwa of the current solar year, 2,465 entries and exits of foreign nationals to the country have been recorded. The registered figures indicate that foreigners have come to Afghanistan to visit historical sites," said Halim Rafi, spokesperson for NSIA.

Taliban confirm arrest of British couple: Report



KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban have confirmed the arrest of an elderly British couple in the central province of Bamiyan, along with a Chinese-American citizen and their Afghan interpreter, the Associated Press reported. However, they have not provided details on the reason for their detention or their current condition.

The detained couple, identified as Peter Reynolds, 79, and Barby Reynolds, 75, have lived in Bamiyan since 2006 and ran Rebuild, an organization focused on education and job training for both government and private-sector employment.

Despite repeated warnings from the British government about Afghanistan's deteriorating security situation, they chose to remain in the country after the Taliban takeover in August 2021.

According to The Sunday Times, the couple was detained on February 1 after returning to their home in Bamiyan. In the early days of their detention, they were able to send messages to their four children, assuring them that they were in good condition and under the supervision

of the Taliban's Interior Ministry. However, three days later, communication abruptly stopped.

Local sources told The Sunday Times that Taliban forces raided the couple's home and interrogated their staff about potential involvement in religious activities. The nature of the allegations against them remains unclear.

Peter and Barby Reynolds, who married in Kabul in the 1970s, had continued their work in education and parenting skill development despite the Taliban's restrictions on foreign organizations. Their family has insisted that they have not engaged in any illegal activities.

Their children have called on the Taliban to release them, citing their deteriorating health and urgent need for medical care.

Red Cross stresses aid for Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has expressed commitment to addressing the challenges in Afghanistan. Peter Maurer, the ICRC president, called for sustained international support to Afghanistan.

Peter Maurer, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), has called for sustained international support for Afghanistan.

In a statement, the organization mentioned that Maurer, during his seven-day visit to Afghanistan, reviewed the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country.

The statement emphasized that Maurer highlighted the importance of neutral and independent humanitarian efforts to address the crisis in Afghanistan. He also pointed out that the human rights situation in Afghanistan is "very severe."

Maurer further noted that nearly four decades of conflict in Afghanistan have affected almost every family in the country. He reiterated the ICRC's commitment to addressing the challenges facing Afghanistan.

This comes at a time when US President Donald Trump, upon entering the White House, suspended humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. The situation in Afghanistan continues to demand international attention and support, with the ICRC playing a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid.

Patriarchal system denied women their basic rights: Chief



KABUL (Khaama Press): The 58th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council has officially begun in Geneva, Switzerland, with high-ranking officials from 100 countries and global organizations, including the UN Secretary-General, participating.

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, stated at the opening that "this session has begun under the shadow of a grim milestone."

He emphasized the dire state of human rights, especially in Afghanistan, highlighting the oppression of women and girls. Guterres further pointed out that in Afghanistan, "a patriarchal system has denied girls the right to education and women their

fundamental rights." His statement stressed the severity of the situation in Afghanistan and the global responsibility to address it.

He made these remarks, referring to the restrictions imposed by the Taliban, highlighting the ongoing suppression of women's rights in Afghanistan.

The session will last for eight days, focusing on human rights issues around the world. On the sixth day, Friday, February 28, discussions will specifically address the human rights situation in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have imposed numerous restrictions on the citizens of Afghanistan, particularly women, over the past three years. Girls and women are

currently prohibited from attending school, university, or working, and are deprived of their basic rights.

The 58th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council has begun, with Afghanistan being a key focus. Nasir Ahmad Andisha, Afghanistan's representative in Geneva, announced that Richard Bennett, the UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur, will present a report on Afghanistan on February 28.

The report will largely focus on the restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women, particularly following the approval of the Ministry of Vice and Virtue's decree.

Free school opens for working, orphaned children in Herat

HERAT (TOLOnews): A charity foundation in Herat has established a school providing free education for around one thousand working and orphaned children.

According to the officials of this charity foundation, both boys and girls study together in this school, and all educational expenses are covered by the organization.

Currently, the school provides education up to the sixth grade, but the foundation's officials have stated that in the future, it will be upgraded to a high school.

