

Türkiye supports Kashmir
ISLAMABAD (APP): Türkiye's Ambassador Irfan Neziroglu on Wednesday expressed his country's unwavering support to the resolution of Kashmir issue for regional peace. "We reaffirm our unwavering support to resolution of Kashmir issue on the basis of justice," he said in his message on 'Kashmir Solidarity Day'. He called for resolution of the Kashmir issue within the framework of the United Nations.

Nawaz condoles
LAHORE (APP): PML-N President Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed deep sense of grief and sorrow over the sad demise of Prince Karim Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of Ismaili community. In his condolence message issued here, he said that services of Prince Karim Aga Khan for promotion of education, health and culture would be remembered.



BEIJING: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday met with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping during his visit to China.

Kashmir to remain corner stone of Pakistan’s foreign policy: PM

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has assured that issue of Jammu and Kashmir was a cornerstone of the country's foreign policy and will continue to be so till its resolution. Talking to a delegation of All Parties Hurriyat Conference here on Wednesday the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's moral, diplomatic, and political support for the struggle of Kashmiri brothers and sisters. "The sacrifices of Kashmiris who have laid down their lives in the struggle for the right to self-determination will not

go in vain," the Prime Minister said. He emphasized the urgent need for the international community to take action against Indian aggression and human rights violations in Kashmir. The Prime Minister reiterated that Pakistan will maintain its unwavering moral, diplomatic, and political support for the Kashmiri people until they achieve their right to self-determination, in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. He also directed Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal and Engineer Amir Muqam to

formulate a strategy to address the concerns and issues faced by refugees in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) expressed their appreciation to the Prime Minister and the Government of Pakistan for their continued solidarity with the Kashmiri people. They also praised Pakistan's unwavering support for the Kashmir freedom movement. The Hurriyat leaders commended the Prime Minister for highlighting the Kashmir issue before the international community through the United

Nations platform. The meeting was attended by Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq, Speaker of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Engineer Amir Muqam, and Attaullah Tarar, among with Kashmiri leaders Ghulam Muhammad Safi, Advocate Parvez, Ijaz Rahmani, Syed Gulshan, Muhammad Ashraf Dar, Shaheen Iqbal, Mushatq Ahmed, Khurshid Ahmed Khan, and Raja Khadim Hussain Shaheen.

Kashmir to be free on day to be part of Pakistan: COAS

F.P. Report
MUZAFFARABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), visited Muzaffarabad, where he paid homage to the sacrifices of the martyrs. Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), visited Muzaffarabad, where he paid homage to the sacrifices of the martyrs. Upon arrival at the Jammu and Kashmir Monument, he laid floral wreath at the Martyrs' Monument and offered rich tributes to the unparalleled sacrifices of the Shuhada. While paying homage to the martyrs of Kashmir, COAS also commended the unwavering dedication, professional excellence, and combat readiness of the deployed officers and soldiers in the face of challenging operational conditions in Kashmir.

He lauded their high morale and vigilance, emphasizing the importance of maintaining peak operational preparedness to deter and counter any hostile provocations. The COAS expressed complete confidence in the battle readiness of the Armed Forces, and reaffirmed that no act of aggression would go unanswered and underscored Pakistan Army's commitment to defend the nation's

sovereignty and territorial integrity with full resolve. Later COAS interacted with the notables and veterans of Kashmir and reiterated Pakistan's steadfast support for the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK). COAS stated that Indian atrocities and rising Hindutva extremism only strengthens the resolve of Kashmiri people in their struggle for self-determination.

He reaffirmed that Pakistan will always stand by them in their just and legitimate cause against state-sponsored repression and oppression. He remarked: "Without any doubt Kashmir will be free one day and part of Pakistan as per the free will and destiny of the people of Kashmir". Earlier, upon arrival, COAS was received by the Commander Rawalpindi Corps.



