

Ruet body to meet today
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee will meet on the evening of Friday, February 28 (29th Shaban) in Peshawar to sight the moon for Ramazan-ul-Mubarak 1446 AH. Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad will preside over the meeting. Aiming for a unified start to the holy month across Pakistan, the government has convened meeting in Peshawar.



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Pakistan, UAE sign five accords

PM, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi resolve to enhance relations

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates on Thursday signed five accords to boost bilateral cooperation in different fields including banking, railways, mining and infrastructural investment.

The documents were signed during the first official visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to Pakistan, at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The crown prince and the prime minister witnessed the ceremony as the officials from both sides exchanged the pre-signed documents of agreements and Memorandums of Understanding for cooperation in various fields.

Federal cabinet members and Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and members of the UAE delegation were also present. Both countries signed an agreement to promote bilateral cooperation in the field of banking. Secretary Finance Imdadullah Bosal and CEO & MD of IHC Syed Basar Shueb exchanged the documents.

The two sides also signed another agreement to boost cooperation in the field of mining. The CEO of Pakistan Railways Amir Ali Baloch and CEO Ethihad Rail Shadi Malik exchanged the documents for two MOUs for cooperation in the field of railways. Similarly, Secretary Board of Investment Nadeem Chaudhary and CEO AD Ports Capt. Muhammad Juma Al Shamisi exchanged the documents for an MoU in the field of infrastructural investment.

Meanwhile, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Council Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al

Nahyan called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif during his official visit to Pakistan and discussed matters of bilateral interest.

This was the first official visit of Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in his capacity as Crown Prince. The Prime Minister warmly welcomed the Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince while reaffirming Pakistan's resolve to further strengthen its historic and fraternal bonds between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. One on one meeting was followed by the delegation level talks.

Recalling his most productive meeting with His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE in Abu Dhabi earlier this month, the Prime Minister said that it was a matter of huge satisfaction that the two countries were now working more closely than ever before, to transform their excellent political ties into a mutually beneficial economic partnership.

The Prime Minister told that during his recent visit to Uzbekistan the project of Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Railway Line was discussed and Uzbekistan showed keen interest in the project. He further said that the project will benefit the ports of Gwadar and Abu Dhabi and would prove to be a game changer for the whole region.

The Prime Minister lauded the U.A.E.'s consistent and strong support for Pakistan in various fields, including at difficult times. He deeply appreciated the keen interest shown by the U.A.E. in expanding its investment portfolio in Pakistan and remarked that the recent successful investment initiatives between various Pakistani entities and Abu Dhabi Ports were a shining example of this

robust and ever-expanding cooperation.

Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed, who was accompanied by a delegation comprising senior officials and business leaders, thanked the Prime Minister and reaffirmed the U.A.E.'s steadfast support for Pakistan's economic development and prosperity. On this occasion, both leaders also witnessed the exchange of several MoUs and agreements between the two sides. The MoUs/Agreements were signed in the fields of banking, mining, infrastructure development and railways.

Meanwhile in a post on X, the PM said, "Honoured to welcome HH Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Council, today. We held the most fruitful discussions and resolved to further strengthen our excellent bilateral ties, through enhanced trade, investment & energy cooperation. With the encouragement and support of the UAE's Royal family, Pakistan-UAE ties are growing from strength to strength!"

The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was given a guard of honour as he arrived at the PM House to meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. On his arrival at the venue of the formal welcome reception, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the crown prince.

The national anthems of Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates were played as the guest stood at the salute dias along with Prime Minister Shehbaz. The smartly-turned out contingents of the armed forces presented a guard of honour which the crown prince reviewed.



ISLAMABAD: Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman Abu Dhabi Executive Council, Sheikh Khaled bin Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

PM pays tribute to armed forces

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has paid tribute to the courage, professionalism and spirit of sacrifice of the Pakistani Armed Forces on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of Operation Swift Retort.

In his message on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of Operation Swift Retort, the Prime Minister said that six years ago, on this day in 2019, the Pakistan Air Force sent a clear message to the enemy that Pakistan is fully capable of protecting its borders. He said by giving a befitting reply to India's aggression in the region, our armed forces proved that our soldiers are always ready for the security of Pakistan.

The Prime Minister said that the Pakistani armed forces have made great sacrifices for the security of the country, which the Pakistani nation can never forget. He said Pakistan has always strived to promote regional peace, but whenever an attempt was made to attack Pakistan's national security and stability, the entire nation became united like an iron wall.

Meanwhile, in their messages the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Services Chiefs have paid tribute to the unwavering courage, professionalism, and sacrifices of Pakistan's Armed Forces on the occasion of the 6th anniversary of Operation Swift Retort. According to ISPR, Operation Swift Retort was a resolute and measured response to India's unwarranted aggression, reaffirming Pakistan's unyielding commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

They reiterated their steadfast commitment to ensuring Pakistan's national security and stability while continuing efforts to foster regional peace. They reaffirmed that Pakistan's Armed Forces remain ever vigilant and fully prepared to counter any threat to the nation, upholding the trust and confidence reposed in them by the people of Pakistan.

New federal ministers take oath

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday administered oath of office to new federal ministers and ministers of state at a swearing-in ceremony here at the Presidency.

The event began with the playing of the national anthem followed by recitation from the Holy Quran. Leadership of mainstream political parties, parliamentarians and senior government officials attended the

event. The newly sworn-in federal ministers include Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Khalid Hussain Magsi, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, Muhammad Mueen Wattoo, Muhammad Junaid Anwar, Muhammad Raza Hayat Haraj, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Rana Mubashar Iqbal, and Syed Mustafa Kamal.

The ministers of state who took the oath include Maikil Rasheed Ahmed Khan, Aqeel Malik, Bilal Azhar Kayani, Kesoo Mal Kheal Das, Mohammad Awn Saqlain, Mukhtar Ahmad Malik, Talal Chaudhry, and Wajih Qamar.

PM's advisors Dr Syed Tauqir Hussain Shah, Muhammad Ali and Pervez Khattak, and Special Assitants Haroon Akhtar, Huzaifa Rehman, Mubarak Zeb, and Talha Burki also took oath of office.

Opposition's anti-govt moot calls for dialogue

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP), a multi-party opposition alliance, on Thursday stressed the need for a national dialogue to steer the country out of the economic and political crises amid "worsening" situation.

In their joint declaration issued after the conclusion of the two-day grand moot in the federal capital, the opposition parties stated: "The country's deteriorating situation demands a joint strategy to stabilise Pakistan through national dialogue."

The opposition's two-day conference held with TTAP chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai in the chair at a local hotel in Islamabad. The solution to the country's problems lies in rule of law and supremacy of the Constitution, it added.

The moot held the "rigged" February 8, 2024 general elections responsible for the ongoing economic, political and social crises facing the country. "Current parliament has no moral, political and legal standing," read the statement. The opposition's moot demanded to abolish all amendments that contradict the spirit of the Constitution. The conference called the "rampant violation of constitutional and human rights" a complete negation of the rule of law in the country.

Referring to the crackdown on the opposition parties, the moot asserted that the violation of "human rights" was proof of the "fascism" of the incumbent government. "The country's Constitution does not allow any Pakistani citizen to be harassed or arrested for any political activity," the declaration added.

The opposition parties demanded the incumbent government release all the political prisoners in the country. It also urged the federal government to revoke recent amendments to the Peca (Amendment) Act, 2025. It further said that the water resources should be distributed among provinces in accordance with the 1991 water agreement.

Fresh and transparent elections was the sole solution to the country's current crisis, read the joint declaration. Addressing the conference, SIC chief Sahibzada Hamid Raza condemned the attempts to obstruct the event, saying that efforts were made to prevent the gathering from taking place.

He criticised the restrictions on political discourse, remarking that even a small group of individuals can no longer hold discussions in the capital. Raza highlighted that the attendees included members of the National Assembly and Senate. Expressing his concern over the state of democracy, he said that it was at least reassuring that voices advocating for constitutional supremacy were still being raised.

PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan claimed that the people have risen and their voices cannot be silenced. He declared the opposition's conference a success, highlighting the growing public dissent against the current administration. Gohar, speaking to journalists in the federal capital, stressed the need for judicial independence and the rule of law, emphasising that a fair and impartial judiciary is crucial for democracy.

He revealed that there had been a suggestion to hold the conference at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House, but the committee decided on the current venue. He clarified that this movement is not about revolution but about amplifying the people's voice, which has already gained momentum.

Criticising the government, he remarked that those in power lack public support and legitimacy. Former senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, while addressing the opposition parties' conference, criticised the government for suppressing dissent and restricting political freedoms.

He said that independent thought could not be silenced and vowed not to allow such restrictions. Khokhar accused the authorities of withholding Sindh's water rights and denying the province its due share. Condemning the suppression of opposition voices, he said that constitutional violations were ongoing. He also criticised the attempts to prevent the conference.

Trade at Torkham affects \$9m in six days

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Trade worth of approximately nine million dollars has been affected in last six days as the Pak-Afghan sharing border; Torkham remained suspended for the sixth consecutive day for all kind of movement due to Afghanistan construction new post in the disputed area along the crossing, the custom official informed.

He added that border blockade restricted all trade activities including export import and pedestrian crossing at the border. Mujib Shinwari, President All Torkham Clearing Agents Association said that \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million loss daily was in progress in the form of export.

In the same way in import 500 million rupees loss in revenue was inflicted to the national exchequer, he remarked. Former President of Sarhad Chamber of commerce and Industry Zahid Shinwari said that it was ironic that more than 1.1 billion rupees loss daily to Pakistan was in progress in spite of the deteriorated economic condition of the country.

KP unveils Ramazan relief package

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Thursday announced the distribution of Ramazan and Eid packages this year as well.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Adviser Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said that the provincial government had decided to provide a Ramazan and Eid packages again this year, which would be given to deserving families in the province, adding that each deserving family would be provided with Rs10,000. He stated that the relief package would be provided to more than 1 million deserving families in the province.

He further mentioned that the relief package would be distributed to the deserving families through banks and EasyPaisa before the 15th of Ramazan, and the government would bear any additional transfer charges to ensure that the full amount reached the deserving individuals.

Saif went on to say that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur had directed that the relief package be delivered to the deserving individuals with complete

transparency. "The Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also instructed that orphans and those affected by terrorism be given priority for receiving the package," he added.

Meanwhile, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, attended the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected cabinet of the District Press Club Karak in Peshawar and administered the oath to its members.

Addressing the gathering, he highlighted the significance of journalism and stated that a free and responsible media plays a pivotal role in strengthening the foundations of democracy. He emphasized that journalists have an indispensable role in countering extremist ideologies and promoting social harmony.

A responsible and independent media, he noted, not only provides the public with accurate information but also shapes public opinion and fosters a positive narrative. He urged journalists to strengthen social cohesion through fact-based reporting and discourage elements that spread discord and misinformation.

formation.

Barrister Dr. Saif also shed light on the government's ongoing initiatives for the welfare of journalists, reaffirming the commitment to providing resources for the growth of independent and professional journalism. He stressed that all possible measures are being taken to equip media professionals with modern skills and safeguard their rights. He commended the journalists of Karak for their dedication to highlighting public issues, constructively critiquing government policies, and contributing to positive change.

He further assured that the provincial government would extend full cooperation in addressing the challenges faced by journalists. The funds allocated for the welfare of media professionals would be utilized transparently and effectively to help them stay aligned with modern technology and evolving industry demands. He reiterated that an informed and empowered media not only helps to steer government policies in the right direction but also acts as a bridge between the public and the government.

KP govt launches financial assistance programs for orphans, widows

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has taken another revolutionary step towards the welfare of underprivileged and deserving segments of society by launching two major financial assistance programs—

"Roshan Mustaqbil Card" for orphaned children and "Sahara Card" for widows.

In this regard, a ceremony was held on Thursday at the Chief Minister's House Peshawar, where Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur formally inaugurated these programs. The event was attended by Provincial Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Secretary Social Welfare Department Syed Nazar Hussain Shah, and other relevant officials, as well as orphan children and widows.

Under the "Roshan Mustaqbil Card", orphaned children up to the age of 16 years were initially set to receive a monthly stipend of Rs 5,000. However, in a generous move, Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur

announced to double this amount. Priority in this program will be given to children who have lost both parents. In its initial phase, approximately 9,000 orphaned children will benefit from this initiative.

Similarly, the "Sahara Card" was designed to provide financial assistance to widows aged 45 years and above, offering a monthly stipend of 5,000 rupees. However, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur announced an increase in this amount as well, raising it to 10,000 rupees per month. Through this program, a total of 15,000 widows will receive financial support.

The funds under both programs will be disbursed by the 5th of each month through designated cards issued to the beneficiaries. An IT-based scoring system will be employed to screen and select eligible applicants, ensuring transparency and fairness in the distribution process.

While addressing the ceremony, Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur emphasized that PTI leader-

ship is committed to establishing a welfare state, where the well-being of vulnerable segments of society is a top priority. He stated that caring for the underprivileged is a fundamental duty of a welfare state and that his government is working tirelessly to fulfill this responsibility. "Those who think about the well-being of others are truly great people," the Chief Minister remarked, highlighting that the welfare of marginalized communities remains one of his government's foremost priorities.

He revealed that as soon as his government took office, a comprehensive data collection initiative was launched to identify and register deserving individuals. Based on this data, various welfare programs are now being introduced. "One of our first steps was to double the Zakat fund to ensure that maximum beneficiaries could receive assistance," he added.

The Chief Minister also announced that a database of special students in government educational institutions has been compiled, and soon, these stu-

dents will be provided with electric wheelchairs to facilitate their mobility. He reiterated that the launch of Roshan Mustaqbil Card and Sahara Card is a continuation of these efforts, aimed at alleviating financial burdens on disadvantaged families. The Chief Minister also urged well-off individuals to extend their support to those in need, especially during the holy month of Ramazan.

Furthermore, he encouraged the general public to monitor ongoing development and welfare projects in their respective areas, ensuring that resources are utilized fairly and effectively. "If the people unite and actively supervise public works, no one will be able to commit injustice," he asserted. The Chief Minister reaffirmed his government's commitment to ensuring that rightful beneficiaries receive their due share of resources. He urged the public to also play their part in helping the needy, emphasizing that through collective efforts, a prosperous and welfare-oriented society can be established.

Chinese envoy, KP CM discuss investment opportunities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, H.E Jiang Zaidong met with the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, on Thursday at the Rashakai Special Economic Zone and made discussion on investment opportunities in various sectors, including agriculture, energy, and mines & minerals. Both the dignitaries agreed to enhance cooperation between China and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in multiple fields. Relevant senior officials from the provincial government and the Chinese Embassy were also present on this occasion.

The Chief Minister invited the Chinese Ambassador to establish industrial units in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for solar systems manufacturing and value addition and finishing of minerals and said that vast investment opportunities are available in sectors such as mines and energy & power in the province. He added that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will warmly welcome Chinese investment in the province and would extend full support to investors. In his remarks, the Chief Minister said that the provincial government is working to provide industries with various incentives, including cheaper electricity adding that ongoing hydropower projects are expected to generate 800 megawatts of electricity by 2028, and a provincial transmission line is being laid to supply industries with electricity at cheaper rates.

Sindh cabinet approves Dow Science Foundation

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh cabinet has approved the establishment of the 'Dow Science Foundation' under the management of Dow Medical University, the transfer of Mehr Polytechnic Institute to ZBIST, the procurement of double-decker buses and additional electric buses, the automation of anti-narcotics records, the provision of free pink bus service for women, the installation of a transmission line to Dhabeji for the Karachi Water and Sewerage Project, the registration of double-cabin vehicles under a single category, and the review of costs for the Kalri Baghar Feeder and Keenjhar Lake expansion project under the K-4 initiative.

Addressing a press conference after the Sindh cabinet meeting, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that the meeting, chaired by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, approved the establishment of the 'Dow Science Foundation' under the management of Dow Medical University. Under this program, Dow Science Foundation Company will manufacture medicine, vaccines, and other forms of treatment against snake and rabid dog bites.

He added that the cabinet had approved the transfer of Mehr Polytechnic Institute to SZBIST, which will provide opportunities of employment and skill development for the youth of the area. Additionally, the Sindh cabinet decided to procure more buses for the people of Sindh, including the approval of double-decker buses. The meeting also reviewed and approved the cost of the Kalri Baghar Feeder and Keenjhar Lake expansion project under the K-4 initiative.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Sindh cabinet



has decided to automate the anti-narcotics record. He noted that previously, people registered double-cabin vehicles under commercial categories to evade taxes while using them for personal purposes. The cabinet has now abolished this practice, ensuring that all such vehicles will be registered under a single category, preventing tax evasion. Additionally, the Sindh cabinet approved allocating funds from the open auction of premium number plates for the construction of houses for flood victims. The Sindh government has decided that these funds will be directed to the Sindh People's Housing Scheme.

He stated that, for the first time in Pakistan's history, the process of issuing premium number plates had been initiated. He added that a number plate worth ten crores had already been sold. The Sindh cabinet has approved that the funds collected from this initiative will be allocated to the Sindh People's Housing Scheme.

Sharjeel Inam Memon revealed that the Sindh cabinet also agreed to purchase additional electric buses. He had reminded that when Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, for the first time as PM, visited Karachi, he had promised to provide 180 buses to Sindh during a meeting. In response, the Sindh government had pledged to match the number of buses provided by the federal government, requesting a total of 360 buses. However, despite the Prime Minister's promise, not a single bus was allocated to Sindh in the 2024-2025 budget. He added that the Sindh government has decided to write a letter to the Prime Minister, as a whole year has passed without the delivery of the promised buses. He reiterated that they will once again request the Prime Minister to honor his commitment to the people of Sindh and provide the pledged buses.

He stated that the Sindh government is investing \$1.6 billion in water

He stated that the government's primary focus is on providing relief to the people. The Sindh government is actively working across all key sectors to ensure that the public is provided with the best possible facilities.

In response to a question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that those responsible for inciting the arson and siege by Farooq Sattar and his party are now all in jail, so Farooq Sattar should be released. He added that if Farooq Sattar believes people support him, he should resign today and contest the elections tomorrow. "The truth will come out," he said. Memon further emphasized that Farooq Sattar may continue speaking, but his party has no political credibility.

In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon acknowledged the challenges faced in the Red Line BRT project, stating that the biggest challenge is the transfer of utilities. He explained that working in urban areas is particularly difficult due to the presence of these utilities.

In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that Salman Akram Raja is a very good lawyer, but questioned why he had forgotten the 2018 elections and the outcome of those elections, which brought Imran Khan to power. In response to a question, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that they are happy when the Chief Minister of any province does something good. However, he noted that 90 percent of the things in the Punjab Chief Minister's advertisement were based on future programs.

In response to a question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the federal government has written a letter to the Sindh government, stating that the deal made with the IMF must be followed, as the federal government is bound by it. He explained that the Sindh government

is taking difficult steps to benefit the farmers, with the aim of ensuring that farmers do not suffer and that the people receive affordable wheat. He mentioned that the government was advised not to increase the support price of wheat, while also being instructed to maintain a certain quantity of wheat. Protective measures are being taken for the wheat stored in godowns. However, he added that the Sindh Chief Minister and the Sindh government are very concerned for the farmers, especially with fears of a 20 percent decrease in wheat production this year. He reiterated that, despite the restrictions from the IMF, the Sindh government is seriously searching for more meaningful solutions for its farmers.

Responding to a question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that I have been forewarning about such cases as the Mustafa murder case during the past year. The drug situation is extremely dangerous. I urge parents to be vigilant about what their children are doing. It is heart-breaking that the son of an actor was arrested in a drug case. Akash Ansari was tragically killed in Hyderabad, and the accused in his murder was his own son. A child capable of killing and burning his parents in such a manner-what might they do to society? If parents remain silent or ignorant about their children's drug use, this amounts to criminal negligence. Similarly, if the relevant institutions are not taking action in the fight against drugs, this too is criminal negligence. Jobs, politics-everything else will continue, but drugs must be stopped first. Our society is creating suicide bombers and "zombies" due to drugs, individuals who can kill anyone at anytime, anywhere. Parents must keep their children away from drugs. It is impossible that parents don't notice the changes in their children's behavior. The entire society must unite to fight this scourge.

Wafaqi Mohtasib's team hold Khuli Katcheri

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: A Wafaqi Mohtasib's team comprising Advisor, Mr. Haroon Sikandar Pasha and Consultant, Mr. Khalid Sial held a Khuli Katcheri at Hazro, district Attock under the directions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, wherein they have heard complaints against the Federal Government agencies and passed on the spot instructions to the government officials for their speedy redressal. They have managed to redress a large number of complaints and provided relief to the people.

A large number of people turned up at the Khuli Katcheri to air their grievances against Federal Government agencies like

'World Civil Defence Day' observed

F.P. Report

SARGODHA: A special event was held at Government Ambala Muslim Graduate College, Sargodha, to commemorate World Civil Defense Day on Thursday.

Principal Professor Dr. Muhammad Azhar Abbas addressed the gathering, stressing the critical need for a strong civil defense framework. He pointed out that several Muslim countries had experienced devastating losses due to the lack of a robust civil defense mechanism. Dr. Abbas further highlighted that Pakistan's stability was directly linked to the military mindset and training of its citizens, calling for civil defense volunteers to be trained in every household.