Faiz Ahmad Khawafi, the head of the charity foundation, said about this school: "We have enrolled orphaned and homeless children in this program, especially those who beg or work on the streets and intersections. We have gathered them and included them in this school. I hope that one day we will witness a time when no Afghan child has to stand at a street corner. We are striving to expand this initiative to other provinces as well."

Mohammad Yunus Mohmand, the deputy head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment, who was present at the ceremony, said: "The Afghan private sector believes in making progress in education and training. If we establish factories, build airplanes, and have a banking system, we are compelled and obligated to acquire education and training."

In addition to education, vocational training courses are also offered to the children enrolled in this school.

"I dream of becoming a doctor in the future so that I can help the needy and also be a useful person for



my country," Mujtaba, one of the students, told TOLOnews.

Mohammad Akram, another student, said: "I want to become a doctor in the future to help patients in the country."

Jawid, a fourteen-year-old boy who polishes shoes on the streets of Herat from morning until evening to

support his family, has never attended school. He said that going to school is just a dream for him.

"I polish shoes every day. There is no money for me to go to school and study," Jawid told TOLOnews.

The officials of this charity foundation said that in the future, they plan to

provide free education for four thousand working and orphaned children in this school.

According to statistics, nearly ten thousand child laborers work on the streets of Herat.

Local officials state that most of these children are deprived of education due to poverty.

Ghazni's 300-bed hospital nears 90% completion

GHAZNI (TOLOnews): Local officials in Ghazni say that the construction of the province's 300-bed hospital is 90% complete.

Zark Zirak, the head of Ghazni's Public Health Department, stated that the hospital has been built with a budget of 350 million afghani from domestic resources and will soon be inaugurated.

"With the arrival of winter and cold weather, con-

struction work on the hospital was halted. However, as the weather warms up, the remaining 10% of the work will resume soon and be completed quickly," he added. Residents of Ghazni have also urged officials to complete the project as soon as possible.

"We have faced many challenges over the past six years. The number of patients in Ghazni is high, and we hope this hospital

will be completed soon," said Mohammad Salim, a resident of Ghazni.

"We ask the government to ensure the completion of this hospital because people are facing serious health issues, and overcrowding in hospitals has increased," said Wahidullah, another resident.

"There is not enough medicine in hospitals and clinics. We want sufficient medicine to be provided in

every hospital because people are in difficult conditions," said Shaheen Shah, a resident of Ghazni.

According to the Ghazni Public Health Department, this solar year, projects worth 313 million afghani have been implemented in the province to provide advanced medical equipment, ambulance services, improved maternal and child healthcare, child nutrition, and disease diagnostics.

Women in Badakhshan find hope in carpet weaving

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLOnews): The establishment of three carpet-weaving workshops in Badakhshan has provided employment and skill-learning opportunities for around 150 women.

Zahir Noori, the head of these workshops, stated that most of the women working there are widows or girls who have been deprived of education. Through carpet weaving, they are able to support their livelihoods.

"Alhamdulillah, in the districts of Jurm, Baharak, and the city of Faizabad, we have been able to provide

employment for more than 150 sisters and mothers," he said.

However, the lack of sufficient facilities, including a dedicated workspace and necessary equipment for washing carpets, remains a major challenge for these workshops.

"We do not have a dedicated place for work, nor do we have machines for washing carpets. For this reason, we have to send our products to Kunduz and Kabul," said Tahmineh Hakimi, the deputy head of the carpet-weaving workshop.

Some women employed

in these workshops have urged the government and aid organizations to support them by providing better resources.

"We request the government allocate a specific place for us to work," said Sarah, one of the workers.

"We are very happy to have this job opportunity and to be able to learn a skill. This is a valuable opportunity," said Rohiya, one of the trainees.

The Badakhshan Department of Industry and Commerce has called on aid organizations to provide more support for the development of women's handi-

crafts in the province.

Samaruddin Rahmani, the general manager of enterprises at the Badakhshan Department of Industry and Commerce, emphasized: "We have asked charitable organizations and aid institutions to increase their activities in the development of Badakhshan's local handicrafts and to support women."

According to statistics from this department, more than 1,000 women in the center and districts of Badakhshan are currently engaged in small businesses, and this number is increasing day by day.



AWCCI: More women drawn to online businesses



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI) says more females are joining online businesses.