Pakistan’s agriculture feels heat of winter drought

KARACHI (AA): A severe lack of rainfall this winter is taking a significant toll on Pakistan's agricultural sector, with farmers bracing for lower yields and a potential spike in food prices. The South Asian nation has received nearly 70% less rainfall than normal, leading to a major shortage of irrigation water, particularly in rain-fed regions where farming is highly dependent on seasonal precipitation. The ongoing dry spell is severely affecting winter crops, fruits, and vegetables, particularly in Punjab and Sindh, the two provinces that serve as the country's primary food baskets. According to Sardar Sarfraz, chief meteorologist at the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), the country has experienced

67% less rainfall than usual during the current winter season. Sindh has been the hardest hit by this winter drought, receiving 90% less rainfall than normal so far, while Punjab, the country's most agriculturally productive province, has recorded 69% less precipitation, according to PMD data from September 2024 to Jan. 28, 2025. Other regions have also suffered significant deficits – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan had 64% less rainfall, Gilgit-Baltistan's tally was down 32%, and Pakistan-administered Kashmir recorded a reduction of 72%. Sarfraz, however, expressed hope that a "good rain spell" in the remaining weeks of the winter season could reduce these deficits. He attributed the erratic rainfall patterns to climate

change and shifting global weather phenomena. "Pakistan's winter rainfall is usually good or even in surplus when the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) index is in its positive phase, and significantly lower when the NAO is negative," he explained. **Winter crops facing heavy losses** The ongoing dry spell, coupled with rising temperatures and persistent heat waves, has placed immense stress on Pakistan's agriculture sector, which employs 38% of the country's workforce and plays a crucial role in economic stability. According to Waqar Rizvi, secretary general of the Kisan (Farmer) Board of Pakistan, wheat production – Pakistan's most important crop – could suffer a 30% to 35% reduction this year compared to 2024.

"Over 60% of the country's wheat crop is currently in its grain formation and flowering stage, which makes it extremely vulnerable to drought," Rizvi told Anadolu. "If there is no rainfall in the coming days, we are facing a serious production crisis." Aside from wheat, other key crops such as sugarcane, potatoes, maize, and lentils are also at risk due to the dry conditions, he said. "There's already a 50% drop in sugarcane production, which will lead to a sharp increase in sugar prices," he added. "Usually, we harvest 1,400 to 1,500 maunds (40 kg units) per acre, but this year, the yield has dropped to 600 to 800 maunds per acre," Rizvi explained. He also warned that the government's plan for early cotton sowing in

February and March is also uncertain, as successful cultivation depends on adequate rainfall. Echoing Rizvi's concerns, Mahmood Nawaz Shah, president of the Sindh Abadgar Association, said the country will likely produce less wheat than last year, not only due to insufficient rainfall but also lower sowing rates. "Farmers were reluctant to plant wheat this season because they did not get the promised prices for their crops last year," Shah explained. Pakistan produced 3.14 million tons of wheat in 2024, barely meeting the country's annual consumption of 3.1 million tons. "Last year, prolonged winter and steady rainfall contributed to a bumper crop," he said. "But this year, we don't have those conditions, and

it will finally depend how the weather unfolds in February." Pakistan's food security at risk Experts argue that a combination of climate change, flawed government policies, and urban expansion is putting Pakistan's agricultural sector in jeopardy. A recent report by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association revealed a 33% decline in cotton production in 2024, citing similar environmental and economic challenges. The reduced cotton output will force the government to import over \$2 billion worth of cotton, impacting the textile industry, which contributes 60% of Pakistan's total exports. Similarly, Pakistan's Fruit and Vegetable Exporters Association recorded a 35% drop in cit-

rus production, mainly affecting the country's renowned kinnow exports. "In reality, there is no (government) agriculture policy," Rizvi lamented. "One year, authorities promise farmers incentives and guaranteed procurement, and the next year, it's totally the opposite." Last year, he added, Punjab's government refused to purchase wheat from local farmers, forcing them to sell their produce to flour mills at much lower rates. Beyond climate issues, rapid urbanization and unchecked housing development are also eating into Pakistan's farmlands. The Kisan Board of Pakistan estimates that 20% to 30% of Punjab's fertile agricultural land has been converted into residential and industrial zones. Punjab alone accounts

for 65% of the country's total food production, meaning the loss of farmland could have serious long-term consequences for food security, warned Rizvi. In the provincial capital Lahore, for example, 70% of agricultural land has been repurposed for urban development. In Gujrat, that figure stands at 60%, while in key agricultural districts such as Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, and Kasur, 30% to 40% of fertile land has been lost to real estate and industry. "We have repeatedly demanded that the government impose a blanket ban on the conversion of agricultural land into housing and industrial projects," Rizvi said. "If this trend continues, Pakistan will have to rely heavily on food imports in the coming decades."