He underscored that national security was a collective responsibility. The event was attended by several notable figures, including Chief Warden Dr. Haroon Rashid Tabassum, Civil Defense Officer Ms. Saira Rafiq Khan, Professor Shahid Islam Danish, Additional Chief Dr. Chaudhry Hashmat Mahmood, Deputy Chief Warden Professor Rana Ashfaq, Publicity Deputy Chief Warden Malik Asad Abbas, Divisional Warden Mehr Muhammad Yousif, Muhammad Waqas Qadri, Muhammad Ali Tabassum, and Hafiz Muhammad Asasah. The program concluded with a Civil Defense Rally, echoing with patriotic chants of "Pakistan Zindabad!", reinforcing the spirit of national service and unity.

South Punjab youth job fair held

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHARAN: Lodhran Pilot Project (LPP), in collaboration with Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Islamia University of Bahawalpur, WHH and TEVTA successfully organized the South Punjab Youth Job Fair at Bahauddin Zakariya University's Lodhran Campus.

The event attracted a large number of young graduates and job seekers from various districts of South Punjab, providing them with valuable employment opportunities and career guidance across multiple industries. Several organizations and companies set up stalls at the job fair, offering internships and employment opportunities. The event's chief guest, Chairperson of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), Madam Gul Meena Bilal, praised LPP's efforts in connecting the youth of Lodhran and South Punjab with industries and businesses.

She highlighted the significant role LPP has played in training young men, women, and transgender individuals in various fields, ensuring their professional growth and job placement. "LPP's commitment to skill development is commendable. Not only has it trained thousands of young individuals, but it has also created employment opportunities for them," she said.

"Following Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision, our institution is dedicated to providing technical training to people from all walks



of life, including persons with disabilities and the transgender community. We will continue to support LPP wherever needed." She also welcomed LPP's announcement of launching its new initiative, LPP Tech, to further enhance technical education. Speaking at the event, LPP's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Abdul Saboor, expressed his delight at hosting the first-ever job fair of South Punjab in Lodhran.

"This initiative aligns with Jahangir Khan Tareen's vision of empowering the youth by providing them with opportunities to become self-sufficient. Over the past few years, LPP has trained more than 13,000 individuals in technical skills, enabling them to secure better career prospects." Dr. Saboor extended his gratitude to Bahauddin Zakariya University, Islamia University of Bahawalpur, WHH, TEVTA, and various district administration departments, whose collaboration made the job fair possible.

In a special message, LPP's founder, Jahangir Khan Tareen, emphasized LPP's pivotal role in promoting technical education and vocational training in South Punjab. "I urge the youth to focus on skill development alongside their academic education. We remain committed to supporting young individuals in their education, welfare, and employment," he stated. The event also featured speeches from Project Coordinator WHH Muhammad Akmal, BZU Lodhran Campus Director Dr. Shabbir Ahmed, Director of Social Work Department IUB Dr. Asif Naveed Ranjha, Deputy Director NAVTTC Muhammad Abu Bakar, TEVTA Bahawalpur Director Engineer Muhammad Rashid, TEVTA Rahim Yar Khan Director Rao Zulfiqar, and other esteemed guests. The South Punjab Youth Job Fair served as a vital platform for young job seekers, bridging the gap between academia and industry, and fostering employment growth in the region.

Azerbaijan Language Center hosts exhibition

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) organized an open exhibition to commemorate the Khojaly Massacre, one of the most tragic events in Azerbaijani history.

Mr. Tamerlan Khalilov, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, delivered the opening remarks. He expressed his gratitude to NUML leadership for facilitating the event and warmly welcomed the presence of faculty members and students. He spoke about the deep-rooted brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, highlighting how Pakistan has always stood by Azerbaijan, especially during the First and Second Karabakh Wars. He acknowledged Pakistan's unwavering support, noting that it was one of the few countries that never recognized Armenia as a state.



During his address, Mr. Khalilov also discussed the significance of the official visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to Azerbaijan. He emphasized the importance of further strengthening the already strong ties between the two nations, particularly in areas of mutual interest. He noted that such high-level visits play a crucial role in consolidating the partnership between the two countries, fostering greater diplomatic, economic, and cultural cooperation.

Speaking about the Khojaly Massacre, he highlighted the brutality inflicted

Latif Khosa visits Amir's home

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and lawyer Latif Khosa visited Mustafa Amir's family and expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the brutal murder of the boy.

After the meeting with parents, Khosa talked to the media and lashed out at the authorities. He said, "Had this happened in another country, the provincial home minister would have resigned by now. Instead, in Pakistan, only SHOs and SSPs are suspended while real accountability is ignored."

The PTI leader also criticized Karachi police for failing to recover Mustafa Amir in time, calling their delay a major factor in his tragic murder. On this occasion, Mustafa Amir's father said that the AVCC police investigation officer is investigating the case and no interference is being made in it.

پی اے ایف بیس رسالہ

ضرورت برائے سویلین انجینیئرنگ اسکورز

میدیکل اسکولوں، بی اے ایف بیس، رسالہ پریس سویلین انجینیئرنگ اسکورز کی عادی معاہدے کی بنیاد پر ضرورت ہے۔ خواہش مند حضرات اپنی درخواست، قومی شناختی کارڈ کی ایک کاپی اور درود قضاویہ کے ہمراہ انجینیئرنگ انکسٹن، میڈیکل اسکولوں، بی اے ایف بیس، رسالہ پریس کو شریں ہفتہ 08 مارچ 2025 تک جمع کروائیں اور پریس 10 مارچ 2025 کو درخواستوں کے لیے تفریف لائیں۔

مزید معلومات کے لیے 0321-9745361 پر رابطہ کریں۔

سینئر میڈیکل اسکولوں، بی اے ایف بیس، رسالہ پریس، انجینیئرنگ، 3905

PAKISTAN AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

پاکستان ایئر پورٹس اتھارٹی

INVITATION TO BID

1. Bids are invited in accordance with **PPRA Rule No. 36(a)** from contractors / firms having engineering expertise / resources and valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in at-least C-6 or above Category with relevant code i.e. CE-10 for the following works:

Name of Work	Earnest Money	Date and time of submission	Date and time of opening
PROVISION OF CAR PARKING SHEDS FOR PAA OFFICIALS AND MT VEHICLES AT BKIA PESHAWAR	Rs. 325,000/-	18-03-2025	18-03-2025

2. Bids must be submitted electronically by uploading as per conditions set out in Bidding documents and guidelines provided by PPRA available on PPRA E-PAD System <http://eprocure.gov.pk> before closing time & date.

3. Following mandatory documents to be submitted with the proposal as per manners described in the Instructions to Bidders:

- Original Bid Security shall reach office of the undersigned prior to opening date & time. Bids received without original security shall not be entertained / Earnest Money furnished in accordance with Clause IB.12 & IB.15. A Scanned copy shall be uploaded on EPADS.
- Company Profile.
- Certificate of incorporation /Memorandum & Article of Association or Partnership Deed / Sole Proprietorship etc. (as applicable) (Attested by Notary Public / Oath Commissioner)
- Active Taxpayer Status (ATL), NTN Certificate
- Professional Tax Certificates issued by the provincial department or undertaking on non-judicial stamp paper (Attested by Notary Public / Oath Commissioner)
- Valid Certification/ License by the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) i.e. C-6 (or above) with PEC relevant Specialization Codes CE-10.
- Affidavit on non-judicial stamp paper to the effect that the firm has not been blacklisted by any Government, Semi Government and Autonomous Body (Attested by Notary Public / Oath Commissioner)
- Details of any arbitration / litigation of similar proceeding against any Govt. / Autonomous / Private body showing extent and results (Attested by Notary Public / Oath Commissioner)
- Previous experience of at least one similar nature works in last 05 years of at least 05 (M) worth.
- Power of Attorney in accordance with Clause IB.14.5
- Bidding Documents with each page to be signed and stamped (both Top & Bottom) by Authorized Representative of the Bidder.

4. PAA reserves all the rights to accept or reject any or all the tenders for sufficient and cogent reasons which will be communicated to bidder on request.

5. **WARNING:** "Pay Order / Bank Drafts or any other financial instruments to be submitted by Bidders and Contractors as "Tender Cost", Earnest Money / Bid Security and Bank Guarantee, if found fake or dishonored by issuing bank / financial institution at any pre / post contract stage of the case, would call for blacklisting and legal action as per law of the land".

(DIVISIONAL ENGINEER ES CIVIL)
PAA BKIA PESHAWAR, TELEPHONE # 091-5253403
ADDRESS: OFFICE OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER ES CIVIL BKIA PESHAWAR, NEW OFFICE BLOCK LEVEL-3

PHC summons record against arrest without warrant

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Acting Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah has summoned the record from the jail administration and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) during the hearing of a petition against the arrest of a resident of Peshawar by the police without a warrant. The resident was accused of murder in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and had fled to Pakistan, on Thursday.

During the hearing, the petitioner's lawyer, Syed Nabi, and the Additional Advocate General, Muhammad Inam Khan Yousafzai, appeared before the court. The lawyer informed the court that the petitioner's son, Haris Mahmood, was illegally detained by the Peshawar police without a warrant. He stated that no Red Warrant was issued, and no other legal action was taken. The accused was allegedly involved in a murder case in the UAE and had escaped to Pakistan.

The lawyer argued that the police had wrongly detained Haris Mahmood, as they did not have the authority to arrest him without a warrant. He claimed that the police had exceeded their powers.

The court's assistant, Barrister Emir Ullah Chamkani, informed the court that a Green Warrant was issued against the accused, and the police had arrested him and produced him before a judicial magistrate, who sent him to jail.

The petitioner's lawyer maintained that a Green Warrant only authorizes the identification and search of the accused, whereas the police had exceeded their powers by arresting him. He further argued that the FIA's report did not mention the arrest, while the police had taken the accused into custody.

On the other hand, the Additional Advocate General, Muhammad Inam Khan Yousafzai, argued that the accused was arrested under Section 54, Sub-Section 7, which empowers the police to arrest wanted persons.

The court ordered the jail administration and the FIA to produce the record and adjourned the hearing till 25th March.

All MTI recruitments to be conducted through ETEA: Advisor Health

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to CM on Health Ihtesham Ali has announced that all Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) in the province will now conduct their recruitments exclusively through the Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA).

Ihtesham Ali directed all MTIs to process their hiring through ETEA, emphasizing that no private or other testing agencies will be accepted for recruitments in the health sector. "The practice of using multiple testing agencies in the Health Department ends today," he declared.

He further stated that ETEA is conducting computer-based testing, which ensures transparency and fairness in the recruitment process. Highlighting concerns over private agencies, he pointed out that some organizations obtain recruitment tenders and appoint candidates of their choice, compromising merit.

"I am not here to recruit my own people; I am here to ensure a merit-based system," Ellhtesham Ali asserted, reaffirming that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has issued clear instructions to uphold merit in all hiring processes.

The advisor concluded by announcing that, effective immediately, all recruitments in the sub-institutions of the Health Department will be conducted solely through ETEA.

Minerals exploration – A key to country’s economic growth

PESHAWAR (APP): With deposits ranging from gold and copper to coal and salt, Pakistan has vast deposits of minerals offering opportunities to stimulate its economy and progress of people, once this area is fully focused to exploit this potential.

Key regions including Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh hold the promise of significant economic prosperity through mineral exploration as Balochistan's Reko Diq copper and gold project, with reserves estimated at over \$260 billion, is a prime example of the wealth lying beneath the surface.

Similarly, the Thar coalfields—one of the largest untapped coal reserves globally—represent an opportunity to meet domestic energy needs and cater to growing export demands besides gems, granite and marble of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

These deposits were there since centuries before they came to fore after mining and drilling in different areas of these provinces just a couple of decades back. But, even after knowing about these deposits, the country is still in planning, tendering or bidding phase in many cases.

In some instances like Reko Diq different hiccups and litigation between the local authorities as well as the mining company, delayed the mining process even when it was direly needed in view of prevailing economic challenges.

So to say, despite being a home to precious minerals worth trillions of dollars, respective governments failed to fully unlock these natural treasures.

Unfortunately, our mining industry remained largely underdeveloped due to infrastructure challenges, inadequate investment and complicated regulatory mechanisms.

A crucial aspect of this revitalization is China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that seeks to enhance infrastructure in resource-rich areas, improving access to mineral deposits and facilitating mining operations.

Besides China, countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and many others are mulling investment in this sector and these overtures would not only benefit the exploring companies but also help improve economic conditions indigenously.

"The government's move to modernize the mining sector by offering tax incentives and streamlining regulations is expected to draw both local and foreign investors," remarked an economist Prof Dr Naemur Rehman Khattak.

He said Pakistan's revised mineral exploration laws aim to encourage wider participation, creating opportunities for both large-scale corporations and smaller mining ventures.

"Projects like Reko Diq and Thar coal would not only bolster exports, particularly of coal and precious metals but also generate thousands of jobs in sectors like mining, infrastructure development and related industries like cement and steel production," Prof. Naem said.

Beyond traditional mining, he claimed that Pakistan's gemstone industry holds export potential estimated at US\$ 32 billion.

Recent efforts to attract foreign investment and the government's focus on revitalizing the sector, however, signaled a shift towards realizing the full potential of these resources and consistency of policies in these sectors are hoped to bring about positive changes.

"Besides precious minerals, our marble, granite and gems industry also offer magnanimous profit opportunities," stated Faraz Ahmed, a marble miner from Peshawar.

"Profitability in marble industry is an easy going task as an investor with basic know-how and Rs three million investment could earn Rs 10 million annually."

But, he emphasized use of modern techniques and machinery to fully benefit from this sector as there is bulk demand of marble being explored from Mohmand, Swat and Buner districts, within the country and abroad. "At present, many miners rely on outdated equipment and unskilled labor leading to significant resource waste. If we shift to modern techniques from traditional methods of exploration, the dividend would be much more."

Being Khyber Pakhtunkhwa specific, the province has vast deposits of minerals including 14 trillion tons of marble, limestone, dolomite and gemstones and according to the KP Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BIT), the province's marble production has been increasing steadily, although export numbers still lag behind the true potential.

"We have introduced a Mining Cadastre Portal to improve transparency and ease the investment process," informed Junaid Khan, Director General of Mines and Minerals Department.

"Mapping and exploration of mineral sites in regions like Chitral, Orakzai and Kurram is underway with the help of Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP)," he said. "The government is also working to establish a gemstone laboratory to improve mineral testing process with the help of modern equipment."

The province has ambitious plans like exploring lithium in Chitral and rare metallic minerals in Orakzai besides improvements in mining safety standards. Besides creation of new industrial clusters for mineral extraction, the government is also constructing Mohmand Marble City on 350 acres and similar projects have been planned for Buner. KP's growing marble and mining sectors are further supported by Rashakai and Nowshera Special Economic Zones (SEZs) where portions of land are allocated for marble and mining units.

Since the country is in dire need of revenue generation and foreign exchange earning to break the debt shackles, investment in minerals and mining sectors would be of great importance to fully tap this potential, accelerate economic growth and reduce dependence on foreign aid.

Now, with the right policies and investments, Pakistan's mineral wealth can serve as a cornerstone for its future economic stability and improve the living conditions of its people.

Hum Log Peshawar organizes free medical camp at Edwardes College

PESHAWAR (APP): Hum Log Peshawar, a non governmental organization on Thursday successfully organized a free medical camp at Edwardes College Peshawar to support the well-being of the college staff.

The camp provided medical consultations in various fields, including ophthalmology, general medicine, dentistry, and dermatology. More than 50 staff members benefitted from this initiative, receiving professional healthcare services.

The Principal of Edwardes College, Sir Shujat Ali Khan, welcomed the medical team and Hum Log Peshawar representatives to his office, expressing his gratitude for their dedicated efforts in supporting the college staff.

He commended their commitment to community welfare and extended his heartfelt thanks.

Augustin Jacob, a social activist and chairman of Hum Log Peshawar, also thanked the principal, college staff, and doctors for their invaluable contributions.

The medical team, including Dr Maraj Aleem John, Dr Muhammad Junied Qadri, and Dr Qurti ul Ain, was acknowledged for their time and professional service.

As a token of appreciation, Augustin Jacob and the Principal of Edwardes College presented shields to the doctors, recognizing their commitment to healthcare and social service.

The event was a testament to the importance of community-driven initiatives in promoting health and well-being.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chairing a comprehensive briefing on the Elementary and Secondary Education Department.

Chief Secretary chairs briefing on Elementary and Secondary Education Department

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chaired a comprehensive briefing on the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, focusing on key issues such as school infrastructure, teacher recruitment, student enrollment, and the challenge of out-of-school children. The meeting also reviewed the progress of the Education Monitoring Authority and deliberated on performance criteria for District Education Officers (DEOs) to enhance accountability and efficiency within the department.

During the session, a strategic discussion took place regarding ongoing and future reform initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education in the province. The Chief Secretary underscored that access to quality education is the fundamental right of every child and reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening the education sector through well-planned reforms.

Chief Secretary issued directives for strict departmental action against any teacher found using political influence for personal gains. It was decided that a meeting will be convened with District Education Officers to finalize a plan ensuring transparency in board examinations. A dedicated reform working group will be tasked with developing a comprehensive strategy, complete with an action plan and progress tracking mechanisms.

Emphasizing the importance of education as the backbone of a strong and progressive society, the Chief Secretary reiterated the provincial government's commitment to enhancing the quality of education. He stressed the need for a structured and result-oriented reform strategy to ensure a sustainable improvement in the education system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Frontier Foundation services lauded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation comprising of retired bureaucrats, judges, journalists, businessmen, and social workers visited the Frontier Foundation and Welfare Hospital. The delegation was given a detailed tour of the hospital by Dr. Fakhar Zaman, and they were briefed on the facilities provided to patients, on Thursday. Chairman of the Foundation, Sahibzada Haleem, thanked the visitors and said that the foundation has been providing free treatment, blood, and food to thousands of patients suffering from thalassemia, hemophilia, and blood cancer since 2003. He added that special attention is being given to prevent these deadly diseases, and awareness campaigns are being launched to educate the public. Sahibzada Haleem further said that the main reason for the spread of these diseases is intermarriage within families. Currently, the foundation is treating around 4,000 patients. The visitors praised the services of the foundation and expressed their willingness to work together. The Frontier Foundation and Welfare Hospital is a non-profit organization that provides free medical treatment and other facilities to patients suffering from various diseases.

Uroosha defends M. Phil thesis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The review meeting of the Annual Development Program for Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives for the fiscal year 2025-26 was held in Peshawar under the chairmanship of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives, Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai. The meeting was attended by Director Livestock Extension Dr. Asal Khan, Director Livestock Research Dr. Ijaz Ali, Director Livestock Research Dr. Khosro Kaleem, Cooperative Registrar Muhammad Ishaq, Director Fisheries, and other relevant officers.

During the meeting, multi-billion-rupee development projects under the Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives were discussed. The annual development program for livestock includes a project to establish a poultry hatchery to increase chicken production, enabling the province to become self-sufficient in the poultry sector.

Provincial Minister for Livestock, Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai, highly appreciated the flagship research activity on Saanen goats at the Charbagh Research Station in Swat and directed that the scope of research on these high-yielding, world-renowned goats be further expanded.

The meeting also discussed in detail the issues faced by the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Swat.

Observations from the Planning and Development Department regarding the project were also discussed. Provincial Minister Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai directed the Project Director to raise the issue with the Planning and Development Department.

Regarding fisheries, it was informed that the annual development program includes four fisheries projects, including the establishment of a Biodiversity Center, a Fisheries Hatchery in D.I. Khan, and the completion of ERA schemes.

Provincial Minister Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai directed the cooperative officials to restore the Frontier Provincial Cooperative Bank Limited (FPCBL) keeping in view the needs of the farming community. He instructed that all issues to be brought to his notice so they can be resolved promptly and effectively.

He directed the Registrar of Cooperative Societies Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to approach the Planning and Development Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to convene a meeting of the committee formed for the restoration of FPCBL. Regarding the Honey Filtration Plant in Karak, he directed that practical steps be taken to install a solar system at the Honey Filtration Plant so that farmers can filter their raw honey locally at a lower cost.

Hotel associations delegation meets Speaker

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation comprising the Balakot Hotel Association, Naran Hotel Association, Galiyat Hotel Association, and the All Traders Federation met with the Speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Babar Saleem Swati, at the Speaker's Chamber today.

During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held on the challenges faced by the hotel industry. The delegation urged the Speaker to implement a uniform and simplified tax system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, similar to other provinces, to facilitate the business community. They also emphasized the need to expand the tax net while reducing tax rates, which would not only boost government revenue but also curb corruption and administrative issues.

The delegation strongly criticized the imposition of the "bed tax" from 2021 to 2024, arguing that it had been abolished through the Finance Bill. However, due to a misunderstanding by the Excise Department, hotel owners were still being issued heavy tax notices. They demanded the immediate removal of this unnecessary and duplicate tax, stating that it was increasing business costs and negatively impacting tourism.

Speaker Babar Saleem Swati assured the delegation that their concerns would be conveyed to the relevant authorities. He further stated that policy reviews would be conducted through the Assembly forum to ensure facilities and ease for the business community.