Women entrepreneurs involved in online businesses say they are largely satisfied with their work.

Following the political changes in the country in 2021, the number of businesswomen and female investors has seen a signif-

icant increase.

Growth of online businesses

Shakiba Fazli, one of the women entrepreneurs in Kabul, told Pajhwok Afghan News she had been working in the field of women's handicrafts for the past five years.

Over the last two years, Fazli said, she had also ventured into online business, selling a variety of products.

She shares her products on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and others, through which her customers place orders.

Saadia Hafizi, another female entrepreneur, says she has been working in the handicraft sector for seven years. For about three years, she has also been involved in online business, which has gained significant success.

She added most of her products were Afghan clothing and jewellery made by women. Since starting her online business, her customer base has increased, with orders coming from abroad.

Hafizi stated she showcased her products through social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram.

She shared the benefits of online business, saying, "Currently, our work has become a bit easier, and our sales have risen. Now, we receive online orders from the United States, Germany, and Canada."

She also discussed the quality of her products, saying, "We always send the same high-quality products that we showcase on our page. We never offer low-quality products, and encourage other online shops to use quality products and send them to customers."

Hafizi argued selling low-quality products to customers would harm their businesses and people would lose trust in their work.

AWCCI Khadija Mohammadi, executive director of AWCCI, also spoke about the growing trend of online businesses among women.

"Sales in the domestic market are not high, so women are forced to turn to online businesses to sell their products outside Afghanistan as well."

She added the Chamber had made significant efforts to encourage female entrepreneurs to engage in online businesses.

According to her, around 65 percent of female entrepreneurs in the country also run online businesses.

The women are engaged in sectors such as handicrafts, jewellery, food processing, dried fruits, and hijab designs in their online businesses. They promote their products on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, with some even conducting businesses through

official websites. Mohammadi said one of the main challenges women faced in online business was a lack of knowledge about it, but the Chamber had been working to provide arrange programmes for them.

She explained over the past two years, 11 training workshops on online business had been conducted for female entrepreneurs by the Chamber.

In the past year, she recalled, business licences had been distributed to 100 women — working both online and in person.

She said: "Indubitably, online businesses are beneficial because they currently don't have enough sales in the domestic market, and women entrepreneurs have not reached their goals. Therefore, they must work outside the country."

Economist Abdul Nasir Reshtia called online businesses a good opportunity for women who were not allowed to work outside

their homes. He commented: "Fortunately, online business has lately been booming in Afghanistan, where most women can earn a steady income through this channel, although many challenges and problems still exist."

He emphasised the need to encourage women in this sector by providing them with necessary training and financial support in case of need.

He continued, "On the other hand, they still have not been able to build trust and attract customers. If they want their business to grow and be trusted by people, they need to learn digital skills to manage their businesses in a more efficient way."

Views on online shopping Hamira Sabir, a resident of Kabul who works at a private school, said due to her busy schedule, she had been purchasing goods online for the past two years. Because of time constraints, she cannot

shop in person. She sometimes receives good-quality items, but more often than not, the quality is not up to the mark.

Similarly, Hasina Tanveer, another Kabul resident, said she occasionally purchased necessary items online.

She vied online shopping a convenience for busy individuals, advising such businesspeople to act honestly to win customer confidence.

Just like women; men are also jumping into online businesses. Mohammad Fahim Ulfat, a resident of Kabul and manager of Nab Mall, noted the popularity of online businesses and growing public trust in them.

Ulfat also stated he taught young people how to conduct online business and trade at an educational centre.

He emphasised the world was moving forward, urging young people to familiarise themselves with online businesses.

Six newborns die as cold snap grips Gaza

GAZA CITY (AFP, Reuters): Gaza's civil defense agency said on Tuesday that six newborn babies have died in a cold snap which has gripped the war-ravaged Palestinian territory over the past week.

"As a result of a severe cold wave and the lack of heating, we have recorded the deaths of six newborns during the past week up until today," agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP. Meteorologists say temperatures have fallen to zero degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit) in recent days as a cold front has gripped the eastern Mediterranean.

Although an ongoing ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has seen a surge in the volume of humanitarian aid entering Gaza, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians continue to live in tents. Many are camped out in the rubble of their former homes and are struggling to survive as temperatures drop.