Zardari, Xi discuss CPEC 2.0 development

BEIJING (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday met with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping here wherein two sides discussed the positive trajectory of the bilateral relationship, high-quality development of CPEC 2.0, and the significance of people-to-people linkages and cultural exchanges. In the meeting held at the Great Hall of the People during the five-day official visit of President Zardari to China, two leaders also discussed regional and international issues of common interest, and opportunities to even further expand the scope of bilateral partnership, especially through continued high-level exchanges. They highlighted the vital role of CPEC 2.0 in

promoting regional connectivity, shared benefits and common prosperity, including through partnerships with other countries. Both sides also underlined the significance of people-to-people linkages and cultural exchanges for strengthening the China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future in the New Era. Underlining the enduring friendship between the two countries, both leaders also reaffirmed support for each other on the issues of core interest. President Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to its All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership with China and underlined the unique, time-tested and special relationship between the two countries.

He also commended China's exemplary development, progress and prosperity, calling it a manifestation of the vision of the Chinese leadership and the dynamism of the Chinese people. President Zardari also paid rich tribute to President Xi Jinping for China's profound contributions to global development under the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). He termed China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a shining model of the BRI's visionary concept of win-win cooperation. President Zardari extended the invitation to President Xi to visit Pakistan, emphasizing that the people and government of Pakistan hold him in high esteem as a visionary

leader and as a special friend of Pakistan. The meeting was followed by an MoU signing ceremony where the two leaders witnessed the signing of MoUs to enhance cooperation in the fields of science & technology, media, clean energy and socio-economic development, among others. Earlier, President Asif Ali Zardari was warmly welcomed by President Xi and presented with the guard of honour upon his arrival. A group of children also extended a warm welcome and offered a heartfelt reception to the President. After the ceremony, President Xi Jinping hosted a state banquet in honour of President Asif Ali Zardari and his accompanying delegation.



MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif talking to a delegation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.

US flies back expelled Indian migrants

GUJRAT, INDIA (Reuters): A United States military plane carrying illegal Indian immigrants landed in India's northern city of Amritsar on Wednesday, a Reuters witness said, deporting an unspecified number of people as part of President Donald Trump's immigration agenda. Some local media reported that the flight was bringing 205 people back, while others put the number at 104, and that they were mainly from the northern state of Punjab, where Amritsar is located, and the western state of Gujarat. The Trump administration has increasingly turned to the military to help carry out its immigration agenda, using military aircraft to deport migrants and opening military bases to house them. Although illegal Indian immigrants have been deported home by previous US administrations, it is the first time Washington has used a military aircraft for the purpose.

Saif meets Afghan envoy

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, met with Afghanistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Maulvi Sardar Ahmed Shukib, in Islamabad. Senior politician Muhammad Ali Durani and Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil also attended the meeting. On this occasion, Barrister Dr.

Muhammad Ali Saif conveyed a special message from PTI founder Imran Khan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur to Afghanistan's leadership. Dr. Saif stated that Imran Khan sent a message of goodwill to the people of Afghanistan, expressing good wishes and fraternal sentiments from both Imran Khan and the Chief Minister. The meeting emphasized the importance of promoting friendly, mutu-

ally trustworthy, and cooperative relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as strengthening ties between the people of both countries. Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif discussed plans to lead a delegation of tribal and political leaders, as well as scholars, to Afghanistan. Afghanistan's Ambassador expressed reciprocal goodwill sentiments towards Imran Khan, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, and the delegation.