‘Two million educated individuals flee Pakistan’

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Muzzamil Aslam, revealed that according to the Bureau of Statistics, a staggering 63,000 individuals left Pakistan in January 2025 alone in search of employment opportunities.

At this rate, approximately 750,000 people are expected to migrate annually.

Mr. Aslam criticized the Prime Minister and ministers for celebrating unemployment and business closures instead of acknowledging their failures.

He pointed out that during the PDM and Shehbaz Sharif government's tenure, a massive 2 million people have migrated from Pakistan.

Advisor on finance termed this the largest migration in Pakistan's history, estimating that if these 2 million individuals send back just Rs. 75,000 monthly, the country receives approximately \$6.5 billion annually.

However, Aslam argued that this increase in remittances is not a sign of progress but rather a decline, emphasizing that 2 million educated and skilled individuals have left the country.

Mr. Aslam also highlighted that Pakistan's average annual growth rate over the past three years has been less than 1.5 percent, while the population growth rate stands at 2.5 percent.

ADP Review meeting reviews various projects

F.P. Report

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In brief

Man found dead in Mastung F.P. Report

QUETTA: A young man's lifeless body was discovered in the Lakha area of Mastung district, Balochistan, raising concerns and prompting a police investigation. According to police, the deceased, identified as Tanveer Ahmed Bangulzai, son of Muhammad Hussain Bangulzai, had suffered a fatal gunshot wound. His body was found near a road in the Lakha vicinity. Authorities shifted the body to Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Raisani Memorial Hospital in Mastung for necessary formalities. The local police were actively pursuing further investigation into the incident to uncover more details.

Educational reforms sought F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pushtunkhwa Students Organizations (PSO) today called on authorities to prioritize the overhaul of Balochistan's education sector, addressing teacher shortages and reviving non-functional schools. These demands were made during a demonstration organized by PSO outside Quetta Press Club as part of its school enrollment campaign. The campaign, under the motto "Every Child in School," aims to raise awareness about the importance of enrolling children in schools. PSO speakers emphasized to parents the critical need for their children to receive an education. The demonstration featured speeches from PSO Zonal Secretary Waris Afghan, Senior Zonal Deputy Secretary Muzamil Shah, District Secretary Baryal Khilji, and other representatives, all advocating for immediate action to ensure educational access for all children.

Young man found dead F.P. Report

PISHIN: The bullet riddled body of unidentified young man was found near Pishin in Balochistan province on Thursday. According to Levies, authorities are investigating the discovery of a bullet-riddled body of an unidentified young man recovered from the rain drain of Kala Batezai area of Pishin district, sparking concerns among local residents. The body was transported to Civil Hospital Pishin for medico-legal formalities and identification procedures. The Levies Station Kala Batezai has initiated further investigations into the incident, aiming to uncover the circumstances surrounding the death.

Murderer awarded death sentence F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: District & Sessions Judge Rehan Bashir awarded death sentence to an accused over killing his wife in the area of Saddar police station. According to the prosecution, accused Muhammad Shehzad resident of Chak No.215-RB had shot dead his wife Maria Maqsood over a domestic dispute on August 22, 2022. After observing evidence and witnesses, the learned judge awarded death penalty to accused Muhammad Shehzad under section 302-B of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and directed him to pay Rs.500,000/- as compensation to legal heirs of the deceased under section 544-A of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). The convict would have to undergo an additional imprisonment of six months if he failed to pay amount of the compensation.

Over 1000 teachers posts to be filled on merit in Lower Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: District Education Officer (DEO) Inayatullah Khan has announced that around 1,000 new teaching positions have been advertised to address the shortage of teachers in public sector schools across the district. He assured that the recruitment process would be conducted on a strictly merit-based system to improve the quality of education.

He made these remarks while addressing a function organized by the School Officers' Association (SOA) at a local hotel in Timergara on Wednesday. The event, arranged by the SOA's former president for his colleagues, was attended by various education officials, including Deputy District Education Officer Fayyaz-ud-Din, SOA District President Principal Ali Gauhar, Principal Bahadar Zeb, and Principal Saeed Ahmad.

Speakers at the event lauded the contributions of former SOA president Salah-ud-Din towards the promotion of education and sports as well as his community service. They underscored the importance of modern education in tackling contemporary challenges and urged all segments of society to contribute to the advancement of quality education.

DEO Inayatullah urged school heads to play an active role in ensuring quality education in public sector institutions. He emphasized that with government schools reopening on March 1 following the extended winter break, school heads and teachers must ensure the regular attendance of students and staff.

He further highlighted the ongoing reconstruction and renovation of 142 educational institutions affected by floods and natural disasters. The Rs 1 billion project, he stated, aims to restore and enhance the district's educational infrastructure.

Private sector's role in education emphasized: At an annual awards ceremony organized by a private school in Tauda China, former advisor to the Chief Minister on education and renowned educationist Muhammad Rahim Haqqani emphasized the critical role of the private sector in advancing quality education. He urged parents, teachers, and students to collaborate in improving literacy rates and educational standards.

The event featured national songs, speeches, and anthems performed by students, captivating the audience. High-achieving students from the previous academic year were honored with shields, trophies, and medals. The ceremony also included speeches from the institution's Managing Director Rahim Saeed and Dr.

Asim Suri, while noted poet Javed Shadarman was acknowledged for his poetry recital.

In his address, Rahim Haqqani stressed that progress in the modern era is unattainable without quality education. He underscored the necessity of mastering modern technology to remain competitive on the global stage. Expressing concern over the excessive use of social media, he noted that the younger generation often restricts new media usage to social networking rather than research and learning.

He urged parents and teachers to focus on character building, asserting that the fundamental purpose of education is to instill positive behavioral change in individuals. He congratulated the event organizers on successfully hosting the ceremony and assured them of his full support for future educational initiatives.

Persons with disabilities get Rs 7.76 million financial assistance: As per the provincial government's directive, a cheque worth Rs. 10,000 was distributed to 776 special persons (totaling Rs. 7.76 million) under the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Financial Assistance Program for Special Persons in Lower Dir during a function held at Timergara.

District Officer Social welfare department Muhammad Zeb outlined the objectives of the program. The compensation cheques were distributed MPA Shafiullah Khan, DDAC chairman MPA Ubaidur Rehman, MPA Muhammad Azam Khan, tehsil chairman Adenzai Fairuz Shah, and tehsil chairman Balambhat Shakir Shoaib.

The special persons expressed their gratitude to the Provincial Government and for their timely support. The administration was instructed to ensure the implementation of the 2% job quota for PWDs in all sanctioned posts.

Meanwhile, under the supervision of assistant commissioner Timergara Zaid Safi, a grand Jirga was convened to resolve a longstanding land dispute in Munjai. The Jirga, comprising its chief Sahib Zada Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, MPA Muhammad Azam Khan, former MPA Malak Behram Khan, and former MPA Haji Bahadar Khan successfully addressed the chronic land issue of 1400 Kanals, which had been unresolved for the past 60 years.

Following multiple sessions with the tenants and landowners, a final meeting was held on Wednesday, where a mutually agreeable solution was reached. Both tenants and landowners appreciated the efforts of the Grand Jirga. Moving forward, all Assistant Commissioners have been tasked with resolving similar chronic land issues through Jirgas.



QUETTA: An attractive block structure installed by District administration for beautification of the city.

All parties grand jirga called today

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: The arrangements for All Parties Grand Jirga on the law and order situation in Nowshera have been completed. Former Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Perviz Khattak, and Awami National Party's provincial president, Mian Iftikhar Hussain, among other political leaders, will participate in the Jirga.

The All Parties Grand Jirga, convened by the Provincial Peace Jirga, will be held on Friday at the

residence of Syed Kamal Shah Bacha, Chairman of the Provincial Peace Jirga. A delegation led by Ehsanullah Wazir, President of the Contact Committee, met with the district heads of all parties and invited them to participate in the All Parties Grand Jirga.

It has been learned that former Chief Minister Perviz Khattak and Awami National Party's provincial president, Mian Iftikhar Hussain, among other political leaders, have promised to attend the Jirga.

The arrangements for

the All Parties Jirga have been completed, and the Jirga will discuss the deteriorating law and order situation in Nowshera and devise a plan to eliminate social evils.

Meanwhile, Syed Kamal Shah Bacha, Chairman of the Provincial Aman Jirga, while talking to the media, said that the Provincial Peace Jirga is a non-political platform that is fighting against social evils. He made a strong appeal to the leaders of all parties to participate in this important Jirga and represent the people.

Commissioner inaugurates seeds broadcasting drive

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah on Thursday formally inaugurated the 7-day Seed Broadcasting Campaign of the Billion Trees Plus Program in Lachi Tehsil of District Kohat.

He, along-with the officials of the Forest Department, Local Village Committees and volunteers started a formal campaign to broadcast 5,000 Kg of seeds and 15,000 seed balls, suited to the local climate in the 300 Hectares of

the Darmalak area in Lachi Tehsil. Some 100 volunteers are participating in the said campaign.

Commissioner Kohat Division himself participated in the campaign by broadcasting the seeds, to encourage the Forest Department and the Local Village Committees. Commissioner Kohat in his brief speech, said that tree planting is the greatest and lasting charity.

It not only helps in the beauty of the area and climate change, but also benefits all kinds of living things by producing oxy-

gen in abundance, he added.

Motasim Billah Shah appealed the volunteers and local people to be the protectors of these plants and save them from wasting. He, on this occasion, also distributed free olive saplings among the local people.

Meanwhile, in all the districts of Kohat division including Kohat, Karak, Hangu, Orakzai and Kurram, the plantation and transplanting campaign is in the full swing under the supervision of their respective deputy commissioners.



THATTA: Students of Liaquat Institute of Medical and Health Sciences taking oath during 'White Coat Day.'

Drug rehab center inaugurated F.P. Report

KARAK: As per directions of inspector General of Prisons Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Drug Addicts Rehabilitation centre has been inaugurated at Central jail Karak.

Inauguration Ceremony has been conducted under Superintendent Central jail Karak and District Session Judge Karak Syed Adnan Shah graced the occasion as well. All kinds of drugs rehabilitation medicines, sports facilities including volleyball, Carromboard and skill facilities like sewing machines, and prisoners own hand made articles hv been provided inside the Rehabilitation centre.

Medical officer jail Dr Iftikhar wl treat and supervise this centre. Jail Superintendent Mr Nasir Khattak briefed in detail about the directions of Worthy Inspector General of Prisons Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mr Usman Mehsud regarding establishment of Drug Addicts Rehabilitation centre and stated that establishment of Drugs Addicts Rehabilitation centre is the initiative of Provincial Government and it's all became possible under the esteemed guidance and support of worthy Inspector General of Prisons Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Restoration of service structure demanded F.P. Report

LARKANA: Paramedical Alliance Sindh, took out a rally from Civil Hospital to acknowledge their demands, which turned into a demonstration in front of the press club, passing through various roads of the city, on Thursday.

The protestors displayed placards and banners and shouted slogans. On this occasion PMA leaders Shahi Khan Jagirani and others said that the service structure of the para medical staff has been approved by the Sindh government but unfortunately the management does not take any further steps on it due to lack of interest and neither does the professional allowance increase from 20% to 50%, nor does Jinnah Hospital become equal to NICH.

Open conversation by provincial ombudsman held: On the instructions of provincial ombudsman, Ali Akbar Jagirani, regional director of provincial ombudsman, reached the District Accounts Office and held an open discussion at the district accounts office.

On that occasion, he spoke about the serving and retired employees and said that the instructions given to you regarding pension cases should be resolved as soon as possible so that the people of the district do not get worried. Accounts Officer Abdul Fattah Soomro and officials related to the department also participated.

Teen killed F.P. Report

MUZAFFARGARH: An unidentified teenage boy was killed when a speeding tractor-trolley ran over him here at Bukhar Road, tehsil Karor Lal Easan.

Police said here on Thursday that the victim aged over 15 years succumbed to injuries on the spot.

Colony for Christian community demanded

F.P. Report

WANA: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Minority Wing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senior Vice President, Akash Masih, actively presented the pressing issues of the Christian community in Lower Waziristan during a Khuli Kachehri. The session was attended by key civil administration officials, including Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner, the Assistant Commissioner, and representatives from various line departments.

During the session, Akash Masih voiced the community's longstanding concerns, emphasizing the urgent need for a residential Christian Colony to provide secure housing for Christian families. He also highlighted the critical need for a boundary wall around the Christian cemetery,

ensuring the sanctity and security of burial grounds.

Furthermore, he stressed the implementation of the 5% minority quota in government jobs and services, a constitutional right that minorities often struggle to obtain. He also demanded the inclusion of minority women in the Benazir Income Support and Ehsaas Program survey, ensuring access to financial assistance for underprivileged Christian women.

A significant demand was the introduction of a special Ramadan package in March for Christian families observing Lent,

similar to the support provided to Muslims during Ramadan. Additionally, he brought forward issues faced by DHQ hospital employees and other grievances affecting the Christian community.

In response, Deputy Commissioner Nasir Khan assured the community that their concerns would be addressed on priority, reaffirming the government's commitment to minority rights and welfare.

Speaking after the session, Akash Masih reaffirmed his unwavering determination to fight for the rights of his community. "No matter how many obstacles are placed in our way, I will continue my struggle for the development and progress of my Christian nation," he stated firmly.

The Khuli Kachehri session marked a crucial step in addressing the challenges faced by the Christian community in Lower Waziristan, offering hope that their long-standing issues would finally be resolved through government intervention.

Jirga resolves tribal dispute with mutual consultation

F.P. Report

BANNU: In the presence of the leaders of the Bannu tribes, the long-standing enmity between two families turned into friendship.

The leaders of the Bannu tribes, Haji Malik Nawab Khan, Malik Adnan Khan, Malik Umar Daraz Khan, Malik Ashur Khan Durrani, Haji Hamid Khan Durrani Advocate, Malik Umar Hayat Khan Ahmadzai Minister Malik Noor Kishad Khan Minister, an unpleasant incident had taken place between two families and the families of

Sirobdah Khel in the Surani Jan Qala area three years ago, in which two people were killed and two people were injured.

During this time, there was a long-standing enmity between the families of Malik Rashid Khan and Nisar Khan of Jan Qala Surani and the families of Malik Akbar Khan and Malik Akram Khan of Sirobdah Khel.

On this occasion, the head of the Bannu tribes, Haji Malik Nawab Khan, former candidate for the provincial assembly Malik Adnan Khan, and Malik

Ashur Khan Durrani, Malik Umar Hayat Khan Ahmadzai Minister and Malik Kashed Khan started efforts to reconcile the two families.

Finally, they succeeded and the long-standing enmity between these families turned into friendship. Addressing the jirga held on this occasion, Malik Nawab Khan Malik Umar Hayat Khan Ahmadzai, Minister, said that in the current situation, playing a role in resolving long-standing disputes is a jihad in the name of Allah.

Faculty outreach training ends at Buner varsity

F.P. Report

BUNER: National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) Higher Education Commission (HEC) concluded a four-week training program for faculty members under the National Outreach Program for Higher Education in collaboration with University of Buner.

The closing ceremony organized for Faculty of Education (Tier-I, Lecturers/

Assistant Professors) was attended by distinguished guests Ghulam Murtaza Guraya, Assistant Director NAHE-HEC, along with office holders of University of Buner.

Vice Chancellor Dr. Saiful Islam thanked Dr. Noor Amna Malik, Managing Director, NAHE for awarding the project to University of Buner, National Outreach Program for Higher Education Faculty.

Ghulam Murtaza Guraya and Nimatullah enlightened the participants on the importance of this training program and explained its objectives and structure and thanked them. He explained that the objective of this four-week training program is to enhance teaching and learning skills, develop research and academic skills, promote faculty development and mentoring and strengthen institutional capacity.

Books distributed among govt school students

F.P. Report

MARDAN: District Education Officer, President Mardan Press Club, Education Specialist Principal Hafiz Zubair Ahmad, ADO, APCA Chairman, Education Council President, General Secretary and other teachers distributed books among students, on Thursday.

Speaking at the event, Press Club President Muhammad Riaz Mayar said that the initiative of the government to give free books is good, but instead of giving free books, the government should adopt a policy of providing books at half price in the open market so that poor students can have equal access to books because most of the poor students study in government schools.

Educationist Zubair Ahmed while speaking said that distribution of free

books is a very difficult phase even if we distribute books with full honesty, infamy is our destiny. He demanded the provincial government to reduce the size of the books and investigate the substandard quality of the books this year to ensure that the books were printed as per the tender. He said that the provincial government and the education department should ensure the supply of books to all the students before the start of the new session.

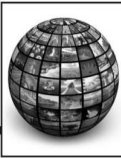
Addressing the event, DEO Mardan Zahid Muhammad said that providing books to students is the first priority. In this regard, along with the officers of the Elementary Secondary Education Department, it has been decided to provide free books to the students with great care. He said that according to the government policy, 80 to 100 per-

cent of free books will be provided at the primary level, while 50 percent of books will be provided to middle and high school students.

Ulema to back Ruet body F.P. Report

MALAKAND: A convention of religious scholars from all sects was held in Malakand, wherein they announced to observe fasting and Eid in accordance with the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee's decision.

The district administration on Thursday said the religious leaders agreed to follow the decision of Central Ruet-e-Hilal regarding sighting of the moon both for Ramadan and Eid ul Fitar.



EU-US diplomatic talks called off as tensions rise

WASHINGTON (AP): A planned meeting between European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas and Secretary of State Marco Rubio was abruptly canceled due to “scheduling issues,” coming as political tensions have increased between Europe and the United States.

Officials from both sides blamed scheduling challenges for preventing the pair, who last met at the Munich Security Conference in Germany last month, from meeting in Washington. However, European officials said they were caught off guard, and, notably, Kallas had previewed her planned talks with Rubio just two days earlier.

In recent weeks, President Donald Trump has thrown the partnership between the US and Europe into turmoil by pledging to charge higher taxes on imports from Europe that he says will match tariffs faced by American products. EU officials have traveled to Washington trying to head off a trade war. Top Trump administration officials also have warned Europe that it must start taking responsibility for its own security, including Ukraine, and sidelined the Europeans from their initial talks with Russia on ending the war. In a remarkable shift, the US split with its European allies by refusing to blame Russia for its invasion of Ukraine at the United Nations this week and joined Moscow in voting against a Europe-backed Ukrainian resolution.

In a bid to mend relations, French President Emmanuel Macron was in Washington for a White House meeting with Trump seeking support. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, whose country is

no longer a member of the EU but often aligns itself with the continental bloc on foreign policy, is due to visit Thursday. Kallas herself had said that she would be holding talks with Rubio “on the issues that are of interest to both of us,” which for the EU are chiefly Russia’s war on Ukraine and transatlantic relations.

“It is clear that the statements coming from the United States make us all worried,” she told reporters after chairing a meeting of EU foreign ministers. Kallas said she hoped the EU-US relationship can continue to function. “So far, we do not have any indication that it would not. Of course it is going to change, that is very clear. But we should not throw something out the window that has worked well so far,” she said. In a terse text message, her office referred all questions about why the meeting was canceled at short notice to the State Department.

A senior US official said the planned meeting, which had never appeared on Rubio’s public schedule, had been pulled down due to “an unavoidable scheduling conflict.” The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations. Rubio attended Trump’s Cabinet meeting at the White House, which began.

The cancellation came less than a week after the State Department’s policy planning office sent an internal memo instructing officials who deal with Europe to highlight two specific issues in interactions with European counterparts. The Feb. 21 memo, seen by The Associated Press, also mentioned tentative plans for an upcoming Rubio meeting with Kallas. The two issues

of concern identified in the memo were “Freedom of Speech and Free Opposition” and “Migration.”

On the former, the memo said Rubio and other US diplomats should emphasize in their discussions with European officials the importance that the Trump administration attaches to free speech. It noted that Vice President JD Vance had said in a speech at the Munich Security Conference this month that the West should “unite around free speech, halt censorship, reject suppressing opposition, jailing people for tweets and memes, etc.”

“The United States cannot continue supporting a continent that drifts in an authoritarian direction,” the memo said. “It’s bad for Europe and bad for us.” On migration, the memo said US officials, including Rubio, should refer to Europe’s “de facto open borders policy” as a “disaster” that must end. Trump has made cracking down on illegal immigration and carrying out mass deportations a signature priority.

“The United States is changing course on migration policy under Trump,” it said. “It’s well past time for Europe to do the same. We want you to remain civilization partners and to do that, you must get this under control.” It was not clear if the blunt language in the memo contributed to the cancellation of the Rubio-Kallas meeting. Although her meeting with Rubio was pulled down, Kallas was due to meet with US senators and members of Congress to discuss the war in Ukraine and EU-US ties during her two-day trip to Washington and to take part in a talk about those issues at the Hudson Institute research organization.

Tinubu ex-ally flays Nigeria reforms

ABUJA (BBC): One of the architects of Nigerian President Bola Tinubu's 2023 election victory has criticised the reforms being carried out by his government. In an interview with Arise TV, Nasir El-Rufai said the president's decision to import food to lower prices would impoverish the country's farmers.