Hamas has repeatedly accused Israel of preventing shelter materials from being delivered to Gaza's 2.4 million people, most of whom have been displaced at least once during the war. It blamed the deaths of the six newborns on Israel's blocking of aid materials.

"We call on the mediators to take immediate action to stop the occupation's violation of the ceasefire agreement ... and facilitate the entry of essential supplies such as shelter, heating and urgent medical items into Gaza," Hamas said in a statement. "This is crucial to protect the children of Gaza." Israeli bulldozers have demolished large areas of the now virtually empty Jenin refugee camp and appear to be carving wide roadways through its once-crowded warren of alleyways, echoing tactics already employed in Gaza as troops prepare for a long-term stay.

At least 40,000 Palestinians have left their homes in Jenin and the nearby city of Tulkarm in the northern West Bank since Israel began its operation just a day after reaching a ceasefire agreement in Gaza after 15 months of war. "Jenin is a repeat of what happened in Jabalia," said Basheer Matahen, spokesperson for the Jenin municipality, referring to the

refugee camp in northern Gaza that was cleared out by the Israeli army after weeks of bitter fighting. "The camp has become uninhabitable."

He said at least 12 bulldozers were at work demolishing houses and infrastructure in the camp, once a crowded township that housed descendants of Palestinians who fled their homes or were driven out in the 1948 war in what Palestinians call the 'Nakba' or catastrophe at the start of the state of Israel. He said army engineering teams could be seen making preparations for a long-term stay, bringing water tanks and generators to a special area of almost one acre in size.

No comment was immediately available from the Israeli military but on Sunday, Defense Minister Israel Katz ordered troops to prepare for "a prolonged stay," saying the camps had been cleared "for the coming year" and residents would not be allowed to return. The month-long operation in the northern West Bank has been one of the biggest seen since the Second Intifada uprising by Palestinians more than 20 years ago, involving several brigades of Israeli troops backed by drones, helicopters, and, for the first time in decades, heavy battle tanks.

"There is a broad and ongoing evacuation of population, mainly in the two refugee camps, Nur Shams, near to Tulkarm and Jenin," said Michael Milshtein, a former military intelligence official who heads the Palestinian Studies Forum at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. "I don't know what the broad strategy is but there's no doubt at all that we didn't see such a step in the past."

Israel launched the operation, saying it intended to take on Iranian-backed militant groups including Hamas and Islamic Jihad that have been firmly implanted in the refugee camps for decades, despite repeated Israeli attempts to root them out. But as the weeks have gone on, Palestinians have said the real intention appears to be a large scale, permanent displacement of the population by destroying homes and making it impossible for them to stay.

Russian Ambassador calls on Naqvi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Russian Ambassador Albert P. Khorev in Islamabad. During the meeting, bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest were discussed in detail.

Both sides also discussed to enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism and anti-narcotics efforts and agreed to activate the counter-terrorism dialogue between the two countries. They also agreed to increase the exchange of delegations to strengthen mutual ties.

The Russian ambassador invited Pakistani officials to participate in anti-narcotics training programs in Moscow and Siberia. Interior Minister stated that terrorism is an international challenge and collective efforts are required to overcome it. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening relations with Russia and emphasized that there are vast opportunities for bilateral cooperation in various sectors.

Govt to setup NCC: Minister

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday said that the government would consider establishing a National Crypto Council to ensure that the country's digital asset ecosystem evolves in a secure, compliant, and sustainable manner.

The finance minister made the remarks while chairing a high-level meeting on digital assets in Islamabad. The council will serve as a dedicated advisory body comprising government representatives, regulatory authorities, and industry experts, he added.

The minister said it will also collaborate with friendly countries to develop standardised frameworks for international digital economic engagement. Aurangzeb expressed the government's commitment to exploring digital assets and integrating blockchain technology as part of a broader strategy to modernize the financial sector.

He directed relevant stakeholders to formulate a comprehensive framework that ensures security, transparency, regulatory compliance, and economic viability while safeguarding against financial crimes and illicit activities.

The minister also stressed the need for a balanced approach that encourages innovation and investment in digital assets while maintaining strict regulatory oversight in line with international standards. The meeting was attended by foreign delegates, including US President Donald Trump's advisors for digital assets.