Writing letter to COAS meaningless: Siddiqui

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Irfan Siddiqui has said that so-called letter written by founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan to the Chief of Army Staff is evidence of his deep frustration, and is reflective of the party's negative

mindset about the military. He said at a time, when soldiers and officers are being martyred in fight against militancy, writing such a letter and claiming that a gap has emerged between the public and the armed forces, is "deeply regrettable". This letter will not receive any response nor an

acknowledgement at any level, he said in a talk show at a private television channel. He recalled that Imran Khan had also written a letter to General Asim Munir in early 2023, which was delivered through then President Arif Alvi, but it too received no acknowledgement or a response.



LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami workers participate in 'Kashmir Solidarity Day walk at Mall Road. —APP Photo

Dhee Rani Program: Mass wedding ceremony held for 57 couples in Khanewal

LAHORE (APP): A mass wedding ceremony was organised in Khanewal for 57 couples under Punjab Dhee Rani programme by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

Punjab's Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Sohail Shaukat Butt was the chief guest at the event, while other attendees included MNA Muhammad Khan Daha, MPAs Rana Muhammad Saleem Hanif, Barrister Usama Fazal, Chaudhry Zia-ur-Rehman, Aamir Hayat Hiraj, Rana Babar Hussain, Asghar Hayat Hiraj, former MNA Pir Aslam Bodla, Secretary of Social Welfare Javed Akhtar Mahmood, Deputy Commissioner Salma Sulaiman and DPO Ismail Kharrak.

Provincial Minister for Social Welfare extended congratulations and best

wishes to the newlywed couples on behalf of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. He also distributed Dhee Rani Salami Cards among the couples, granting them a monetary gift of Rs 100,000 each. Additionally, the couples were presented with wedding gifts, including double beds, mattresses, mirrors, dinner sets, cooking utensils, fans and other household items.

In his address, minister said that CM's vision is to serve the people and the Punjab Dhee Rani programme reflects her commitment to public welfare. He emphasised that she is carrying out this initiative purely for the pleasure of Allah. He further remarked that the this program will be remembered in history, highlighting Maryam Nawaz Sharif's maternal role in supporting the daughters of Punjab.

The minister also mentioned that the Himmat Card and Dhee Rani programmes lay the foundation of a welfare society. Through her service, the chief minister has set the groundwork for a Riyasat-e-Madina-like state. He added that the programme also benefits daughters from minority communities.

Deputy Commissioner Salma Suleman also addressed the gathering, conveying the CMs message and congratulations to the couples. The event featured a traditional Jhoomar dance performance, followed by a luncheon for the newlyweds and guests. The ceremony concluded with prayers.

Prominent figures from the district administration, the President of the District Bar Association, Mehr Iftikhar Nikiana and members of civil society were also present.

Speakers deplore world's duplicity on Kashmir issue

RAWALPINDI (APP): Speakers at ceremony was held under the auspices of the Rawalpindi District Bar Association to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day on Wednesday, deplored the world community's duplicity on the lingering Kashmir issue.

They pointed out the double standards of the international community, particularly the United Nations, which had failed to act decisively against India's oppression.

A large number of lawyers attended the event, which took place at the Quaid-e-Azam Hall. The special guests for the event included Hafiz Talha, Ghulam Muhammad Seefi, Ihsan Ullah Mansoor, and Abdul Hamid Lone. led by

Bar President Sardar Manzoor Bashir and General Secretary Asad Mehmood Malik.

Besides Kashmiri leader Abdul Hamid Lone, Ihsan Ullah Mansoor, Ghulam Muhammad Seefi, and Hafiz Talha, who were the special guests, Shahbaz Rajpoot Advocate, President of the High Court Bar Malik Javed Khalid, Member of the Punjab Bar Council Chaudhry Taufiq Asif also addressed the audience.

The speakers emphasized that the entire Pakistani nation had always been ready to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of Kashmir. They condemned India's illegal occupation and aggression, calling for the continued support of the ongoing struggle of people

of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir for its liberation. The speakers affirmed the resolve that the struggle would continue until Kashmir's liberation as the IIOJK would never tolerate India's illegal occupation.