In response, presidential spokesman Bayo Olanuga said that even though El-Rufai had worked hard for Tinubu's election, it was time for him to move on from the disappointment of not being made a minister. The 65-year-old, one of the founding members of the ruling All Progressives Congress party, was tipped to be one of Tinubu's most influential ministers before his nomination was declined by parliament. “Food prices may be going down, but farmers are being impoverished because they are being made to compete with subsidised agricultural products from Europe and other countries,” he said.

“I have issues with many of them [Tinubu's policies], and I'm in touch with many senior officials of the administration, and I give them my opinion privately.” The former minister also said his party had abandoned its founding values and internal democracy, warning he might leave if reforms were not made. El-Rufai also said he had supported Tinubu in 2023 not because he was the best but because the 72-year-old was the candidate of his party.

“As a loyal party man, I was duty bound to support the party's candidate,” he noted. He also spoke about his nomination as a minister which was later turned down by the senate over a security report. “The idea that the National Assembly rejected me is not true. The decision was made by the president himself. Either he changed his mind, or some other factors influenced him. Regardless, I have moved on,” El-Rufai said. The politician, who has been seen with opposition figures recently, did not rule out moving to another party before the next general elections in 2027.

Judge gives time to Trump admn

WASHINGTON (AP): A federal judge gave the Trump administration less than two days to release billions of dollars in US foreign aid, saying the administration had given no sign of complying with his nearly two-week-old court order to ease its funding freeze.

The lawsuit was filed by nonprofit organizations over the cutoff of foreign assistance through the US Agency for International Development and State Department, which followed a Jan. 20 executive order by President Donald Trump targeting what he portrayed as wasteful programs that do not correspond to his foreign policy goals. Nonprofit groups and businesses that receive federal money for work abroad said the freeze breaks federal law and has shut down funding for even the most urgent life-saving programs abroad. Those USAID and State partners say the administration has stifled them on hundreds of millions of dollars in money already owed, forcing them to lay off tens of thousands of staffers and pushing some organizations toward financial ruin.

US District Judge Amir H. Ali on Feb. 13 had ordered the administration at least temporarily to get funding flowing again, including to make good on its bills. Despite the order, USAID staffers and the businesses and nonprofit groups say they know of no payments that have gotten through. “I'm not sure why I can't get a straight answer from you on this: Are you aware of an unfreezing of the disbursement of funds for those contracts and agreements that were frozen before Feb. 13,” the judge asked Indraneel Sur, the lawyer for the government. “Are you aware of steps taken to actually release those funds?” “I'm not in a position to answer that,” Sur said.

Putin will try to achieve in peace talks: Latvia FM

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Latvia's foreign minister warns that Russian President Vladimir Putin will try to achieve in peace talks what he hasn't been able to accomplish in his war against Ukraine — weaken the United States and restore control over his smaller neighbor.

Baiba Bra e spoke to The Associated Press during a week of intense diplomacy between Europe and the United States following President Donald Trump's upending of US policy with his decision to hold direct talks with Russia, while excluding Ukraine and its European allies from the initial discussions.

Bra e notes that Russia, with a population of 140 million, has managed to gain control of less than 20% of Ukraine, population 40 million, since it seized Crimea in 2014 and launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022. Putin has failed to weaken the US and the NATO military alliance it leads, or to oust the democratic government in Kyiv. So, when it comes to seeking peace, “I think the difficulty is with the Russians, because Russians are the ones who want to weaken US power, and who want to weaken the EU in the world overall,” Bra e said.

What the world is seeing, she said, is that when Putin interferes in other countries he wants to control both territory and the political choices of their governments. In Syria, for example, he supported the authoritarian regime of Bashar Assad and got military bases on the Mediterranean. But Putin hasn't gotten what he wanted during the three-year war in Ukraine and “he will try to get it through the peace talks,” Bra e said. “So, it's important to clearly remember that perspective in whatever deal we negotiate or strike.”

She said although only US and Russian officials took part in last week's talks in Saudi Arabia, “Europe is included” in the peace discussions because of constant communications



with both the Ukrainians and the Americans. She has been in Washington three times since mid-December and said she was heading there for talks with lawmakers and administration officials. French President Emmanuel Macron met with Trump at the White House, and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer was due to meet with him on Thursday.

Bra e stressed that Europe's task now is to strengthen the transatlantic alliance and build up its own militaries and defense industries. Last week, Latvia announced it will increase defense spending to 4% of GDP next year and continue to move toward 5%. NATO members have agreed to spend at least 2% of their GDP on defense.

“We are investing in our own capability,” she said. “We wish all Europeans would do that. That's one of the issues we are discussing.” As NATO members, Bra e said, Latvia and the neighboring Baltic states of Estonia and Lithuania need to make sure they are prepared for any future aggression from Russia. She said their focus is on deterrence — early warning, rapid response, military capability and political will.

The three Baltic states were occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II and fell under Soviet control

after the war. Like Ukraine, they became independent countries with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Bra e stressed to the UN Security Council that “only Ukraine's victory can ensure lasting security and put an end to Russia's imperialist aggression.”

“We strongly believe that a rushed ceasefire will not lead to sustainable peace; instead, it will only embolden Russia, encouraging further expansion and putting global security at grave risk,” she said. Macron said he had spoken to 30 European and allied leaders, with some saying they are willing to be part of security guarantees for Ukraine in a peace deal. Bra e said that while there have been preliminary discussions, there is no peace process yet.

When there is, she said, “We will be guided very much by the needs of Ukraine.” “For any security force, we need military guidance,” Latvia's top diplomat said. “We need military advice. What type of force is there? Where? Are the troops withdrawn on the Russian side from the contact line? How far? What is the location of any security force?” But Bra e said the most important thing is peace must be long-lasting, not just a ceasefire where war can restart again. “Nobody wants that,” she said.

Pope Francis is critical but stable with no new respiratory crises

ROME (AP): Pope Francis was in critical but stable condition as he worked from the hospital while battling double pneumonia, and the Vatican announced some major governing decisions that suggest he is getting essential work done and looking ahead.

The Vatican's evening update said the 88-year-old pope had had no new respiratory crises and that his blood parameters were stable. He underwent a follow-up CAT scan to check the lung infection, but no results were provided. Doctors said his prognosis remained guarded. “In the morning, after receiving the Eucharist, he resumed work activities,” the Vatican statement said.

The Vatican's bulletin contained a series of significant decisions Francis had taken, most importantly that he had met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, the Vatican “substitute” or chief of staff. It was the first known time the pope had met with Parolin, who is essentially the Vatican prime minister, since his Feb. 14 hospitalization and the first outsider known to have called on Francis since Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni visited Feb. 19.

During the audience, Francis approved decrees for two new saints and five

people for beatification - the first step toward possible sainthood. Francis also convened a consistory, or a formal meeting of cardinals, to set the dates for the future canonizations. Francis regularly approves decrees from the Vatican's saint-making office when he is at the Vatican, albeit during audiences with the head of the office, not Parolin. A consistory is a necessary ceremonial step in that saint-making process, and it is normal that no date is given at first.

It wasn't clear, though, why there was such urgency to approve the decrees while the pope was in critical condition, when some of the new proposed saints have been waiting years if not decades for their causes to advance. The signing of the decrees did serve to show the pope fully in charge and provided a public way to announce Parolin's audience. But it also raised some questions.

It was also at a banal consistory to set dates for canonizations on Feb. 11, 2013, that Pope Benedict XVI announced, in Latin, that he would resign because he couldn't keep up with the rigors of the papacy. Francis has said he, too, would consider resigning after Benedict “opened the door” and became the first pope in 600 years to retire.

Giovanna Chirri, the

reporter for the Italian news agency ANSA who was covering the consistory that day and broke the story because she understood Latin, said that she didn't think Francis would follow in Benedict's footsteps, “even if some would want it.” “I could be wrong, but I hope not,” she told The Associated Press. “As long as he's alive, the world and the church need him.”

Francis' English biographer, Austen Ivereigh, said that it was possible, and that all that matters is that Francis be “wholly free to make the right decision.” “The pope has always said that the papacy is for life, and he has shown that there is no problem with a frail and elderly pope,” Ivereigh said. “But he has also said that should he ever have a long-term degenerative or debilitating condition which prevents him from fully carrying out the exercise of the papal ministry, he would consider resigning. And so would any pope.”

Francis has said that if he were to resign, he would live in Rome, outside the Vatican, and be called “emeritus bishop of Rome” rather than emeritus pope given the problems that occurred with Benedict's experiment as a retired pope. Despite his best efforts, Benedict remained a point of reference for conservatives before he died in

2022, and his home inside the Vatican gardens something of a pilgrimage destination for the right. Francis has also written a letter of resignation, to be invoked if he became medically incapacitated.

Speculation about a possible resignation has swirled ever since Francis was hospitalized, but the Vatican hierarchy has stamped it down. Parolin himself told Corriere della Sera over the weekend that such speculation was “useless” and that what mattered was Francis' health. In addition to the audience with Parolin, the Vatican released Francis' message for Lent, the period leading up to Easter. And Francis named a handful of new bishops for Brazil, a new archbishop for Vancouver and modified the law for the Vatican City State to create a new hierarchy.

Many if not all of these decisions were likely in the works for some time and the Lent message was signed before he was hospitalized. But the Vatican has said that Francis has been doing some work in the hospital, including signing documents. Doctors have said the condition of the Argentine pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, is touch-and-go, given his age, fragility and preexisting lung disease before the pneumonia set in.

US Coast Guard ship did not interact with Chinese navy

SYDNEY (Reuters): A US Coast Guard cutter crossing the Tasman Sea as part of maritime security cooperation with Australia and New Zealand knew Chinese naval ships were in the area but had no interaction with them, its commanding officer said.

China's navy held live-fire exercises in international waters between Australia and New Zealand that Australian officials have described as unprecedented. The drills forced airlines to change the paths of 49 commercial flights for safety reasons.

The movements of the People's Liberation Army Navy frigate, cruiser and refueling vessel involved are being monitored by Australian and New Zealand defence forces. The US Coast Guard national security cutter Midgett arrived in port in Sydney from New Zealand.

“We were aware of their presence,” Captain Matthew Rooney, commanding officer of the Midgett, told reporters in Sydney of the Chinese ships. “It did not affect our operations. We follow

international norms, regulations for preventing collisions at sea and we had no encounters and we would expect the Chinese navy to do the same,” he added. Euan Graham, senior analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said it was the furthest south the Chinese navy had held exercises, and showed China did not need a naval base in the South Pacific to project power.

China was likely testing the diplomatic resolve of Australia, New Zealand and Australia's security ally the United States, he said. “This is a clear signal that China doesn't feel deterred from operating close by (the US's) closest Pacific ally,” he said. A spokesperson for China's foreign ministry said the People's Liberation Army Navy had been conducting exercises and training in distant waters and upheld safety standards in accordance with international laws and practices.

The US Coast Guard has increased operations in the South Pacific since 2024, patrolling for illegal fishing by distant fleets

including from China, at the invitation of Pacific Island countries.

China registered dozens of coast guard vessels for fisheries patrols in the Pacific Islands for the first time in 2025, although none have deployed yet. China uses its coast guard to enforce its maritime border claims in the South China Sea. Rooney said the US Coast Guard was in the Pacific to “assist nations in maintaining their national sovereignty through bilateral invitations - bilateral maritime agreements to support operations within their exclusive economic zone to prevent malign behaviours, and also to prevent poaching of marine resources”.

The commanding officer for the HMAS Kuttubul fleet base in Sydney, Captain Rebecca Levitt, said Australia has “a very large patch of ocean that we need to protect and provide that stability within the region and we can't do that without the United States”. The Midgett will next travel to Papua New Guinea on an illegal fishing patrol.

Haiti gangs launch deadly attack on Delmas neighborhood

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Reuters): Armed gangs launched a fresh attack on Haiti's capital before dawn, killing residents in the Delmas 30 neighborhood and causing more residents to flee as gangs continue to operate unchecked in the Caribbean nation.

More than 1 million Haitians - close to 10% of the Caribbean's most populous country - have been internally displaced due to a years-long conflict in which well-funded and broadly allied armed gangs have expanded and cemented their control over much of the capital and surrounding areas. Police did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

“We haven't slept since the day before yesterday because everyone was panicking,” said local res-

ident Alex Josue, saying he believed around 15 people had been killed. “I have a friend who sells meat at the Delmas 30 market and they burned him in front of his child,” he said. “A woman who lived very close to me was taken with her child, and they burned them.”

“I don't know whether to go up or down, left or right,” added Josue. “Wherever the gangs go, we run.” Local rights group RNDH's program director Rosy Auguste Ducena said her organization was not yet able to estimate a death count, but there were reports of several people being killed or shot at, and several houses set on fire. “According to the information we've received, the armed gangs are on the rampage. They attack several areas at the same

time, and it's always the same modus operandi: murder, arson, gunshot wounds, rape, and so on,” Ducena said.

“Each time, the victims try to flee and find refuge in often unlikely places,” she added. In Delmas 30, residents fled the scene carrying mattresses and other goods on their heads. One man pushed a corpse in a wheelbarrow. A local resident, who asked not to be identified, said the area had been facing deadly attacks since 1 a.m. (0600 GMT), and appealed to Jimmy Cherizier, a former policeman who leads the Viv Ansanm gang coalition that is looking to become a political party. “The population is fleeing, they don't know where to go,” the person said. “What have we done to you?”

authorized to speak to the media on the issue. Over half of the 7,000 waiting are Chinese, with the rest from a mix of countries.

More than 600 Chinese were repatriated over four days last week. Due to the large number, Thailand is allowing Beijing to handle most processing on their return to China. China chartered 16 flights. Earlier this month, about 260 people from 20 countries, ranging from Ethiopia to Brazil to the Philippines, crossed from Myanmar into Thai custody as part of the crackdown. Over 100 remain in Thailand awaiting repatriation, Thai officials said.

Many were trafficked to Myanmar through Mae Sot, now a center of mass repatriation efforts. On the road to Mae Sot, checkpoints displayed signs in Thai, English and Chinese warning Thais and foreigners of the risk of being trafficked to work along the Myanmar border. Soldiers checked vehicles and asked for identification.

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UNSC vote welcome weather vane

THE Ukraine crisis is a complex interplay of historical, political, economic and social factors, exacerbated by external influences and geopolitical considerations.

Ukraine's strategic location, its historical ties with Russia, and the West's efforts to expand its influence in Eastern Europe have all played a role in triggering the conflict that has now entered its fourth year. Resolving the crisis and establishing a durable European security framework requires not only promoting dialogue between the two sides and upholding international law, but also working diligently and in good faith to address the root causes.

As China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Fu Cong said ahead of the voting on two General Assembly resolutions on Monday, a binding peace deal should be acceptable to all parties, and Europe should come together to address the root causes of the crisis. "At this critical juncture, we are counting on the international community to create an enabling atmosphere for a political solution to the crisis and for the General Assembly to help forge consensus for peace among Member States," he said.

The UN Security Council also voted on a resolution on the Ukraine crisis later that day. Drafted by the United States, it was the first resolution on Ukraine to be passed by the Security Council since the outbreak of hostilities in 2022, receiving 10 votes in favor and none against, with five abstentions, all from European countries. The resolution was concise, calling for a swift end to the conflict and lasting peace between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

But it reflects there is a new dynamic at work, as the vote marks the first time that Beijing, Moscow and Washington have been on the same page. This is indicative of a wider consensus between different camps that with both Kyiv and Moscow signaling their willingness to negotiate a peace deal, and the new United States administration intent on acting as a broker in order to secure access to Ukraine's coveted mineral reserves and reset economic and political relations with Russia, a window of opportunity has opened to end the conflict.

Without the change of the US administration and its shift in position on the Ukraine crisis, such a resolution would not have been passed. But it should also be pointed out that the call of the UNSC resolution is exactly what peace-loving countries in the world have been pushing for since the outbreak of the conflict, which is not just a regional conflict but a reflection of broader global tensions, making it one of the most significant geopolitical challenges of the time.

On the same day the UNSC resolution was adopted, President Xi Jinping held a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in which he welcomed the positive efforts made by Russia and relevant parties to resolve the crisis. President Xi also pointed out that soon after the full escalation of the Ukraine crisis, he outlined China's basic position, including four points on what should be done to resolve the crisis, and that China and Brazil, together with other Global South countries, launched the group of Friends for Peace in September with the aim of fostering the right atmosphere and conditions for the political settlement of the crisis.

In fact, Beijing's persistent stance on the Ukraine issue and its commitment to enhancing China-Russia ties have not only made it stand out as an impartial and just voice in the world arena but also lent Moscow support that it badly needed in international organizations, including the UNSC, in the face of the West's previous efforts to portray Russia as an enemy of the entire civilized world.

By insisting on its legitimate right to maintain normal ties with Moscow, Beijing had to endure pressure and criticism from the previous US administration and the Western world at large, which wrongly accused it of enabling Russia's military operations in Ukraine. Hence, it is good to see the US under the newly installed Donald Trump administration make a 180-degree turn in its stance on the Ukraine crisis.

But despite the latest developments, the crisis remains a Gordian knot. China's position on the Ukraine crisis remains consistent and clear; it is committed to building a consensus for ending the conflict and paving the way for peace talks and the establishment of a sustainable security framework in Europe. To that end, it will continue to uphold an objective and fair position and play a constructive role in advancing the political settlement of the crisis.

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The urgent need for Arab unity

Hani Hazaimeh

AS Arab leaders prepare to convene at the emergency Arab League Summit in Cairo next week, the urgency of crafting a unified and strategic response to the region's worsening crises has never been greater. From the ongoing Israeli aggression in Gaza and the West Bank to escalating tensions in the Red Sea, shifting global alliances and persistent economic vulnerabilities, the Arab world finds itself at a crossroads. This moment demands more than rhetorical unity — it requires decisive action, strategic coordination and a bold reassessment of the region's geopolitical and economic priorities.

The war in Gaza has once again exposed the Arab world's inability to translate political outrage into tangible consequences for Israel. While statements of condemnation and diplomatic efforts persist, they have yet to produce meaningful deterrence against Israel's continued violations of international law. The humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Palestine should not only be a cause for concern but a rallying point for genuine Arab-led initiatives.

At the same time, tensions in the Red Sea — where Houthi attacks on commercial shipping have drawn Western military intervention — pose a direct threat to Arab economic and security interests. The increased militarization of this vital trade route, combined with the broader strategic contest between global powers, underscores the necessity of an Arab security framework that prioritizes regional stability over foreign influence.

Shifting alliances in the Middle East further reflect an evolving global order. The Abraham Accords, US disengagement from certain regional conflicts and China's

growing footprint in the Gulf illustrate how the Arab world must redefine its foreign policy strategies. Instead of passively reacting to these changes, Arab states must proactively shape them by asserting their collective influence and ensuring their own strategic interests take precedence.

Economic fragmentation has long been a weakness, leaving the region vulnerable to external pressures. It is time for Arab nations to move beyond mere discussions and take concrete steps toward economic integration. A unified strategy in key sectors such as energy, food security and technology would bolster resilience against global market fluctuations and geopolitical instability. The Gulf states, with their vast energy resources, can play a central role in establishing an independent Arab energy network that strengthens regional economies and reduces dependence on Western markets. Meanwhile, investments in agricultural technology and intra-Arab trade can mitigate the region's reliance on food imports, which has long been a source of economic and political vulnerability.

The rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and digital economies present another opportunity for Arab nations to collaborate in technological development. Instead of competing for foreign partnerships individually, Arab states should establish regional research hubs, innovation funds and cooperative agreements that ensure a future built on self-reliance rather than dependency. Strengthening economic ties will not only boost collective prosperity but also enhance political leverage on the global stage.

For decades, Arab summits have been marked by

strong declarations of solidarity with Palestine, yet these statements have rarely translated into meaningful action. The Israeli bombardment of Gaza and expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank demand more than words — they require policy shifts that impose consequences on Israel. One immediate step could be leveraging economic and diplomatic pressure through trade restrictions, sanctions and the suspension of normalization agreements until Israel adheres to international law. Additionally, Arab states must use their influence within international organizations such as the UN and the International Criminal Court to hold Israel accountable for its war crimes.

The Arab world must also reconsider its reliance on Western mediation, which has consistently favored Israeli interests. A stronger Arab-led peace initiative — one that aligns with Palestinian aspirations and international law — should be pursued as an alternative to the failed frameworks of the past. Without a clear, coordinated approach, the Palestinian cause risks becoming an afterthought in an increasingly polarized world order.

Foreign intervention in Arab affairs has historically fueled instability rather than resolved conflicts. From Libya to Syria, Yemen to Sudan, external military interventions and political maneuvering have exacerbated divisions rather than facilitated peace. The Arab world must take ownership of its security landscape through a robust, regionally led diplomatic and defense framework.

A revitalized Arab League, with strengthened enforcement mechanisms, could serve as a platform for resolving intra-Arab

conflicts and preventing external actors from exploiting regional divisions. Additionally, the creation of an Arab-led rapid response mechanism for conflict resolution — similar to the African Union's peacekeeping model — could reduce reliance on foreign military interventions and empower the region to handle crises independently.

Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as two of the region's most influential powers, bear a particular responsibility in steering the Arab world toward greater unity. Saudi Arabia's economic strength, diplomatic reach and leadership in the Islamic world position it as a key driver of regional cohesion. Meanwhile, Egypt's strategic location, historical role in Arab politics and military capabilities make it an indispensable pillar of Arab security. Together, they can spearhead efforts to forge stronger political, economic and military cooperation among Arab states. By leading the charge in establishing a comprehensive regional strategy, they can shift the Arab world beyond reactionary politics and toward proactive leadership.