Syrians reject Israeli statements

LONDON: Hundreds of Syrians took part in a mass demonstration on Tuesday in the southern city of Suwaida, affirming national unity and rejecting Israeli interference. Demonstrators, primarily from trade unions and civil organizations, highlighted the importance of extending the state's sovereignty over Syrian territory and defending it against external aggression, the official SANA news agency reported.

The demonstrators at Suwaida's central Al-Karama Square urged the interim government to protest in international organizations against the Israeli statements that violate international norms. On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israeli forces would continue to maintain their presence at the strategic summit of Mount Hermon, which Israel captured following the fall of Bashar Assad's regime in December.

He also said that Israel demands the complete demilitarization of southern Syria, including the areas surrounding Suwaida, Daraa and Quneitra, and committed to "not tolerating any threat" to the Druze community. Demonstrators in Suwaida, a predominantly Druze city, rejected the statements on Tuesday and called on national actors to oppose the Israeli plan. — Arab News



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Russian Ambassador Albert P. Khorev.

US scraps order linking arms sales to in'l law

WASHINGTON: The White House has revoked a key policy order linking arms sales to international law on human rights, according to reports. United States President Donald Trump ordered the key policy to be scrapped. The Washington Post reported quoting unnamed sources.

The order, signed by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden amid concerns over Israel's actions during its war on Gaza, was aimed at preventing US arms sales from contributing to human rights abuses abroad. The sources told the daily that National Security Advisor Mike Waltz had issued a memo formalising the decision.

National Security Memorandum-20, signed by Biden in February 2024, required assurances that US weapons would not be used in violation of international humanitarian law. The measure was viewed as a response to a growing concern that Israel was committing human rights violations amid its bombardment of Gaza. The memorandum was one of the few remaining Biden policies addressing the conflict. All mention of the memorandum has been scrubbed from the White House website, with searches resulting in a 404 error.

A May 2024 report, mandated by the memorandum, stated that while Israel may have violated international humanitarian law, the Biden administration could not verify specific cases of civilian harm because of the ongoing war. Trump's decision to overturn the memorandum follows moves to unfreeze heavy weapon shipments to Israel and lift sanctions on Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank.

On February 7, the Trump administration approved the sale of more than \$7.4bn worth of bombs, missiles, and related military equipment to Israel. The latest move effectively removes the last vestige of Biden's policies on the Gaza war, which has killed at least 48,346 and left more than 111,759 others wounded.

Senator Chris Van Hollen, a prominent advocate for the memorandum, condemned

the move to scrap it, calling it "shameful" and a blow to global human rights and US national security and its standing around the world. He added that the reversal undermines the ability of taxpayers to ensure their money aligns with US laws and values.

"This is another clear example of Trump's blatant indifference to American values," he stated. US Senator Jim Risch, a Republican and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, welcomed the move. He criticised the original order as a political manoeuvre "conceived of as a means to embarrass our ally Israel in its time of need", arguing that the policy had weakened US alliances while benefitting rivals such as Russia and China.

Meanwhile, the United States has sided with Russia in votes on two United Nations resolutions on Ukraine. The two countries opposed a European-backed UN General Assembly resolution condemning Moscow's war in Ukraine. In the UN Security Council (UNSC) they both then approved a US-backed resolution calling for a swift end to the conflict that avoided labelling Russia as the aggressor or acknowledging Ukraine's territorial integrity.

The United Kingdom and France, which have permanent seats on the UNSC alongside the US, as well as Russia and China, abstained from the second vote. So did non-permanent members Denmark, Greece and Slovenia. The votes, which came on the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, illustrate once more the deepening divide among Western allies as President Donald Trump overturns US support for Ukraine, signalling a departure from long-standing foreign policy.

The Trump administration has sidelined Kyiv and Europe as it has launched talks with Moscow on a potential peace deal. Meanwhile, the US president has intensified criticism of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. — Aljazeera

Court upholds arrest warrants for KP CM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad District and Sessions Court has upheld the non-bailable arrest warrants for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in the audio leak case.