Rawalpindi District Bar President Sardar Manzoor Bashir and General Secretary Asad Mehmood Malik, their speeches, reiterated that the legal community in Rawalpindi, especially the Rawalpindi Bar, had always stood for truth and justice. They vowed to continue raising their voices on every platform, asserting that the Kashmiris have the right to freedom and that India's attempts to suppress their rights are unacceptable.

Kashmir Solidarity Day observed in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): The citizens of Karachi, like other parts of the country, organized rallies and gatherings on Kashmir Day to express solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and reiterate their commitment that the Pakistani people will continue to support the right of self-determination of Kashmiris and oppose Indian domination.

The main rally of the Kashmir Day led by Sindh Minister for Education and Mineral Development was brought out from Peoples Chowranghi and it culminated at Mazar e Quaid.

The rally was attended by Chief Secretary Sindh Asif Hyder Shah, Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh Najmi Alam, Hurriyat leader Syed Muhammad Naseem Yousuf Bukhari, Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi, political leaders, representatives of civil society, social activists, students and a large number of people.

A two-minute silence was observed at the beginning of the rally. The partic-

ipants of the rally carried the Kashmiri flag and solidarity banners with slogans like "Kashmir to become Pakistan" and "We are with Kashmiris".

Syed Sardar Ali Shah, speaking at the occasion, said that geographically Kashmir is a part of Pakistan and despite years of oppression and greedy tactics, India has not been able to get the support of Kashmiris until today because the people there are refusing to accept Indian domination.

India has forgotten that it can never get Kashmir by coercion, he said and expressed the commitment that Pakistan will continue to support the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people and will continue to expose Indian atrocities at every forum.

"Today's day was founded by the Pakistan People's Party to express solidarity with Kashmir and the people of Pakistan renew their support to the oppressed citizens of IIOJK every year," the minister Shah said and added that Quaid Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto whenever got an

opportunity, he never stopped supporting the just cause of Kashmiri people.

The Chief Secretary Sindh Asif Haider Shah said that the people of Pakistan will continue to support Kashmiris diplomatically and morally at all levels.

Hurriyat leader Syed Muhammad Naseem Yusuf Bukhari, who came from Azad Kashmir, said during his speech that "the relationship of the state of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan is based on the word and the decree of the Quaid-i-Azam.

People of IIOJK liked to die but never recognized India, he said and added that over six hundred thousand Kashmiris had sacrificed their lives for the just cause of right of self-determination. He vowed that India has not been able to get Kashmir on the basis of force or greed and will not be able to.

On this occasion, tributes were paid to the martyrs, while special prayers were offered for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs and the freedom fighters of Kashmir.

PPP delegation meets Punjab Governor

LAHORE (APP): Senior leaders and workers of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) from Gujranwala division met Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at Governor's House on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Punjab Governor said that if PPP would come into power in Punjab then it would start equal development projects in all districts of the province.

It was his first priority to strengthen PPP in Punjab, he said and added that doors of Governor House were open for leaders belonging to other parties as well. He said that with the grace of the Allah Almighty and support of the people, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would become next Prime Minister in general elections.

He said that he would soon visit Gujranwala and meet party leaders and workers and convey message of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to them.

Home dept issues transfers, postings orders

LAHORE (APP): The Home Department Punjab has issued the official notification regarding the appointments and transfers in the Punjab Prisons Department under the Punjab Chief Minister's Jail Reforms Policy.

According to the notification. Dr. Muhammad Siddique Gul has been appointed as Superintendent of District Jail Bhakkar, Tahir Majeed has been posted as Additional Superintendent of Central Jail Multan. While the Wajahat Ali Khan has been appointed as Superintendent Jail, Inspectorate of Prisons Punjab, Lahore, and has also been given the additional charge of Superintendent of Sub-Jail Pindi Bhattian.