The upcoming Arab summit represents more than a diplomatic gathering — it is a test of whether Arab leaders can rise to the challenge of this pivotal moment. The region has the resources, strategic advantages and historical legacy to assert itself as a unified and influential bloc. However, this will only be achieved if leaders prioritize collective interests over individual ambitions, take decisive action rather than issue empty statements and embrace a vision that secures the region's sovereignty, stability and prosperity.

A divided Arab world is a vulnerable Arab world. The time for unity, strategy and action is now.

Rebuilding Syria's economy

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

AFTER more than a decade of war, destruction and economic collapse in Syria, the country's new government faces an urgent and formidable challenge: rebuilding the nation's shattered economy. Years of conflict have devastated infrastructure, displaced millions and left the country struggling with widespread poverty, inflation and a crumbling financial system. For Syria to move forward and achieve long-term stability, economic recovery must be a top priority.

One of the most significant obstacles to rebuilding Syria's economy is the severe impact of Western sanctions. These restrictions, imposed over the years due to the war and political developments, have crippled Syria's ability to trade, attract foreign investment and access global financial networks. Lifting these sanctions — a process started by the EU this week — is essential for economic revitalization, as it would allow Syria to engage in international commerce, rebuild industries and improve the daily lives of its citizens.

Regional support, particularly from Arab nations, is playing a crucial role in assisting Syria's recovery, with efforts focused on restoring trade ties, providing investment and helping Syrians regain financial stability. Beyond lifting sanctions and securing regional partnerships, Syria's government must implement comprehensive economic strategies to stimulate growth, create jobs and restore essential services. Revitalizing key industries, rebuilding infrastructure and stabilizing the Syrian pound are necessary steps to ensure a sustainable recovery.

The Syrian economy has suffered one of the most severe contractions in modern history. According to reports, Syria's gross domestic product shrank by 84 percent between 2010 and 2024. The nation's currency has drastically devalued, leading to hyperinflation and making everyday goods unaffordable for most citizens. In 2023, it was reported that more than 90 percent of Syrians were living below the poverty line, struggling to afford food, medicine and other basic necessities.

The country's energy sector, once a crucial part of the economy, has suffered immense losses. Oil production has declined significantly, forcing Syria to rely on expensive fuel imports. Additionally, the destruction of infrastructure, including roads, power plants and water systems, has made industrial recovery even more challenging. Without a functioning economic system, businesses cannot operate efficiently and foreign investors will remain hesitant to engage with Syria due to the risks involved.

As a result, one of the most pressing tasks toward economic recovery is the lifting of Western sanctions, which have placed severe restrictions on Syria's ability to rebuild. These sanctions have frozen Syrian assets abroad, blocked financial transactions and limited the country's access to international markets. Lifting these sanctions would have an immediate and significant impact on Syria's economy. It would allow businesses to engage in international trade, making it easier to import essential goods and the raw materials needed for reconstruction. Additionally, easing financial restrictions would enable Syrians to receive remittances from relatives abroad — an important source of income for many families who are struggling to survive.

There have been discussions within the EU about easing sanctions and some were lifted on Monday, including restrictions on state-owned banks and investments in Syria's energy and electricity sectors. These steps are crucial, but a broader lifting of sanctions is necessary to create real economic momentum.

To rebuild its economy, Syria must attract investment, particularly in key sectors such as infrastructure, energy and manufacturing. Infrastructure reconstruction is essential for restoring normal economic activity, as roads, ports and communication networks are necessary for trade and industry to function.

Investment in the energy sector is also critical. Syria's electricity grid has been severely damaged, leading

to frequent power shortages that make industrial and commercial activities difficult. By securing investment in power plants and alternative energy sources, the government can provide reliable electricity to businesses and households, improving overall economic stability.

Manufacturing and agriculture are two other sectors that require substantial investment. Restoring factories and supporting small businesses can help create jobs and stimulate local economies. Similarly, rebuilding the agricultural sector will ensure food security and reduce the need for costly imports.

In addition, encouraging both domestic and foreign investors to participate in Syria's reconstruction will require significant policy reforms. The government must create a business-friendly environment by ensuring legal protections for investors, streamlining bureaucratic processes and guaranteeing stability in financial regulations. Without such reforms, potential investors may remain reluctant to engage with Syria's economy.

A fully functioning transport network is also vital for economic recovery. The destruction of roads, bridges, railways and airports has made it difficult to move goods and people efficiently, further hindering trade and investment. Rebuilding highways and roads would allow agricultural and industrial products to reach markets more easily, reducing costs and increasing profitability for businesses. Restoring railways would enhance trade efficiency, making it easier for goods to be transported across the country and into neighboring markets. Additionally, reopening and modernizing Syria's major ports would boost international trade, allowing the country to export its products and receive essential imports more efficiently.

Investment in transport infrastructure will also have long-term economic benefits by creating jobs, stimulating demand for construction materials and improving the overall efficiency of business operations.

The collapse of the Syrian pound has led to inflation, making daily life increasingly difficult for citizens. Restoring confidence in the national currency is essential for economic recovery. This requires sound financial policies that promote stability, control inflation and encourage investment. Encouraging the use of banking services within Syria and strengthening financial institutions will further contribute to economic stability. Many Syrians have lost trust in the banking system due to war-related economic instability, so rebuilding confidence in financial institutions is a necessary step toward recovery.

Finally, Syria's economy can greatly benefit from increased regional and international trade. Restoring trade partnerships with neighboring countries and reestablishing commercial routes can help Syria reintegrate into global markets. Several Arab nations have already shown an interest in helping Syria regain economic stability. Strengthening these ties can lead to trade agreements that facilitate the movement of goods, reduce tariffs and encourage business collaborations. By improving its trade relations with regional partners, Syria can gain access to new markets and benefit from foreign investments that support key industries. The reopening of trade routes, border crossings and customs facilities will be crucial for Syria's economic recovery.

Facilitating smoother trade transactions with neighboring countries will help businesses thrive and create new opportunities for economic growth.

In sum, Syria's economic challenges are immense, but they are not insurmountable. The key to recovery lies in a multifaceted approach that includes lifting sanctions, attracting investment, rebuilding infrastructure, stabilizing the currency and strengthening trade relations. By prioritizing economic growth and implementing sound policies, Syria's new government can create a foundation for stability, prosperity and a better future for its people. The road to recovery will not be easy, but with the right strategies and international cooperation Syria can rebuild its economy and offer its citizens the opportunity for a more secure and prosperous life.

What US-Russia talks mean for China and global diplomacy

Britain and France are

significant Trump with a significant gift ahead of his trip, announcing on Tuesday that Britain would hike its defense spending to 2.5% by 2027, and to 3% by the middle of the next decade. That is an unexpected acceleration of his government's goal, and represents massive expenditure. It is also desperately needed; the British military is much depleted, experts say. A massive review of Britain's army is due to

Last October, then-candidate Trump returned fire, accusing Starmer's Labour Party of election

The deal is “insane,”

— CNN

China-US relations

China has always maintained an objective and neutral stance, actively advocating for peace and promoting dialogue. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson expressed

has consistently argued that the US has invested too much in this conflict, which he sees as not directly concerning US territory. He believes Europe should contribute more to the "protection

— AA

Ding Duo

calm seas. While Western media screams "Chinese militarization," China has prioritized civilian infrastructure: lighthouses that guide ships through typhoon-ravaged waters.

Washington, while lecturing about "freedom of navigation" and refusing to ratify UNCLOS, conducts series of military drills every year in the South China Sea and even

deploy mid-range missile systems in the Philippines. True threats to the stability of the South China Sea clearly come from external powers inflaming tensions, not from China's lawful activities. The call to "revive" the arbitration is less about law than about perpetuating a Cold War-style containment strategy against China. The 2016 arbitral ruling is a relic, a dead letter gathering dust. Those still clinging to it are like sailors navigating by a broken compass: stubborn, lost, and destined to crash. To abuse the UNGA and ICJ for geopolitical score-settling would poison international law, transforming courts into tools of coercion rather than guardians of justice. China's rise is not a problem to be "solved" by legal gimmicks but a reality to be accommodated through mutual respect. The South China Sea doesn't need more Western saviors waving phantom legal flags; it needs face-to-face talks, maritime cooperation, and the hard, unglamorous work of building trust brick by brick. On the South China Sea issue, politics without dialogue and mutual understanding is tyranny, and abuse of dispute settlement mechanisms without restraint is chaos. China has been long on the definite path: principled, patient and very pragmatic. Washington and Manila should take note.



SCCI wants special incentives to attract investment in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fazal Moqem Khan stated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a lucrative destination for local and foreign investors. He, however, linked the attracting of foreign investment with provision of special incentives and facilities to local industries and businesses under one window operation.

Fazal Moqem was speaking to members during the visit of Dan Stoenesco, Ambassador of Romania in Pakistan here at the chamber house, according to a statement here on Thursday.

Meeting thoroughly deliberated on major potentials of Pakistan and Romania potentials and

agreed to collaborate in diverse sectors to enhance bilateral trade between the two countries.

Minister Plenipotentiary Eduard Robert Preda, Head of Consular Section Cristian Stelian Coroma, and Minister/Consul General Affairs Mr Claudiu Vasile CUCU, and Honorary Consul General of Romania in Peshawar Maqsood Anwar Qazi were amongst the team of the Romanian Ambassador.

Stoenesco stated Romania and Pakistan have established close diplomatic, economic and cultural relations, which need to be further strengthened.

The diplomat said both countries' economic cooperation can be enhanced by optimal utilization of each other's potentials, launch of joint ventures and promo-

tion of products through exhibitions.

SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, vice president Shehryar Khan, former presidents Haji Muhammad Afzal, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, ex-SVP Sanaullah Khan, members of the chamber executive committee Abbas Fuad Azeem, Ashfaq Ahmad, Sabir Ahmad Bangash, Adnan Nasir, Saddam Hussain, Saifullah Khan, Shamsul Rahim and Qurat Ul Ain, Saddam Gul, Ishtiaq Ahmad, Ashgar Khan, Naeemur Rehman, Husnain Sheraz, Ihsanullah, Syed Ejaz Ali Shah, Feroz Shah, Shahid Khan, Secretary General SCCI Muqtasid Ahsan, traders and industrialists were in attendance on the occasion.

Moqem said oil and gas and other natural resources

rich in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province offered diverse avenues for local and foreign investors.

He highlighted natural deposits, hydel power generation, as well as agriculture, tourism, furniture, pharmaceutical are strengths of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wherein huge avenues of investment available for investors.

The SCCI chief stressed concrete steps to resolve problems of local industries and businesses so that foreign investors would also be encouraged to invest in potentials of K-P.

Diplomat said vast opportunities available to strengthen mutual cooperation between Romania and Pakistan. He said his country has established strong diplomatic, trade and cultural relations for the last

Gold prices decreased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.3,000 and was sold at Rs 303,300 on Thursday against its sale at Rs306,300 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 2,829 to Rs 259,773 from Rs. 262,602 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went down by Rs.2,594 to Rs 238,133 from Rs.240,727.

The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.3,314 and Rs.2,841.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$29 to \$2,887 from \$2,916 whereas the prices of silver in international market remained stagnant at \$31.79, the Association reported.



PESHAWAR: Country Manager Interlink Communications receiving "Award of Excellence" from Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor's House.

PSX loses 78 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) loses 78.02 points on Thursday, a negative change of 0.07 percent, closing at 113,784.31 points as compared to 113,862.33 points on the last trading day.

A total of 397,393,389 shares were traded during the day as compared to 640,178,422 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs19.327 billion against Rs22.740 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 454 compa-

nies transacted their shares in the stock market, 145 of them recorded gains and 253 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 56 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Cnergyco PK with 71,837,021 shares at Rs.7.81 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 20,251,564 shares at Rs.1.45 per share and At-Tahur Limited with 17,624,004 shares at Rs.32.84 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.75.02

per share closing at Rs.23,399.99 whereas runner-up was PIA Holding Company LimitedB with Rs.30.75 rise in its share price to close at Rs.884.29.

Hochst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.184.68 per share price, closing at Rs.3,002.79, whereas the runner-up was Ismail Industries Limited with Rs.44.52 decline in its per share price to Rs.1,890.40.

Rupee sheds 11 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 11 paise

against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.72 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.61.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.00 and Rs281.50, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs0.70 to close at Rs292.92 against the last day's closing of Rs293.62, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan presenting Chamber's shield to Ambassador of Romania in Pakistan Dan Stoenesco.

Foreign Reserves Position

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves held by the country stood at US\$ 15,925.7 million as of 21-Feb-2025. The break-up of the foreign reserves position is as under: i) Foreign reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan: US\$ 11,222.4 million ii) Net foreign reserves held by commercial banks: US\$ 4,703.3 million iii) Total liquid foreign reserves: US\$ 15,925.7 million During the week ended on 21-Feb-2025, SBP reserves increased by US\$ 21 million to US\$ 11,222.4 million.

Fly Jinnah launches new route from Lahore to Bahrain

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, announces the launch of its new non-stop flights between Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport and Bahrain International Airport, further strengthening its international network. Commencing on March 26th, the new route will operate three times a week, every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, providing travelers with more options for seamless connectivity.

The introduction of this new route marks a new milestone in Fly Jinnah's continued expansion, further solidifying its commitment to providing affordable and reliable air travel.

This launch also complements Fly Jinnah's existing Islamabad-Bahrain service, offering increased accessibility between Pakistan and Bahrain from two key cities.

Fly Jinnah's spokesperson commented on the expansion, stating: "We are glad to introduce our new flights between Lahore and Bahrain as part of our growing international network. This expansion reaffirms our commitment to strengthening connectivity and providing our passengers with more travel options at affordable fares while enhancing air travel between Pakistan and the Middle East."

With a modern fleet of five Airbus A320 aircraft, Fly Jinnah currently serves

five major cities in Pakistan including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta. Additionally, the airline offers non-stop flights from Lahore to Dammam, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Sharjah, while also operating routes from Islamabad to Sharjah, Muscat, and Bahrain.

Fly Jinnah continues to offer a comfortable and value-driven travel experience to its passengers. With a modern fleet of Airbus A320 aircraft, the airline ensures extra comfort with the most generous seat-pitch of any economy cabin. The airline offers value-added services such as the SkyCafe onboard menu, featuring a wide variety of snacks, sand-

wiches, and meals at affordable prices. The aircraft is also equipped with "SkyTime", a free in-flight streaming service that allows passengers to stream a wide selection of entertainment directly to their devices. In addition to that, the airline also offers the most generous loyalty program "Air Rewards", through which passengers can earn, transfer, and spend points.

"Fly Jinnah" is a Pakistani private joint venture low-cost airline. Based in Karachi, Fly Jinnah follows the successful low-cost business model operated by Air Arabia that focuses on offering comfort, reliability, and value-for-money air travel.

CE meets businessmen

SIALKOT (APP): Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Chief Executive Faiz Ahmad Chadhar met stakeholders from the textile and apparel industry at an event organized by the Pakistan Readymade Garments and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) here on Thursday.

The gathering brought together prominent business leaders, including former PRGMEA chairman Ijaz Khokhar, Chairman Surgical Instruments Manufacturing Association of Pakistan (SIMAP) Zeeshan Tariq, Chairman Dryport Trust Raza Iqbal, Chairman AirSial Fazal Jilani and Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited

(SIAL) Hassan Ali Bhatti. Recognizing the importance of the textile and apparel industry in Pakistan's export landscape, Chief Executive TDAP Faiz Ahmad reaffirmed the government's commitment to resolving industry challenges.

He announced plans for monthly engagements with industry stakeholders to ensure continuous dialogue and problem-solving. Additionally, he requested each association to nominate a focal person to streamline communication and collaboration for prompt resolution of problems.

Faiz Ahmad informed the attendees that the government was striving hard

to overcome structural issues in order to enhance the global competitiveness of industries, foster innovation, entrepreneurship, facilitate greater integration with global supply chains and market access.

The government would continue to work closely with stakeholders to enhance ease of doing business and unlock new export opportunities, he added.

In his opening remarks Ijaz Khokhar emphasized the need for structural reforms to enhance global competitiveness, recommending the establishment of a dedicated Apparel Export Promotion Council and a support fund for apparel startups and innovation.

Nestlé kickstarts 100,000 trees urban forest drive



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam inaugurated Nestlé Pakistan's first 100,000 trees urban forest plantation drive in Islamabad. Organized in partnership with Capital Development Authority, the activity under the company's Nestlé Cares initiative supports endeavors to reduce carbon footprint in its ambition to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

Talking on the occasion, Coordinator to PM on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam said, "Planting an urban forest is a great example of what can be achieved when the public and private sectors come together with a common

goal. We acknowledge Nestlé's support and collaboration in driving this with CDA. Together, we are not just planting trees - we are nurturing a legacy for future generations."

Jason Avancena Chief Executive Officer, Nestlé Pakistan said, "Climate change is a reality and we all need to play a proactive role in mitigating this challenge. Nestlé has been continuously investing in sustainability initiatives such as planting urban forests for the wellbeing of our communities. It is our duty to reverse the trend of deforestation and work towards a greener future."

"Initiatives such as urban forests and continuous investment in renewable energy reflects our dedication towards making

a positive impact on society and environmental sustainability. We remain committed to being a force for good throughout our value chain by Creating Shared Value for communities," he added.

Secretary Interior Capt (ret'd) Khurram Agha said, "It is my hope that we can all inspire each other to embrace similar practices and contribute to the country's broader climate action agenda in line with the Government of Pakistan's stance."

Secretary Federal Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani said, "To mobilise our energetic youth for a greener future, students in schools and colleges will actively participate in this urban forest drive with Nestlé and CDA."

Paragon Overseas Education hosts successful Study Abroad Expo

— over 35 international universities provide guidance to Pakistani students



F.P. Report

LAHORE: Paragon Overseas Education (Pvt.) Ltd. successfully organized a Study Abroad Expo, bringing together over 35 leading international universities to provide Pakistani students with comprehensive guidance on admissions, scholarships, and study opportunities in the UK, USA, Australia, and Canada.

The event, held at a private hotel, was attended by a large number of students, parents, and education experts, reinforcing Paragon Overseas Education's role as Pakistan's largest overseas education network.

Paragon Overseas Education is operational in

27 cities with 31 fully functional branches, making it one of the most trusted education consultancy services in Pakistan. With official affiliations with top universities in the UK, USA, Australia, and Canada, the organization ensures that students receive direct and accurate information from university representatives, eliminating the risks associated with unverified agents.

Speaking at the event, representatives from international universities provided free counseling to students, guiding them on admission processes, visa applications, and scholarships. The event aimed to help students make informed decisions about

their education and career paths abroad.

Several notable figures from Pakistan's education sector attended the expo, further highlighting its significance. The distinguished guests included Mian Imran Masood, Vice Chancellor, University of South Asia, Dr. Nizam Ud Din, Former Education Minister & Pro-Rector, Superior University and Dr. Nasir Hayat, Pro Vice-Chancellor, UET.

These experts emphasized the growing importance of international education and praised Paragon Overseas Education's commitment to transparency and student success. They encouraged students to take

advantage of the unique opportunity to interact directly with official university representatives and confidently explore their academic options. Atif Aslam, Director Paragon Overseas Education Pvt Ltd, highlighted that the primary objective of the event was to bring top universities together under one roof, enabling students to interact, discuss their study plans, and apply to their desired institutions.

This initiative by Paragon Overseas Education reaffirms its mission to help Pakistani students achieve their academic dreams on a global platform.

The expo provided a one-stop platform for students to meet university officials, explore degree programs, and discuss scholarship opportunities. The organizers stated that the primary goal of the event was to bring top-ranked universities under one roof, enabling students to seek personalized guidance, clear their doubts, and submit applications with confidence.

Paragon Overseas Education reaffirmed its mission to eliminate fraudulent consultancy practices and provide authentic and transparent information to students aspiring to study abroad. With an extensive network and direct partnerships with leading universities, the organization continues to support students in achieving their academic and professional dreams.