The hearing was conducted by Additional Sessions Judge Abdul Ghafoor Kakar, but Ali Amin Gandapur did not appear before the court. His lawyer, Raja Zahoor ul Hassan Advocate, appeared on his behalf, while co-accused Asad Farooq attended the hearing and marked his presence. The court maintained Gandapur's arrest warrants and adjourned the case. The next hearing is scheduled for March 6. The case against Ali Amin Gandapur is registered at Golra Police Station.

Capital punishment demanded

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The mother of slain youth Mustafa Amir, alongside a social welfare organization, staged a protest at Karachi's Teen Talwar to demand justice for her brutally killed son. Mustafa Amir was kidnapped and allegedly murdered by his friends in Karachi's DHA on January 6.

2024 deadliest year for children crossing English Channel

LONDON: A record number of children died in the English Channel trying to reach the UK last year, with the route witnessing its highest-ever fatality figures. The Missing Person's Project of the UN's International Organization for Migration recorded 82 people dying in the Channel — one of the world's busiest sea lanes — of whom 14 were minors.

The 82 deaths in 2024, which officials say are likely an underestimate of the true total, are more than three times the number from the previous year. In the period spanning 2018 to 2024, child deaths in the Channel never exceeded five fatalities in a single year.

Not all of the children who died making the crossing in 2024 have been identified. However, those named include 14-year-old Obada Abd Rabbo from Syria and his compatriot Mohamed Al-Jbawi, 16, both of whom died on Jan. 14. Several Iraqi children are also known to have died

making the trip, including 7-year-old Rola Al-Mayali, who was on a boat carrying her and her family which capsized in a canal approaching the Channel.

Seven-year-old Sara Al-Ashimi, also from Iraq, drowned on April 23. The youngest victim — Maryam Bahez, who was just a month old — died on Oct. 17 after falling from her father's hands in an overcrowded boat. Her family was from Iraqi Kurdistan. The IOM warned that even children who survive the journey are often left vulnerable when arriving in the UK, with many separated from their parents.

Christa Rottensteiner, chief of mission for the IOM in the UK, told The Guardian: "The record high number of children who died in the English Channel last year is a wake-up call that more needs to be done. "For those whose nationality is known, you can see that they are from war-torn countries or extremely volatile contexts.

"More safe and regular routes are urgently needed, and the right support need to be in place for separated children looking for their families." Dr. Wanda Wyporska, CEO of Safe Passage International, told The Guardian: "Crossing the Channel in these small and overcrowded boats is a terrifying experience no child should have to go through. "Young people we support have shared heart-breaking descriptions with us. They thought they were going to die, have been hospitalised with painful petrol burns from broken engines, and were petrified of falling into the water as they couldn't swim.

"We know children are often deeply traumatised from this journey, and it can take a long time for them to be able to talk about their frightening ordeal in these boats. "It's horrifying so many children have died on this unnecessary journey. This is a clear consequence of the lack of safe routes which would save children's lives." — Arab News



PESHAWAR: A motorcyclist on way holding umbrella during rain at Saddar Road.

PHC seeks response regarding General Office Act

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Tariq Afridi, has issued a notice to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, seeking a response regarding the amendment to the Advocate General Office Act related to the appointment of law officers, on Tuesday.

The petitioner, Nasrullah, has challenged the amendment, arguing that it is unconstitutional and illegal. The petitioner's lawyer, Sultan Muhammad Khan Advocate, argued that the provincial government had amended the Act related to the appointment of

law officers, which is illegal.

During the hearing, Sultan Muhammad Khan Advocate informed the court that the petitioner had challenged the amendment to the Act, which was made retroactive to 2014. The lawyer argued that the amendment was made to remove law officers from the Service of Pakistan, which is illegal.

The lawyer claimed that the amendment was made to protect the provincial government's MNA, Sahil Sultan. Sultan was elected as an MNA from Swat's NA-4 constituency and had previously served as a law officer in the Advocate General's office.

The lawyer argued that

Sahil Sultan had taken part in the election before completing his required service as a law officer, which is illegal. The petitioner had approached the Election Commission, which had initiated proceedings against Sahil Sultan.

The lawyer claimed that the provincial government had amended the Act to protect Sahil Sultan. The amendment, which was made retroactive to 2014, is illegal and unconstitutional. The lawyer requested the court to declare the amendment null and void and to suspend its implementation until the petition is decided. The court has sought a response from the provincial government and has directed them to file a reply.