Further appointments include, Javed Iqbal as Additional Superintendent of High-Security Prison Sahiwal. Muhammad Jafar Syed as Deputy Superintendent Judicial, District Jail Jhang and Asif Murtaza as Deputy Superintendent Development, District Jail Jhang.

Seminar on Kashmir issue held at PU

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab University's Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS) organised a seminar on the root-causes of the Kashmir issue in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day, here on Wednesday. Assistant Professor Dr Mir Waheed Akhlaq from Karakoram International University, Gilgit, was the guest speaker while faculty members and students were also present.

Dr Waheed shed light on the historical roots of Kashmir issue which are linked to colonial era and Britain's imperialistic policies. He said that the treaty of Lahore and the treaty of Amritsar are glaring examples in the context of the Kashmir issue that show how imperialistic ambitions of the British colonisers aggravated the geo-political situation in the Subcontinent. He said that Gilgit-Baltistan in the context of Kashmir had a mixed development trajectory.

India using all possible means to suppress Kashmiris: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awaish Ahmed Khan Leghari on Wednesday said Kashmir Solidarity Day is being observed to honor the sacrifices of Kashmiris who have been resisting illegal Indian occupation for over seven decades.

In his special message on Kashmir Solidarity Day, the minister stated that India has used all possible means to suppress the Kashmiri people's struggle, but their bravery and resilience have kept the issue alive on the global stage. He highlighted that millions, including women, children, and the elderly,

have lost their lives in this struggle for freedom. Despite killing thousands of innocent Kashmiris since 1947, India has only intensified its human rights atrocities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

He said the people of Pakistan have always stood shoulder to shoulder with the Kashmiri people. Every year, Black Day is observed to highlight the human rights violations in IIOJK. On this Day, we stand in solidarity with and support our Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

Sardar Awaish said India has deployed the largest number of troops in

Occupied Kashmir in proportion to its population. The United Nations once recognized Kashmiris' right to decide their future through a referendum, yet this promise remains unfulfilled.

The minister said the Kashmir issue has already led to two wars between India and Pakistan, and lasting peace in the region depends on granting Kashmiris their right to choose their future.

The international community has been watching human rights violations in Kashmir for over seven decades and they must condemn India and hold it accountable for its heinous crimes in the IIOJK.

FIA Lahore arrests two human smugglers

LAHORE (APP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Lahore Zone intensified its operations against human trafficking and visa fraud, resulting in the arrest of two key suspects.

A FIA spokesperson said here on Wednesday that the teams conducted targeted operations in Lahore and Kasur, leading to the arrest of Zahid Mustafa and Amjad Bhatti.

Zahid Mustafa, a wanted fugitive, was arrested for allegedly scamming a citizen with a fake Canadian job offer and embezzling a total of Rs 3.99 million. The

suspect had been on the run since 2024, with a case registered against him at the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle in Lahore.

While, Amjad Bhatti ran a fraudulent employment scheme, deceiving multiple citizens with fake overseas job promises.

During the raid, the officials recovered several Pakistani passports and counterfeit Spanish passports from their possession. Neither of them could provide valid explanations of these documents.

During investigation, both suspects had illegally

collected passports from citizens without authorization, but failed to facilitate their travel abroad. After taking large sums of money, they went into hiding to evade authorities.

FIA Lahore Zone Director Sarfaraz Virk confirmed that operations against human traffickers have been intensified, with ongoing coordination with victims.

The international human trafficking network will be dismantled entirely, "FIA vowed, reiterating its zero-tolerance policy against human smuggling.

Nursing College LGH holds Kashmir solidarity day rally

LAHORE (APP): The Nursing College of Ameer Uddin Medical College, Lahore General Hospital (LGH), organized a rally to express support for the Kashmiri people.

The rally saw enthusiastic participation from faculty members and nursing students, who carried placards advocating for Kashmir's freedom and condemning Indian suppression.

The participants chanted slogans such as "We will hold Kashmir" and

"Kashmir will become Pakistan," while forming human chains as a symbol of solidarity.

Addressing the gathering, Principal Rubina Inam emphasized that Kashmir is the "jugalur vein of Pakistan" and reaffirmed unwavering support for the Kashmiri people in their struggle for their right to self-determination.