تلاش گمشده

ایٹھ لاکھ کی بے پائیسی نبر
506018824/6 نام سید رفیق احمد شاہ ولد سید
نور غفار شاہ کینم ہوئی ہے۔ جس کو کبھی ملے ہو یا اس
پر کوئی دعویٰ رکھتا ہو تو وہ تین دن کے اندر اندر
انچارج شہید خدمت بیدار دان سے رابطہ قائم کریں
بھجور دنگر بھوش کوئی دعویٰ قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔
منجانب انچارج شہید خدمت
بیدار دان پشاور ورن

تلاش گمشده

مجھ سے میرے پلاٹ نمبر 74 بہتام پاک
اسٹیکو فیئر اسلام آباد کے اور بجٹل الاٹ
آرڈر کینم گم ہو گیا ہے۔ جسکو ملے برائے
مہربانی درج ذیل پتہ پر ارسال کریں۔
ماروی وقار ہاؤس نمبر 12، این سینا روڈ
G-8/2، اسلام آباد

تلاش گمشده

مجھ سے میرے پلاٹ نمبر 247، پاک
اسٹیکو فیئر اسلام آباد کے اور بجٹل الاٹ
آرڈر کینم گم ہو گیا ہے۔ جسکو ملے برائے
مہربانی درج ذیل پتہ پر ارسال کریں۔
لیلیٰ زیب ہاؤس نمبر 12، این سینا
روڈ، G-8/2، اسلام آباد

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Additional district Judge I / Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No. 93/13. Institution 18/10/2023. Date of hearing 11/4/2025. Zaren Dad Shah VS Said Muhammad etc. Notice to No. 2. Ghani Muhammad s/o Amir Muhammad. 7. Rashedullah. 8. Irfan Ali sons Samandar Shah. 9. Khanullah. 10. Latifullah sons of Mst Pari resident of Matwanay teshel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 am dated 11/4/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



Pakistan, Bangladesh share points after washout



RAWALPINDI (Cricinfo): Pakistan and Bangladesh ended their disappointing Champions Trophy campaigns with a point each with the second successive match in Rawalpindi washed out. As on Tuesday, when the same fate befell the Australia-South Africa game from Group B, the match was called off without even the toss taking place.

after the scheduled start time. This non-result was Rawalpindi's last match of the tournament. Apart from the two washouts, it also hosted New Zealand's five-wicket win over Bangladesh on February 24. Only one match now remains in Group A, with India taking on New Zealand in Dubai on March 2 in a clash that determines who finishes top of the group. Both teams are already through to the semi-finals. For the record, Bangladesh (-0.443) finish the tournament above Pakistan (-1.087) on net run rate. Pakistan's next assignment is a white-ball tour of New Zealand later this month, comprising five T20Is and three ODIs. Bangladesh, meanwhile, are set to host Zimbabwe for three ODIs and three T20Is.



WEST VALLEY, UT: Daeqwon Plowden #29 of the College Park Skyhawks blocks the shot by Taeivon Kinsey #24 of the Salt Lake City Stars during an NBA G-League game at the Maverik Center in West Valley, Utah.

Asif Mahmood honored at inaugural junior cricket tournament

KARACHI (APP): The Regional Cricket Association Karachi Zone One (RCAK Zone One) launched the Asif Mahmood Memorial Junior Inter-Club Cricket Tournament, paying tribute to the late cricketer's contributions to local cricket. At the opening ceremony held at Young Fighter Ground, RCAK Coordinator Azam Khan praised Asif Mahmood and his family's enduring efforts in promoting cricket in Zone I, calling their services "unforgettable."

RCA Karachi Joint Secretary Muhammad Tauseef Siddiqui and Zone One Secretary Arif Waheed Khan also honored Asif Mahmood's legacy, highlighting his work with the Liaquatabad Eaglets and Al-Mansoorah Ground. Tahir Mahmood, former first-class cricketer and coach, along with his son-in-law, PCB trainer Taimur Mahmood, expressed gratitude for the recognition of Asif Mahmood's contributions. Zone VI President Zia Ahmed Siddiqui pledged his support for the tournament.

Other key attendees included Director Media Dr. Arif Hafeez, RCAK Tournament Committee Chairman Khalid Nafees, RCAK Assistant Secretary Muhammad Ahmad Naqvi, and Zone One Treasurer Tariq Hafeez Siddiqui. The tournament was inaugurated by Tahir Mahmood, who hit the first ball. In the opening match, Muhammad Hussain Gymkhana triumphed over Markhor Cricket Club by 104 runs, thanks to Muhammad Arsalan's century (109), leading Gymkhana to 247/6. Markhor Cricket Club was all out for 143, with notable performances from Muhammad Yousuf Khan, Zubair Khan, Haris Qudus, and Uzair Ali.

Rain threatens high-stakes Afghanistan-Australia clash

LAHORE (ESPNCricinfo): Much like Afghanistan's match against England, the political spectre over this clash is hard to put aside. Matches are rare between the countries with Australia - like England - taking a human rights stance and pledging to suspend bilateral ties while the Taliban remain in power. Cricket Australia publicly demonstrated its commitment to the cause last month by hosting a T20 match featuring an Afghanistan women's XI in Melbourne, bringing the issue firmly back into the spotlight. But underlining the complexities of the issue, Australia do play Afghanistan at ICC events - which has led to some criticism - and this intriguing, budding rivalry will resume in Lahore with much at stake. Given the tournament's sharp format, it's basically sudden death, a virtual quarter-final, after Afghanistan once again knocked out England from an ICC event. But Afghanistan will be eliminated with a loss, while Australia also must win, with a defeat meaning they will have to rely on South Africa being absolutely pummeled by a beleaguered England with nothing to play for. A washout will see Australia through to the semi-final. Australia and Afghanistan once again find themselves pitted in a high-stakes contest at an ICC event. At the 2022 T20 World Cup, Australia emerged with a slim six-run victory in Adelaide that was ultimately not the net-run-rate boost needed as they crashed out early on home soil. Glenn Maxwell, of course, changed the course of the 2023 World Cup with a remarkable double century that still beggars belief. But Afghanistan had some measure of revenge at last year's T20 World Cup as they overcame a brief Maxwell onslaught with a 21-run victory that memorably sealed their place in the semi-finals. And, once again, a semi-final spot is up for grabs. The form line is a little hard to read with both teams having tight wins over a wheezing England. Afghanistan bounced back strongly after a disastrous opening against South Africa while Australia's momentum came to a halt after their clash against the Proteas was washed out. Even though they are considerably weakened - against England they fielded their least experienced attack at an ICC ODI event since 1983 - Australia mustered up their big-game pedigree under pressure to make a statement. Their batting line-up still contains plenty of firepower with centurion Josh Inglis emerging as a genuine star batter across formats. It is little wonder that some believe he's Australia's next captain. A back against the wall triumph is in play, but Australia will have to firstly get past rising Afghanistan in a game that feels evenly poised. Afghanistan will lean on their spin-heavy attack, but Australia do have numerous players adept against the turning ball - led by Inglis. Australia's depleted pace stocks makes that department more equally matched than previous encounters, while an in-form Ibrahim Zadran - coming off a Champions Trophy-best score of 177 - ensures he can go toe-to-toe with his counterparts. The prospect of more bad weather in Lahore could also play a factor in a clash that is set to be just as compelling as the recent matches between these teams. There isn't much cricket history between the countries, but Glenn Maxwell is probably the first name that springs to mind with this match-up. In the last ODI between the teams, a hobbled Maxwell produced one of the greatest ever innings to rescue Australia from the brink at the 2023 World Cup and crush the hearts of Afghanistan.

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England need more variety than just 90mph bowlers: Vaughan

LONDON (BBC): Michael Vaughan has questioned England's over-reliance on selecting out-and-out fast bowlers following their group-stage exit from the Champions Trophy. England bowed out of the tournament on Wednesday after losing their must-win clash with Afghanistan by eight runs. Jos Buttler's side fielded three 90mph bowlers - Jofra Archer, Mark Wood and Jamie Overton - and just one frontline spinner (Adil Rashid) in their bowling attack, and watched as Afghanistan posted a match-winning total of 325-7 after conceding 113 runs in the final 10 overs, six of which were bowled by pace. Earlier in the tournament, a three-pronged pace attack of Wood, Archer and Brydon Carse leaked 226 runs from 26.3 overs as Australia chased 352 to complete a five-wicket win. However, it is far from a new problem for England, according to Vaughan, who criticised the team's management for taking "their eye off white-ball cricket" since winning the 2019 World Cup and 2022 T20 World Cup. England failed to defend either title and have been "all over the place" in terms of selection and tactics, according to the former captain, with their need for speed in the bowling attack at the heart of their struggles. Speaking on the Today programme, Vaughan added: "There's no left-arm seam bowlers, no left-arm spin, no left-handed batters [and] we just seem to be all out in terms of pace. "I don't know who that person is who's made the decision that it's all about pace in white-ball cricket. "If you ask most batters around the world, of course you don't want to face 90mph, but if there's a place where you'd love to face 90mph, it's in the sub-continent. "England have hit both India and [teams] in the Champions Trophy with a huge amount of pace and batters have been deflecting the ball to all parts." Reflecting on England's previous successes with fast-medium bowlers as opposed to out-and-out quicks, Vaughan continued: "I'll just go back to the 2019 World Cup final. I know it's different conditions but Chris Woakes and Liam Plunkett got 6-79 [and] they bowl around 82-84 mph. "Recently, England have been hell-bent on making sure they're looking for that 90mph bowler. "The England Lions tour of Australia - a young chap, Sonny Baker, bowled nicely, he bowled 90mph. He's been given a central contract, or a contract that England can manage. "There's a lad at Essex called Sam Cook. He's 27, he bowls 82mph, he's got 311 wickets in county cricket at an average of 19. He was the pick of the bowlers on the Lions tour and he hasn't got that contract. "It's a clear decision by the England management that it's all about pace. "In the time I've been watching cricket, playing cricket, and involved in English cricket, Stuart Broad and Jimmy Anderson have been our best two bowlers. They don't bowl at 90mph."

UFC & WWE owners 'close' to Saudi deal for boxing league

NEW YORK (BBC): TKO Group Holdings, which owns the UFC and WWE, says it is "close to an agreement" to form a new boxing league funded by Saudi Arabia. It has been reported Saudi Arabian investors are keen to form a league after investing significantly to regularly host heavyweight fights including Tyson Fury, Anthony Joshua and Oleksandr Usyk in the kingdom. The UFC and WWE hold events in Saudi, as do boxing promoters Matchroom and Queensberry, and TKO president and chief operating officer Mark Shapiro told investors on Wednesday about the possible boxing deal. "We are close to an agreement with the Saudis on a creation of a boxing league where TKO would be the producer, the promoter and responsible for all day-to-day operations of the venture, whereby we would receive a fee of \$10m (£7.8m) plus," Shapiro said. "We're not putting any money in, we're not putting any capital in, we're not on the hook for any [costs]." It is unclear what the league would look like and who would compete in it, with most of boxing's biggest stars under contract with key promoters such as Eddie Hearn's Matchroom, Bob Arum's Top Rank and Frank Warren's Queensberry. Shapiro also said TKO would be responsible for overseeing "four large scale super-fights" across 2025 and 2026. "Those may or may not fall into the boxing league itself, they may just be one-offs, but we would be paid a fee to act as the promoter, the producer and the event operator," he said. Turki Alalshikh, chairman of Saudi Arabia's general entertainment authority, has been the face of Saudi involvement in boxing in recent years. Saudi influence over the sport has increased significantly, with many of boxing's biggest events taking place in the kingdom including Fury's two bouts against Usyk in 2024. Events have also taken place outside Saudi under the 'Riyadh Season' banner, one in Los Angeles headlined by Terence Crawford and one at Wembley Stadium headlined by Daniel Dubois.

Maguire header gives 10-man Man Utd win over Ipswich

LONDON (BBC): Ten-man Manchester United recovered from gifting Ipswich a fourth-minute opener at Old Trafford to come out on top in a five-goal thriller thanks to Harry Maguire's header. Maguire powered home Bruno Fernandes' corner two minutes into the second half to give Ruben Amorim only his third home Premier League win. United's success came despite having Patrick Dorgu sent off before the break following the intervention of VAR Craig Pawson after his awful tackle on Ipswich winger Omari Hutchinson had been missed by referee Darren England. Ipswich immediately capitalised on the extra man to level when Jaden Philogene's touchline cross curled in at the far corner as Andre Onana failed to react once Liam Delap had missed it. But that was not Onana's worst mistake of the night as the Cameroon goalkeeper started the game by getting too close to Dorgu as the defender attempted to deal with a long ball downfield. Instead, Dorgu played the ball past Onana to present Philogene with a tap-in. However, it was just the start of a crazy opening as United levelled thanks to Ipswich skipper Sam Morsy, who as he was trying to stop Rasmus Hojlund challenging for Fernandes' deep free-kick, planted a firm header straight into his own net. Four minutes later, United took the lead as Maguire and Diogo Dalot both had attempts on goal saved before the ball broke kindly for Matthijs de Ligt, who sent it into the roof of the net. At that point, it seemed the home side would coast to victory. The reality was far more entertaining. Nothing is quite so simple at Manchester United these days. Manchester United's ability to create mayhem from nothing is incredible. After a terrible week off the pitch, with chief executive Omar Berrada confirming on Monday up to 200 members of staff could lose their jobs and Amorim's criticism of a team that 'didn't turn up' for 70 minutes at Goodison Park, it should have been automatic the home players would be fully focussed from the first whistle. To concede so quickly the way they did was simply staggering. As Dorgu hurtled back to catch a long punt downfield, Onana had a couple of options. He could either yell at his new team-mate to get out of the way so he could tidy up, or he could back off anticipating a back pass. Instead, he got far too close. If there was communication, it didn't get through. Dorgu passed the ball past him and Philogene tapped into an empty net. It was pure comedy gold, unless you were in Amorim's shoes, in which case it was like a recurring disaster movie. However, there are straws for Amorim to clutch at. As at Goodison Park, United rallied. Here, they even played with a degree of cohesion and balance, at least until Dorgu, who looks like the answer to that problematic left-sided wing back slot, recklessly charged into a tackle that rules him out of three games, starting with Sunday's FA Cup fifth round tie with Fulham. Two first-half goals, after one in their previous 17 games, was also reason to celebrate - although something they did not manage against Southampton or Leicester in this stadium earlier this month. In addition, United are clearly a danger at set pieces now, as they scored three goals from a set play in a Premier League game for the first time since September 2016 against Leicester. There are clearly deficiencies though. Rasmus Hojlund still can't score - although the Dane worked hard. And Onana must improve. Having already lost at home to Southampton and United's fellow under-achievers Tottenham this month, and now managed to emerge with nothing from this match, Ipswich are still to win in 2025. It is the first time they have failed to win any of their opening eight top-flight matches in a calendar year since 1970 and it is becoming increasingly difficult to make a case for Ipswich not going

straight back down to the Championship. In patches, they can be good. And in striker Liam Delap and goalkeeper Alex Palmer they have two players of Premier League standard. But the brutal truth is that meeting the physical and technical demands of a 38-game top flight season looks beyond them. Keeping the opposition out is a clear problem. They have now conceded 24 goals in their last eight league games, a ratio which makes it virtually impossible to win matches. Given they emerged from the Championship only months ago, and should therefore be used to dealing with balls launched into their penalty area, manager Kieran McKenna will have been disappointed to repeatedly concede in such a basic function. It's a flaw that could prove fatal by the end of May. Onana v De Gea verdict after Man Utd keeper's latest error Manchester United goalkeeper Andre Onana is in the spotlight again after his error led to

Ipswich Town taking an early lead in their Premier League game on Wednesday evening. United rallied and eventually won the game 3-2 despite being down to 10 men, but the mistake has reignited the debate about the Cameroon international. The 28-year-old endured a tough start to life at Old Trafford but appeared to have turned a corner earlier this season when he had the most clean sheets in England's top flight with six. However, four minutes in to the game against the Tractor Boys, he illustrated why United fans and pundits have persistent doubts about him. He dashed to the edge of his penalty area as Patrick Dorgu ran towards him and, as the left wing-back nudged the ball towards where he expected Onana to be, it gifted Jaden Philogene with a tap-in. The former Aston Villa winger later scored his second of the night from a deep corner that deceived Onana because of Liam Delap's run across him. Speaking on TNT Sports, former Blackburn and Wales midfielder

Robbie Savage said: "I've got no idea why Onana is running out to that position [for the first goal]. "Dorgu has got it under control, no problem at all. He shouldn't come there. "You should be talking, lay it back to him on his right foot and then he can clear it. I don't know why he's come." Former United defender Rio Ferdinand added: "It was a terrible start. Onana doesn't need to come. The full-back is in complete control and he can just hold his ground and let him play it back to him." On BBC Radio 5 Live, former Celtic boss Neil Lennon added: "I don't know where Andre Onana is going. It is a shambles." Onana's blunders return to fore United paid £47m to sign Onana from Inter Milan in the summer of 2023 as a replacement for four-time club player of the year David de Gea. But he has largely failed to shake the view that his occasional fallibility adds to the fragility of a struggling side. Onana made several glaring mistakes in the Champions League last

term that contributed heavily to United's early exit from the competition at the group stage. There had already been notable errors against Viktoria Plzen, Brighton and Nottingham Forest this season prior to the Ipswich game as he has slipped down in the race for the Golden Glove. His performance in the 1-0 defeat at Tottenham, where he pushed Lucas Bergvall's tame effort straight into the path of goalscorer James Maddison, encouraged further scrutiny. His understudy, Turkey's Altay Bayindir, has played just seven times since joining in September 2023 and is yet to start a Premier League game. Onana's form and the reluctance to use Bayindir prompts questions about the decision to let De Gea, Dean Henderson and Czech Republic goalkeeper Matej Kovar to leave for less than half the amount Inter were paid for their goalkeeper. De Gea, 34, who has won 45 caps for Spain and is now at Fiorentina in Serie A, is the obvious barometer.



In brief

Nine criminals arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police apprehended nine criminals, including five drug peddlers, involved in various criminal activities over the past 24 hours and recovered weapons and narcotics from their possession. A spokesperson told APP that teams from Karachi Company, Sabzi Mandi, Sihala, Lohi Bher, and Shahzad Town police stations took action against individuals involved in illegal weapons possession and drug peddling. During the operation, police arrested nine suspects and seized 2,991 grams of heroin, 210 grams of ice, and a pistol with ammunition from them. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan said the Islamabad Police are committed to ensuring the safety of citizens and will not allow any elements to disrupt peace in the federal capital. "Protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens remains our top priority," he added.

Motorcycle theft gang held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have intensified their crackdown on motorcycle theft, arresting two key members of an organized gang involved in multiple incidents. A public relations officer said on Thursday that a team from Aabpara Police Station apprehended the suspects and recovered seven stolen motorcycles worth millions of rupees, along with other stolen items. He said the arrested suspects have been identified as Anish Masih and Ramish Masih. He said efforts are underway to apprehend their accomplices and facilitators. He said operations against those depriving citizens of their valuable assets will continue. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq emphasized the department's commitment to ensuring the safety of citizens and their property.

3 drug dealers apprehended

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police continued its operations against drug dealers and arrested three accused recovering 1.12 kilograms heroin and 2.6 kg charas. According to the police spokesman, the New Town Police recovered 1.12 kg heroin from accused Abrar. Similarly, the Cantt Police held accused Qausain on the recovery of 1.54 kg charas while the Dhamial Police nabbed accused Akhtar Gul with 1.06 kg of the contraband item.

RCCI hold session

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Standing Committee on Healthcare, under the organized an impactful awareness session on waterborne diseases here on Thursday. The session aimed to create awareness on the causes, preventive measures and the treatment methods to the waterborne disease. The session which was organized under the presidency of VP Fahad Barlas and Chairman Dr. Mazhar Qayyum, featured an insightful address by Dr. Farhat Abbas, with Dr. Rafiq Ahmad (Deputy Director Operations, Punjab Healthcare Commission) as the chief guest. Former RCCI President Dr. Shimal Daud Arain and the committee members participated in the discussion. Key topics included the challenges faced by the healthcare industry, regulatory barriers, access to essential healthcare products, and the economic impact on the sector. Participants shared strategies for improving healthcare delivery.

IHC directs CDA, MCI to resolve issues of street vendors

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday directed the authorities including Capital Development Authority (CDA), to address the problems of street-vendors/stallholders (rehriabaans) in capital.

The court instructed the CDA, Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI), District Administration and ICT traffic police to resolve the issues of petitioners 'rehriabaans' with coordination and informed it on next hearing. A single member bench of IHC comprising Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan heard the case filed by vendors through Advocate Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chatha.

At the outset of hearing, the MCI officials took the stance that the corporation only looks at their licenses. Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq remarked that this is not a legal matter but a matter of coordination. The CDA and MCI should coordinate among themselves so that this problem does not arise.

The court, while address-

sing to the Additional Deputy Commissioner, said that these are several hundred very poor earners, why did they have to file a petition even?

Advocate Imaan Mazari argued that this is not an issue of traffic disruption.

The court remarked that these vendors filed application to the deputy commissioner office but it didn't take notice even after hearing them. The Additional Deputy Commissioner said that this is a matter for MCI and CDA, the traffic police take action only when necessary.

The petitioners' lawyer also produced the videos and pictures in USB before the court and said that the court has been wrongly told that this is a traffic issue.

Money is asked from these people and when they do not give it, the police take them away, she said.

The Assistant Commissioner said that we do not take action against those stalls of vendors who have licenses.

The court remarked that

there is a license fee of Rs 2,000, their applications have been pending with you for two years.

The MCI officials said that a bill regarding 'rehriabaans' had come to the Senate, on which we have given comments.

The CDA lawyer said that if the court gives time, we will resolve the matter soon. Advocate Imaan Mazari said that when we contact them, they do not give any response.

The CDA lawyer said that if the vendors come with the Director DMA and MCI, we will resolve the matter.

The court inquired who monitors the license? The CDA lawyer said that the MCI inspectors monitor it.

The court ordered the MCI, CDA and the traffic police to resolve the matter of the petitioner vendors. The parties will present the document regarding resolution of the issue to the court at the next hearing. The court adjourned the further hearing of the case for a week.

NUST hosts Water Conservation Walk

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) successfully organized a Water Conservation Walk on Thursday aimed at raising awareness about the importance of preserving water resources and promoting sustainable practices among students, faculty, and the wider community.

The event saw enthusiastic participation from students, faculty members, and environmental enthusiasts, all united in their commitment to addressing the global water crisis.

The walk was graced by the esteemed presence of Rector NUST, Dr. Muhammad Zahid Latif who emphasized the critical

role of educational institutions in fostering environmental stewardship.

In his keynote address, Dr. Latif highlighted the urgency of water conservation in the face of growing water scarcity and climate change. "Water is a precious resource, and its conservation is not just a responsibility but a necessity for our survival," said Dr. Muhammad Zahid Latif.

"At NUST, we are committed to leading by example and inspiring our students and community to adopt sustainable practices that ensure a better future for generations to come", he said. The event featured a walkathon across the NUST campus, followed by interactive sessions and

awareness booths showcasing innovative water-saving technologies and practices. Participants were also educated on simple yet effective measures to conserve water in their daily lives.

NUST has consistently been at the forefront of promoting sustainability and environmental consciousness. This event is part of the university's broader initiative to integrate sustainable development goals into its academic and extracurricular programs.

The Water Conservation Walk concluded with a pledge-taking ceremony, where participants vowed to take proactive steps toward water conservation in their personal and professional lives.

PAL honors Portuguese writer Teresa Nicolau

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) held a special session as part of the 'Meet the Writers' series in honor of renowned Portuguese writer and cultural journalist, Teresa Nicolau.

The event was presided over by the Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, Manuel Frederico Pinheiro Da Silva, said a press release here on Thursday.

Portuguese Ambassador to Pakistan Manuel Frederico Pinheiro Da Silva in his remarks, expressed his pleasure at visiting the PAL for the fourth time and emphasized the need to further enhance literary collaboration between the two countries.

Teresa Nicolau in her address shared that she was born in Portugal in 1973. Her numerous articles on culture and the arts have been published in prominent Portuguese journals.

She has also hosted television and radio programs on cultural and artistic topics. She has received the Portuguese Author Award and the Cultural Journals Award.

Moreover, she holds a Ph.D. in Journalism and Society, as well as a degree in Communication Sciences. She has also completed a training course in film direction from the New York Film Academy.

While responding to questions from the audience, she expressed her delight at meeting with the people of Pakistan. She also attended the Lahore Literature Festival, where she had the opportunity to interact with Pakistani writers and intellectuals.

She remarked that Vasco da Gama was an adventurer who reached the Indian subcontinent with his fleet, but colonialism was a political game played by politicians, which she does not

view favorably.

Chairperson of PAL Dr. Najeeba Arif in her address noted that a Portuguese novelist, José Luís Peixoto, had previously visited the Academy, and her novel had been translated into Urdu and published.

She affirmed her commitment to continuing such translation initiatives, as they foster harmony and cooperation between nations and strengthen fraternal ties.

Dr. Arif also highlighted the significance of the event and expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to engage with Teresa Nicolau.

She extended heartfelt thanks to the distinguished Portuguese guests and all the participants. As a token of appreciation, she presented the foreign guests with the publications of the Academy. Writers from Rawalpindi and Islamabad attended the event.

Electricity theft; 2457 held, Rs348.5m recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): During the operations taken so far to prevent electricity theft, as many as 3658 cases had been registered across the division out of which 2457 accused had been arrested.

In addition, Rs 348.5 million has also been recovered so far this was briefed by the IESCO officials during a meeting on the power theft issue. Presided by Commissioner Rawalpindi, Engr Amir Khattak at his office, the meeting was attended by Chief Engineer IESCO Ghulam Rasool, Additional Director Hamid Haseeb, Additional Commissioner Coordination Syed Nazarat Ali, Deputy Commissioner Hassan Waqar Cheema, IESCO officials, other relevant officers of Special Branch and Police, besides Deputy Commissioner and

DPO Attock, Jhelum, Murree and Chakwal, through video link. It was briefed that according to the consumer profile, there were 3,445,344 domestic consumers, 506,950 commercial and 18,698 industrial consumers in the division.

The meeting was apprised that the district administration, police and IESCO officers and officials were jointly conducting crackdown against electricity theft. A report on the action taken against electricity thieves in each district and the collection of fines and arrears was also presented in the meeting.

The commissioner underlined the need for more stringent measures against the elements involved in power theft, to protect the national exchequer from loss. He directed that continuous monitoring against

electricity thieves was necessary and there should be no laxity in registering cases against such law-breaking elements.

Engineer Amir Khattak said that people are facing load shedding and overcharging due to the power theft. He issued instructions to all concerned officers to intensify action against power thieves and defaulters and ensure 100 percent recovery in all districts.

"Action should be taken on a priority basis against the culprits and defaulters, and disconnect the electricity connections such elements immediately. The Commissioner further directed to compile a record of FIRs against power thieves. He said that individual recovery should be made from electricity thieves and not to impose fine on entire areas or villages.



ISLAMABAD: Country Coordinator of KNH Pakistan Kiran Shahzadi presenting souvenir to Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi during a seminar.

IGP orders transparent, merit-based investigations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, presided over a meeting on Thursday at the Central Police Office with officers of the investigation wing.

A public relations officer told APP that the meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Muhammad Arslan Shahzaib, investigation teams, and other senior officers.

He said the IGP Rizvi reviewed the investigation system and ongoing cases, directing officers to ensure efficient case resolution and the swift arrest of nominated suspects.

IGP Rizvi said investigations should be conducted using modern technology to meet the demands of the evolving era. Officers were instructed to ensure all cases are handled transparently and on merit.

IG further said the revamping of the investigation wing aims to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

"Criminal cases should be investigated thoroughly and fairly, ensuring transparency so that criminals can be brought to justice and crime eradicated from society," he added.

ANF seizes over 205 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations across the country managed to recover over 205 kg drugs worth more than Rs 17.1 million and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a woman arrested in Karkhano Market Hayatabad, Peshawar.

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

In another operation, 1.1 kg weed was recovered from a parcel sent from the UK at a courier office in Lahore and two suspects were arrested.

200 kg hashish hidden in eight sacks of almonds was recovered near Kuchlak Bypass Road Quetta and a suspect was arrested.

In 4th operation, 2 kg ice was recovered from 2 suspects rounded up near Airport Road Quetta.

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

AIOU launches spring tree plantation campaign

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) under the Green Pakistan initiative will conduct a nationwide tree plantation campaign through its regional offices, stated the university's Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood while inaugurating the tree plantation campaign on Thursday.

The campaign for the year 2025 was officially launched with tree planting at the "Students Park," located adjacent to the Science Block and Project Directorate Building. Participating in the event were Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Vice Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University; Professor Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah, Vice Chancellor Punjab University; Dr. Waseem Qazi, Vice Chancellor Iqra University and Dr. Aurangzeb Khan, Vice Chancellor Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Dewan University, Karachi.

Vice Chancellors emphasized the importance of tree planting for the country, stating that they are making every possible effort to fulfill this crucial need. They highlighted that Pakistan is among the most vulnerable nations to climate change, and by participating in this plantation campaign, the country's youth can help mitigate this risk.

Farewell ceremony for retiring officers held

ISLAMABAD (APP): A farewell ceremony was held on Thursday at Safe City Islamabad in honor of Sub-Inspector Muhammad Ashfaq and Sub-Inspector Tafseer Hussain, who retired from the wireless staff of Islamabad Police.

The event was attended by Deputy Inspector General Safe City Shakir Hussain Dawar as the chief guest. A police spokesperson told APP that during the ceremony, DIG Safe City Islamabad commended the contributions of the retiring officers, stating that retirement is a natural part of service. "Whoever starts

their service will eventually retire. The real honor lies in serving with integrity and dedication," he said.

DIG Shakir emphasized the importance of performing duties with honesty and commitment, encouraging officers to leave a legacy of good character. "We should pledge to serve the public as much as possible during our tenure to earn the blessings of Allah," he added.

DIG Shakir further stated that the retiring officers had dedicated a significant portion of their lives to public service through the police department, which, in turn, had given them

respect and recognition. "For this, we should always be grateful to Allah," he said.

DIG assured the retired officers that his office would always remain open to them for any personal or official concerns.

On this occasion, the retiring officers expressed gratitude for the recognition and thanked DIG Shakir for the honor.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the chief guest presented honorary police shields and gifts to the retired officers and extended his best wishes for their future endeavors.

ICT admin launches fair price shops

ISLAMABAD (APP): The district administration of Islamabad on Thursday decided to set up fair price shops at 17 key locations across the city, allowing citizens to purchase essential food items at wholesale rates.

In this regard, the district administration has released a list of locations where fair price shops will be established. These shops will offer essential groceries at reduced rates, helping residents manage their expenses during Ramadan.

The initiative is part of a broader effort to support the community during a time when demand for food items typically rises.

The fair price shops will be operational in prominent areas, including G-9 Markaz, I-8, F-8, and E-11. Other locations such as F-10, F-11, G-13, and Bara Kahu will also host these shops.

Additionally, residents in areas like Bari Imam, Bhara Kahu, Pakistan Town, F-7, and F-6 will benefit from the initiative.

Shops will also be set up in G-6, G-7, Lethrar Road, and I-11/4, ensuring widespread coverage across the city.

The district administra-

tion has assigned responsibilities to all assistant commissioners to oversee the smooth operation of these shops. Their role will include monitoring the availability of goods, ensuring fair pricing, and addressing any issues that may arise. This step is intended to maintain transparency and efficiency in the distribution process.

The fair price shops will offer a range of essential items, including staples like flour, sugar, rice, and cooking oil. By providing these goods at wholesale rates, the administration aims to reduce the financial burden on households, particularly those with limited incomes. The initiative is expected to benefit thousands of families across Islamabad.

This move comes in response to the annual surge in demand for groceries during Ramadan, a month marked by increased consumption due to fasting and communal meals. By setting up these shops, the administration hopes to curb price hikes and prevent exploitation by middlemen, ensuring that residents can access affordable food without difficulty.

The decision has been

welcomed by residents, who often face challenges in managing their budgets during Ramadan. Many have expressed appreciation for the administration's efforts to address their concerns and provide practical solutions. The initiative is seen as a step toward fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility during the holy month.

In addition to the fair price shops, the district administration is also exploring other measures to support residents. These include monitoring market prices, cracking down on hoarding, and ensuring the availability of essential goods in local markets. The goal is to create a balanced and fair environment for both consumers and retailers.

The establishment of fair price shops is not a new concept, but its implementation during Ramadan holds particular significance.

The holy month is a time of reflection, charity, and community, and the administration's efforts align with these values.

By making essential goods more accessible, the initiative aims to promote a sense of solidarity and care among residents.

ICT admin cracks down on aggressive begging

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Ramadan approaches, residents of Islamabad are voicing frustration over persistent issues with professional beggars and rising prices.

They were growing increasingly frustrated with the presence of professional beggars in public spaces, particularly around shop-

ping areas and open-air restaurants.

Many had reported that these individuals often create disturbances, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, when they become more active and persistent in their demands for charity. This has led to discomfort among citizens who are trying to go about their daily routines or enjoy meals outdoors.

In response to these concerns, the district administration have stepped up efforts to address the issue.

The administration has launched a crackdown on aggressive begging, aiming to reduce the presence of these individuals in high-traffic areas. While the move has been welcomed by some, others argue that a more long-term solution is needed to address the root causes of begging, such as poverty and lack of employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, the district administration has also taken action against price gouging ahead of Ramadan. In this regard, the AC recently led a raid in a local vegetable market, resulting in the arrest of six

shopkeepers who were found charging prices higher than the government-approved rates. This crackdown is part of a broader effort to ensure that essential goods remain affordable during the holy month, when demand typically surges.

The arrests have sent a strong message to vendors across the city, with officials warning that strict measures will be taken against anyone found violating price regulations.

The government has also urged citizens to report any instances of overcharging, emphasizing the importance of fair pricing during a time when many families are preparing for Ramadan festivities.

As citizens prepare for Ramadan, the dual challenges of aggressive begging and price gouging remain at the forefront of public concern. While the recent crackdowns have provided some relief, it is clear that sustained efforts will be required to create a more equitable and comfortable environment for all residents during this important time of year.

OIC to establish center

KABUL (BNA): The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has announced plans to build a large carpet weaving center in Kabul aimed at providing vocational training and job opportunities for Afghans. This initiative was discussed, during a meeting between Mohammed Sayeed Al-Ayash, head of the OIC office in Afghanistan, and Mullah Abdul Manan Omari, the acting Minister of Labor and Social Affairs.

Highway blocked

KABUL (Amu TV): The Logar-Paktia highway has been blocked in the Kotal Tira area due to an avalanche, sources said. The Taliban-controlled Logar Public Works Department confirmed the incident and said clearing operations are underway. The department urged citizens to avoid traveling on the route until further notice. Each year, snowfall causes highway and road closures, particularly in rural areas, disrupting transportation.

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

Govt sign agreement with 25 institutions



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Education has signed a cooperation agreement with 25 ministries and government agencies to promote literacy, expand education, and enhance the capacity of employees. Sakhaullah Saeed, Deputy Minister for Education and Training, stated that educational services are being provided to all remote areas of the country. He also emphasized that efforts to identify

and eliminate “ghost schools” are ongoing. The Deputy Minister further added: “In the past, there were ghost schools, and this legacy still remains. However, we have made significant progress in eliminating ghost positions and schools.” Meanwhile, the National Mobilization Director of the Literacy Department at the Ministry of Education announced the establishment of over

14,000 literacy courses across the country. Zahidullah Salimi, National Mobilization Director of the Literacy Department, said: “A total of 14,090 literacy courses have been established nationwide, providing education opportunities to 290,427 individuals.” According to ministry officials, the government currently funds 100% of the Ministry of Education’s budget.

Kunduz inaugurates maternal, child hospital

KUNDUZ (BNA): A new 100-bed maternal and child health hospital has been inaugurated in Kunduz, marking a significant step in improving healthcare services in the province. The facility was officially opened by Mawlawi Habib-ur-Rahman Sahib, the Deputy Governor of Kunduz.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Dr. Mohammad-ullah Hakmat, the Director

of Public Health in Kunduz, stated that the hospital was built with financial support from the Ministry of Public Health and is equipped with modern medical technology. The hospital is now operational and is expected to ease the burden on healthcare facilities in Kunduz and the wider northeastern region, providing critical medical

services for women and children. Local residents welcomed the initiative, expressing gratitude to the Ministry of Public Health and the provincial health department for their efforts in constructing and equipping the facility. Many noted that the new hospital will significantly improve access to essential medical care in the region.

Passports and Afghan Post sign memorandum



KABUL (TOLONews): The General Directorate of Passports and Afghan Post signed a memorandum to facilitate the passport issuance process for citizens. According to this memorandum, from now on, citizens can receive their passports at their doorstep by paying 100 Afghanis. Abdul Karim Hasib, the Director General of Passports, called this memorandum an important step in providing convenience for citizens and spoke about the department’s future plans and initiatives to further simplify the passport issuance process.

The Director General of Passports added: “Today, Alhamdulillah, we have

reached a stage where we can sign a memorandum with Afghan Post, allowing individuals who wish to obtain their passport to receive it at their doorstep for a payment of 100 Afghanis.” Rahmatullah Maki, the Director General of Afghan Post, stated that this memorandum was signed to facilitate the passport issuance process for applicants across the country. Maki further explained: “When our employee is informed that you want to apply for a passport, you will need to complete the biometric process. After that, your passport will be delivered to your doorstep. If it is ready today, it will be

delivered the same day. If it takes until tomorrow, it will be printed and dispatched accordingly.” At the same time, several residents of the capital have praised the signing of this memorandum between the two departments. Samir Ahmad, a Kabul resident, said: “Our fellow citizens who applied for a passport had to wait for a long time. This initiative can solve that issue and is a great step forward.” According to officials, this process began in Kabul on Wednesday, February 26. It will also be implemented in Herat, Kandahar, Balkh, and Jalalabad in the upcoming solar year (1403).

Afghanistan’s Olive production increased

NANGARHAR (BNA): Olive production in Afghanistan’s eastern Nangarhar province reached 1,100 tons this year, according to officials from the Wadi Agricultural Corporation. Eng. Nidaullah Nyazi, Head of Trade and Marketing at the company, told Bakhtar News Agency that from this year’s harvest, the company has so far produced 135,000 liters of olive oil and 30 tons of

pickled olives. Processing and production remain ongoing. Nyazi noted that the company has expanded its production, processing, and packaging facilities to enhance capacity and improve supply to both domestic and international markets. He also highlighted the role of the company’s 71-kilometer-long irrigation canal, which provides

water for 31,000 hectares of farmland. Of this, 11,400 hectares are directly managed by the company, while the rest is privately owned. Officials report a notable improvement in the quality of olive products this year. The company has recently produced an additional 4.5 tons of olive oil and pickles, which have seen strong demand in local markets.

Baradar calls for national unity

KABUL (Amu TV): Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban’s deputy chief minister for economic affairs, called for “national unity” during a gathering of Shiite citizens in Kabul, asserting that they view Afghanistan’s ethnic diversity as a “symbol of national cohesion.” The event, titled “Preserving National Unity and Supporting the System,” was organized by the Taliban-affiliated High Commission of Shiite Affairs and took place at the Loya Jirga Hall, according to a Taliban statement. In his remarks, Baradar criticized Afghanistan’s political history, arguing that the country had been “wrongly divided into political factions,” which, in his view, had weakened national unity on key issues. “As a result, no meaningful national unity has been achieved in Afghanistan so far,” he said, stressing that solidarity was essential for the country’s political and economic development. “Nations that maintain internal unity and cohesion have easily achieved great goals,” he added, reiterating that “Afghanistan is the common home of all Afghans.”

Baradar’s comments come as concerns persist over the Taliban’s treatment of Afghanistan’s ethnic and religious minorities. Rights groups and international organizations have accused the Taliban of discriminating against certain communities and restricting religious freedoms. Critics contend that the Taliban-led government is dominated by officials from a single ethnic group, raising fears of political exclusion. Meanwhile, the observance of Ashura, a major religious event for Shiite Muslims, has faced increasing restrictions under Taliban rule over the past three years.

Taliban have also banned the celebration of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, removing it from Afghanistan’s official calendar.

School enforces new dress code

HERAT (Amu TV): A school in the western province of Herat has made wearing the Taliban’s newly mandated school uniform compulsory for students, according to sources and an official notice obtained by Amu TV. The notice, issued by Saifi Herawi School in Herat, instructs students to adhere to the dress code introduced by the Taliban-controlled Ministry of Education. The notice says that students in grades 1 to 9 must wear a light blue pirhan (tunic) and tunban (trousers) with a white cap. It also says that students in grades 10 to 12 must wear a white tunic and trousers along with a white turban.

The regulation, approved by Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Taliban’s supreme leader, requires male students and teachers to wear traditional long tunics and trousers (pirhan and tunban), along with a white turban or cap. Under the directive, students in grades 1 to 9 must wear light blue pirhan and tunban with a white turban or cap, while those in grades 10 to 12 are required to wear an all-white version of the same attire. The regulation also specifies that the tunic must extend below the knees. While private schools are allowed to choose their own uniform colors, they must still comply with the Taliban’s broader guidelines. The Taliban’s Oversight and Evaluation Department has been tasked with enforcing the dress code nationwide. The new policy closely mirrors the uniform requirements imposed during the Taliban’s first regime in the late 1990s. The dress code is part of a broader set of education policies introduced by the Taliban, which have drawn widespread criticism. Many Afghans view the move as an attempt to further Islamize the school system and erase distinctions between public schools and religious madrasas.

Support for private sector boosts export growth

KABUL (TOLONews): The Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan organized a scientific-research seminar in Kabul under the title “Economic Responsibilities of the Islamic System.” During the event, Nooruddin Azizi, Acting Minister of Commerce, emphasized that the Islamic Emirate’s support for the private sector has led to the growth of Afghanistan’s trade, with the country’s exports seeing a significant increase compared to the Republic era. He stated: “Claims that the Islamic Emirate receives aid from the Americans are false. If such aid existed, I would be the first to know. Not a single rupee reaches the Islamic Emirate.”

Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy, said that Afghanistan has achieved significant success by pursuing a policy of domestic resource growth. He added: “The Islamic Emirate, considering the structure of the Islamic system and Afghanistan’s historical, cultural, religious, and national values, strives to manage the country’s economy through self-reliance and endogenous growth.” Mohammad Yunous Mo-mand, Deputy Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, stated: “Mechanizing agriculture, standardizing agricultural products, extracting minerals, expanding the industrial sector, and strengthening



trade relations with foreign countries are crucial for Afghanistan’s economic progress.” According to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, supporting the private sector, allocating land to increase domestic production, expanding agri-

culture to achieve self-sufficiency, and establishing mineral processing factories to boost exports have been among the fundamental initiatives of the Islamic Emirate over the past three years, which have kept Afghanistan’s economic situation relatively stable.

Minister meets with Head of European Int’l Partnership agency

KABUL (Ariana News): The Acting Minister of Economy, Din Mohammad Hanif, met with Peteris Ustubs, Head of European Partnership agency to discuss improving economic cooperation, program coordination, and continuing humanitarian and development assistance.

In the meeting, the Acting Minister of Economy voiced appreciation for the continuation of humanitarian assistance from the European Partnership for Afghanistan. The two sides discussed further coordination in arranging programs and plans of the European Partnership for Afghanistan, in accordance with the economic needs of the people and the country’s economic priorities in different sectors.

Hanif emphasized the current economic situation, important economic achievements, development and economic priorities and programs in order to create job opportunities, reduce poverty, and achieve sustainable economic growth. He also called for the unfreezing of the country’s



foreign capital, the lifting of financial and banking sanctions, and the focus of the international community on cooperation in implementing development projects vital for Afghanistan’s economic development. On the other hand, Peteris Ustubs, while emphasizing the continuation of humanitarian assistance to people in need and areas vulnerable to climate change, assured the Acting Minister of Economy of the commitment of the agency

to cooperate in implementing support and development programs in the health services sector, treating addicts, strengthening the agricultural sector, combating drug cultivation, supporting the private sector and small businesses, launching small energy production projects, and launching vocational training programs in the center and provinces in order to create job opportunities and improve the household economy.

The Head of the European International Partnership Agency and his accompanying delegation also assured that they will present the opinions, suggestions, and objective facts presented by the Ministry of Economy at the upcoming meeting that is scheduled to be held in June of this year with the participation of EU member states and international institutions on the continuation of humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan.

Taliban flog man as use of corporal punishment expands

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban publicly flogged a man in Feroz Nakhchir district, Samangan province, after convicting him of theft, the Taliban’s Supreme Court announced on Thursday. According to the court’s statement, the man was sentenced to 39 lashes and one year in prison by a local Taliban court, a ruling later upheld by the Supreme Court. The incident is part of a broader escalation in the Taliban’s use of corporal punishment, with reports indicating that at least 100 people, including women, have been publicly flogged across Afghanistan in the past month. Over the past week alone, the Taliban have

publicly flogged 36 people, including nine women, in various provinces. According to an Amu analysis of Taliban court reports, these punishments were carried out from February 20 to 27 in at least eight provinces, including Khost, Faryab, Kabul, Kapisa, Parwan, Herat, Ghazni and Bamian. The individuals were punished for offenses such as “moral misconduct,” theft, and running away from home.” Statistics on Taliban Public Floggings (Feb. 20-27): 36 people flogged 9 women among them Floggings carried out in 8 provinces Charges: Theft, moral misconduct, fleeing home

Despite repeated calls from the United Nations and human rights organizations to end corporal punishment, the Taliban have not only continued but intensified these punishments, particularly against women. Human rights activists argue that the Taliban’s public floggings are a continuation of their brutal justice system from the 1990s, using Sharia law as a political tool to maintain control. “The Taliban use religion as a tool for political survival,” said Ahmad Wais Rahimi, a human rights activist. “These floggings violate fundamental human rights and distort the image of Islam on the global stage.”

Some Afghan citizens say they feel powerless under the Taliban’s justice system, which they view as oppressive and inhumane. “The Taliban punish men and women under various pretexts,” said a Kabul resident. “They have turned sports stadiums into arenas for public floggings, just like in the 1990s.” Another Kabul resident added: “The Taliban have imposed some of the harshest restrictions and punishments in the past three years—floggings, amputations, and even stonings.” As reports of public punishments continue to mount, concerns are growing that the Taliban are fully reinstating their 1990s-era policies, despite international condemnation.

Afghanistan, Turkmenistan sign three MOUs on railway projects

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Public Works has announced that three memorandums of understanding (MOU) have been signed with Turkmenistan in the railway sector. The agreements were signed during a visit to Turkmenistan by a technical delegation of the Ministry of Public Works headed by Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, the deputy minister of public works for railways. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Public Works on Thursday, the two sides have agreed to expand the Herat-Turghundi Station railway line at an estimated cost of \$7 million and complete the remaining 10 kilometers of



the Aqina-Andkhoy railway line. The two sides also reached an agreement on the survey and design of the

55-kilometer Andkhoy-Sheberghan railway project. The Ministry of Public Works said the contracts for

the three projects would be signed in the near future and practical work would begin soon.

Trump demands return of US military gear left in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON (APP): US President Donald Trump has called for the return of billions of dollars' worth of military equipment left behind in Afghanistan after the 2021 American troop withdrawal, according to media reports. The reports said that the president also pressed for the removal of US generals involved in what he described as a disastrous exit.

"We left billions, tens of billions of dollars worth of equipment behind, brand new trucks," Trump said during his first Cabinet meeting. FOX News quoted him as saying, "You see them display it every year, or their little roadway, someplace where they have a road and they drive the, you know, waving the flag and talking about America ... that's all the top of the line stuff. I think we should get a lot of that equipment back."

Trump added, "I think they should give our equipment back. And I told Pete to study that. But we left billions, tens of billions of dollars worth of equipment behind. Brand new trucks. You see them display it every year, on their little roadways," he said. He said the Taliban were selling the military weapons and gear, making Afghanistan, in Trump's words, "one of the biggest sellers of military equipment in the world."

"They're selling 777,000 rifles, 70,000 armour plated ... trucks and

vehicles," he said. "I think we should get it back." He also asserted the US should have kept control of Bagram Air Base, once the largest American military base in Afghanistan now controlled by the Taliban.

The Taliban seized most of the more than \$7 billion worth of equipment US troops left in Afghanistan at the time of the withdrawal in August 2021, according to a Department of Defense report released in 2022. Pakistan has been warning that some of the advanced military equipment left behind by the departing US troops is now in the hand with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists, who have stepped up their cross-border attacks against Pakistan causing significant loss of life and damage to infrastructure.

According to FOX news, although US troops removed or destroyed much of the major equipment that forces used during the drawdown, military equipment including aircraft, ground vehicles and other weapons were left in Afghanistan. The condition of these items remains unknown, but the Pentagon said in the report it would likely fail operationally without maintenance from US contractors. President Joe Biden moved to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan in 2021, building upon plans from the first Trump adminis-

tration in 2020 with Taliban leaders to end the 20-year-old war in the region.

Thirteen US service members were killed during the withdrawal process due to a suicide bombing at Abbey Gate, outside of Hamid Karzai International Airport, and the Taliban quickly seized control of Kabul. Trump's comments came in response to questions about whether he was considering firing military leaders who oversaw the withdrawal. While the president said he wouldn't instruct Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth on what actions the Pentagon should take, Trump said he would "fire every single one of them."

Even so, several key leaders involved in the withdrawal are no longer serving in the military. The commander of US Central Command at the time of the withdrawal, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, has since retired, and in 2024 took full ownership for the loss of US troops. Additionally, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, said at the time that he believed the evacuation should have occurred sooner and that multiple factors contributed to failures in the withdrawal. Both McKenzie and Milley had also said they advised Biden to keep some US troops in Afghanistan after pulling most US forces.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari administering oath of office to Federal Ministers at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Witness identifies both accused in Amir case

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In the Mustafa Amir murder case, a key witness and employee of the accused, Armaghan, recognised both Armaghan and Shiraz in court. During the hearing at Karachi's Judicial Magistrate South Court, the statement of Ghulam Mustafa, the key witness, was recorded.

The witness testified that on the night of January 6, at around 9 PM, a boy arrived, and they opened the door for him. The boy was wearing trousers and a jacket, but he did not see his face. About an hour and a half later, they heard shouting and abusive language, followed by two or three gunshots. Both he and his companion stepped out of the room. After offering the Fajr prayer, they woke up around midday to find Armaghan and his friend present. They were not allowed to go upstairs.

A few days later, the police raided the bungalow. They hid in their room but eventually left. On the 10th, when they returned near the bungalow to collect their belongings, the police arrested them. In court, Armaghan's employee stated that they had told the police everything honestly. That same night, the police took them to the bungalow, where they pointed out bloodstains. The police then took them to the station, took the mobile numbers, and released them. However, they later received a call from the police summoning them again. Finally, the court asked the witness if the accused were present in the courtroom. In response, Ghulam Mustafa identified Armaghan and Shiraz as the accused.

Syrians fear Israeli escalation

DAMASCUS (AFP): In the Syrian region of Kisweh, southwest of Damascus, residents jolted awake by Israeli strikes voiced their fears Wednesday of a fresh escalation after similar attacks had appeared to taper off in recent weeks.

Israel said it had targeted military sites containing weapons in the Tuesday night raids, which came just days after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded the demilitarization of Syria's south. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least two people were killed at the headquarters of a military unit in Kisweh, while other raids struck military sites in Daraa province to the south.

"We heard successive strikes followed by explosions. The sky lit up, then we saw tongues of flame rising," said Ahmed Mohammed, who works at a service station near the military site in Kisweh. "We fear the resumption of Israeli strikes and an Israeli incursion." Members of the new Syrian government's armed forces occupied the site, located in a large field.

Aerial photos taken by AFP showed 20 tanks at the site, three of them blackened by flames. The owner of a nearby car dealership, who gave his name as Rayan, said most of the tanks had been moved there after they were abandoned by the former Syrian armed forces around the time of the fall of president Bashar Assad. "When the missiles fell, the houses and windows shook," he said, adding that a drone had been filming in the area about an hour beforehand.

PHC seeks records against arrest of beggars

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has summoned records from the Deputy Commissioner regarding the arrest of a beggar under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance. The court heard a petition challenging the arrest, which was filed by the beggar's lawyer, on Thursday.

During the hearing, the lawyer argued that the administration has arrested over 300 people under the MPO, including the petitioner, who was later released after clearance. The lawyer contended that despite being accused of begging, the petitioner posed no threat to public order and should not have been arrested under the MPO.

The lawyer further argued that the MPO is a law that is used to maintain public order, but in this case, it was misused to arrest a beggar. The lawyer requested the court to declare the arrest as illegal and to order the administration to release the beggar.

Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah informed the court that the arrested individuals were begging and were detained due to public order concerns. However, Justice Sahibzada Asadullah questioned the justification for arresting beggars under the MPO.

Justice Asadullah asked where in the law it is written that beggars can be detained under the MPO. The judge noted that beggars have their own laws governing their actions and should be dealt with accordingly. He further remarked that now beggars are also being included in the MPO, whereas there is a separate law for beggars that should be followed.

During the hearing, the Additional Advocate General informed the court that the records have been summoned from the Deputy Commissioner's office, and as soon as the records are received, the court will be informed.

The court has postponed further hearing and requested relevant records from the administration. The court has also ordered the administration to provide a detailed report on the arrests made under the MPO.

Court suspends SBP orders of revoking forex exchange license: A division bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Muhammad Ijaz Khan and Justice Mudassir Emir suspended State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) orders to withdraw Orient Exchange Company's category B forex exchange License, on Thursday.

The petitioner, Orient Exchange Company, had applied for an upgrade to a Category-A license; however, SBP, without assigning any reasons, revoked its existing license. The petitioner's counsels Barrister Qasim Wadud and Babar Khan Yousafzai, argued that the revocation was in violation of the principles of natural justice, as no opportunity of hearing was offered to the petitioner prior to the impugned action.

It was further submitted that the petitioner has consistently complied with the 'Fit & Proper' criteria prescribed under the Exchange Companies Manual. The counsel contended that SBP's action was arbitrary, unlawful, and lacking legal justification. The divisional bench of the PHC, after hearing preliminary arguments, suspended the operation of SBP's revocation letter, granting interim relief to the petitioner until further proceedings.

Trump vows March 4 tariffs for Mexico, Canada

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that his proposed 25 per cent tariffs on Mexican and Canadian goods would go into effect on March 4 as scheduled because drugs were still pouring into the US from those countries.

Trump also said he would impose an additional 10pc duty on Chinese goods on that day. This would appear to be on top of the 10pc tariff that he levied on February 4 on imports from China.

Trump said drugs were still coming into the US at "very high and unacceptable levels", with a large percentage of them being the deadly opioid fentanyl. "We cannot allow this scourge to continue to harm the USA, and therefore, until it stops, or is seriously limited, the proposed tariffs scheduled to go into effect on March 4 will, indeed, go into effect, as scheduled," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social media site.

"China will likewise be charged an additional 10pc tariff on that date."

The statement cleared up some confusion over deadlines for the punishing tariffs on Canadian and Mexican goods that Trump has threatened over the fentanyl crisis and US border security. Trump's comments on the matter during his first cabinet meeting seemed to suggest that he may push the deadline back for about one month, until April 1.

Comments from Trump administration officials indicated that the April deadline was for Trump's "reciprocal tariffs" matching import duty rates of other countries and offsetting their other restrictions. His trade advisers consider European countries' value added taxes to be akin to a tariff. Kevin Hassett, the top White House economic adviser, told CNBC television that Trump would determine new tariffs after a study is completed by April 1.

"The schedule is that there's a study coming out on April 1, and after that, the president is going to decide what to do about tariffs policies for all countries," he said, but specifically mentioning Mexico and Canada. Meanwhile, Canadian and Mexican officials were due to meet with Trump administration counterparts in Washington today and on Friday to try to forestall the tariffs, which could deal a serious blow to a highly integrated North American economy.

Economy Minister Marcelo Ebrard will meet with newly confirmed US Trade Representative Jameson Greer today and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Friday.

In Canada, Public Safety Minister David McGuinty said today that the progress Canada has made on tightening security along the border with the United States and combatting drug smuggling should satisfy the Trump administration. "The evidence is irrefutable — progress is being made," McGuinty said in televised remarks to reporters in Washington ahead of two days of talks with US officials.

Israeli official says army won't withdraw from Gaza

GAZA STRIP (AP): Israel will not withdraw from a strategic corridor in the Gaza Strip as called for by the ceasefire, an official said Thursday. Israel's refusal could spark a crisis with Hamas and key mediator Egypt at a sensitive moment for the fragile truce.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said Israeli forces needed to remain in the so-called Philadelphi corridor, on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt, to prevent weapons smuggling. The official spoke hours after Hamas released the remains of four hostages in exchange for over 600 Palestinian prisoners, the last planned swap of the ceasefire's first phase, which ends this weekend. Talks over the second and more difficult stage have yet to begin.

Israel was supposed to begin withdrawing from the Philadelphi corridor on Saturday, the last day of the first phase, and complete it within eight days. Much could hinge on a visit by US President Donald Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, who is expected in the region in the coming days. There was no immediate comment from Hamas or Egypt. But in a statement earlier on Thursday, the militant group said the only way for Israel to secure the release of dozens of hostages still held in Gaza was through negotiations and adhering to the ceasefire agreement.

The remains released Thursday were confirmed to be those of Ohad Yahalomi, Itzhak Elgarat, Shlomo Mantzur and Tsachi Idan, according to the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which represents families of the captives.

Mantzur, 85, was killed in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war, and his body was taken into the territory. The other three were abducted alive and the circumstances surrounding their deaths were not known.

"Our hearts ache upon receiving the bitter news," Israeli President Isaac Herzog said. "In this painful moment, there is some solace in knowing that they will be laid to rest in dignity in Israel." French President Emmanuel Macron said he shared the "immense pain" of the family and loved ones of Yahalomi, who had French citizenship.

Hamas confirmed that over 600 prisoners had been released overnight. Most were detainees returned to Gaza, where they had been rounded up after the Oct. 7 attack and held without charge on security suspicions.

Accused can be handed over after probe under Official Secrets Act is complete: SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail on Thursday observed that [an accused] would be handed over [to army] under the Official Secrets Act after the completion of investigation.

Justice Mandokhail gave the observation during the hearing of intra-court appeal against the trial of civilians in military courts. A seven-member constitutional bench of the Supreme Court is hearing the appeal. The bench under Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan includes Justice Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarat Hilali, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan, and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. The civil society counsel, Faisal Siddiqui, argued that commanding officers had submitted requests for the handover of the accused. The opening words of their

requests were: "Based on the initial investigation, the offence under the Official Secrets Act had been committed."

Advocate Siddiqui submitted that these words in the request were an acknowledgment that the investigation had not yet been completed. The reasons for handing over the accused by the anti-terrorism court were ridiculous. The administrative judge of the court had declared the accused guilty before the investigation was completed, he continued. Justice Mazhar remarked that the wording of the orders in the Rawalpindi and Lahore courts were exactly the same. Justice Mandokhail noted that it seemed the judges of the anti-terrorism courts had problem with their English language.

Advocate Siddiqui stated that the court, not the administrative judge, could order the handover of the

accused. Under Section 59(1) of the Army Act, military officers can be taken into custody by a civilian court for crimes such as murder and others. Justice Mandokhail remarked that in his view, Section 59(4) also applies to those who come under the Army Act, and the handover under the Official Secrets Act would only be possible after the completion of the investigation.

Advocate Siddiqui submitted that the cases in which handover requests had been made did not contain provisions under the Official Secrets Act. Justice Mazhar observed that one FIR did contain sections of the Official Secrets Act. The counsel replied that he had not seen that FIR in the record. Justice Rizvi asked him to read the FIR which contained allegations of vandalism outside a military installation. Later, the bench declared a break in the proceedings.

NK has sent more troops to Russia

SEOUL: South Korea's intelligence agency has assessed that North Korea has sent more soldiers to Russia after suffering heavy casualties on the front lines of the war in Ukraine, local media have reported.

The National Intelligence Service (NIS) said in a statement to South Korean media that Pyongyang redeployed troops to the front in Russia's Kursk region in early February following a monthlong lull. "It appears that there has been a deployment of additional troops, but their size is still being examined," the NIS was quoted as saying by South Korea's state-funded Yonhap News Agency.

Seoul's intelligence assessment follows an analysis last year that Pyongyang had sent about 11,000 soldiers to Russia in its initial deployment in support of Moscow's invasion. Defence analysts have suggested that the North Korean troops are likely to be easy targets for Ukrainian drone and artillery attacks due to their lack of combat experience and inability to communicate with their Russian superiors.

Ukrainian commanders in the field have also reported that Russian forces have used North Korean troops to spearhead attacks and ordered them to take their own lives rather than be captured. In January, the NIS estimated that 300 North Korean soldiers had been killed and 2,700 others injured in battle. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy estimated the number of North Koreans killed or wounded at 4,000.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin have ramped up their military cooperation since holding rare back-to-back summits in 2023 and last June. In November, Kim officially ratified a mutual defence treaty with Russia that obliges the two countries to provide immediate military assistance using "all means" necessary if either faces "aggression". — Aljazeera



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Prizada receiving mortal remains of six Pakistani nationals died in tragic boat incident in Libya.

West Bank's security situation remains alarming: UN

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Weeks of deadly Israeli military raids in the occupied West Bank have turned Palestinian communities into "battlefields" and left 40,000 people homeless, UN humanitarian officials warned Thursday.

Israeli troops used bulldozers in refugee camps for the first time in 20 years which have destroyed public services, including vital electricity and water networks, it was pointed out. The Israeli Defence Minister, Israel Katz, said on Sunday that forces could remain in the camps for the "coming year".

Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN's Palestine refugee agency, UNRWA, said that "fear, uncertainty, and grief once again prevail. Affected camps lie in ruins...Destruction of public infrastructure, bulldozing roads and access restrictions are common place," said More than 50 people including children have been killed since Israeli military raids started five weeks ago, the UN agency said, warning that the West Bank "is becoming a battlefield" where ordinary Palestinians are the first and worst to suffer.

Meanwhile, UN aid co-ordinating office, OCHA, also condemned the "lethal, war-like tactics" being employed by the Israeli military against Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank. OCHA confirmed

further civilian casualties and mass displacement after a two-day Israeli military raid in the northern town of Qabatiya in Jenin governorate that ended on Monday.

Palestinians were detained in the operation, OCHA noted, before reiterating deep concerns about the use of excessive force against civilians and the additional humanitarian needs among people left homeless. UN partners on the ground are doing their utmost to help people uprooted by the violence despite growing "physical and administrative" challenges, OCHA said.

According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), it reached 190,000 people in January with cash assistance and has provided one-off cash assistance to more than 5,000 displaced people from the Jenin refugee camp. In neighbouring Gaza, UN and its humanitarian partners have continued to scale up food security and livelihood support, while six children reportedly died from the cold.

Needs remain enormous amid desperate humanitarian conditions caused by 15 months of constant Israeli bombardment on Gaza. Citing the Gazan health authorities, OCHA said that six children from the Gaza Strip have died in recent days because of the severe

cold, bringing to 15 the total number of youngsters killed by the winter conditions.

Meanwhile, more than 800 trucks entered the Gaza Strip on Tuesday alone, OCHA said. Since the start of the ceasefire on 19 January, WFP has brought more than 30,000 tonnes of food into Gaza. More than 60 kitchens supported by the UN agency across the Strip have handed out nearly 10 million meals, including in North Gaza and Rafah in the south. The biggest aid provider in Gaza, UNRWA, has reached nearly 1.3 million people with flour and reached about two million people with food parcels since the start of the ceasefire.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) also reported that it has delivered animal feed to northern Gaza for the first time since the escalation of hostilities. The aid delivery last week has helped 146 families with livestock in Gaza City alongside another 980 in Deir al Balah.

Between the start of the ceasefire and 21 February, FAO distributed more than 570 metric tonnes of animal feed across the Gaza Strip to some 2,300 families with livestock. OCHA noted in addition that aid partners working in education have identified additional schools in Rafah, Khan Younis and Deir al Balah that were used as shelters for displaced people.