She condemned ongoing human rights violations in Indian-administered Kashmir, stating that India continues to

defy international resolutions and norms. She also highlighted that the brutal oppression of Kashmiris stands in stark contrast to India's claims of secularism.

Principal Inam further noted that, under the directives of Principal LGH, Professor Dr. M. Al-Fareed Zafar, the medical staff also joined in protest, reinforcing the message that the people of Pakistan have always stood—and will continue to stand—alongside their Kashmiri brethren.

CS for stringent action against illegal animal markets

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Chief Secretary (CS), Asif Hyder Shah, Wednesday, directed the Wildlife department and Commissioner Karachi to take stringent action against illegal trade of animals and birds in the metropolises.

The chief secretary, while presiding over a meeting regarding Karachi Zoological and Botanical Garden, also advised Karachi Metropolitan Corporation to refrain from acquiring exotic animals for Karachi Zoo in the future, said a statement issued here.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi, Additional Chief Secretary Local Government Syed Khalid Hyder Shah, Municipal Commissioner Afzal Zaidi,

Deputy Commissioner (DC) South Javed Nabi, Director Recreation KMC, and other relevant officials of Karachi Zoological and Botanical Garden.

The chief secretary ordered strict action against those involved in the illegal trade of animals and birds and directed the Wildlife Department and Commissioner Karachi to take immediate measures against illegal animal markets.

He further instructed DC South to coordinate with the police, Wildlife Department, and Cantonment Board to completely eliminate illegal animal trade and shops in Sadder area and submit a report in the regard within 15 days.

It was revealed during the meeting that Karachi Zoo currently houses

around 850 animals and birds of various species while no new animal has been purchased for the zoo since 2012.

The CS emphasized that exotic (non-native) animals should not be purchased for Karachi Zoo as they are unable to survive in the local environment.

He highlighted that due to the lack of suitable space, food, and environmental conditions, exotic animals often suffer from stress, diseases, and premature death.

He advised that all animals in Karachi Zoo must be provided with food and healthcare facilities that meet international standards. He assured that the Sindh government will provide the necessary funds to ensure the well-being of the animals and birds in the zoo.

Tessori inaugurates Apni Lab in Karachi

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori inaugurated "Apni Lab", an initiative by JDC Foundation. Before the inauguration, officials briefed the Governor on the lab's operations, highlighting that medical tests will be conducted at extremely low costs, benefiting middle and lower-income groups.

Additionally, CT scans, ventilator tower services, and technician fees will be available at just Rs. 1,200.

Later, speaking to the media, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori said that he had inaugurated "Apni Lab" at the invitation of JDC's Zafar Abbas. He praised JDC for its unwavering commitment to humanitarian service, regardless of race or background. He noted that JDC runs several welfare projects, including a mortuary, free dialysis services, free laboratory tests, Sehri meals, and community dining facilities.

Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori further revealed that JDC's free laboratory services have conducted over 4.8 million tests so far. He emphasized that a test costing Rs. 3,000 in other facilities is available at just Rs. 40 at JDC, and the organization has imported a CT scan machine worth Rs. 500 million, reducing CT scan costs from Rs. 65,000 to just Rs. 1,500.

He also lauded Zafar Abbas for swiftly responding to any crisis in the city, stating that he fully supports his philanthropic efforts. Appealing to generous individuals, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori urged people to include JDC in their Zakat and donations, especially during Ramadan.

Police ensures security on Kashmir Day

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Police on Wednesday saluted valiant Kashmiri people who were rendering innumerable sacrifices in their struggle for freedom.

According to official sources here, Punjab's Inspector General of Police, Dr Usman Anwar expressed solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) who were fighting for their right to self determination for the past many decades.

To mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, the security measures were heightened across the province, especially in the provincial capital. Over 11,000 police personnel were deployed for security and traffic management, with additional forces stationed at rallies and sensitive points, as well as at A-category events.

Dr Usman Anwar directed the authorities to enhance checking at entrance and exit points of different cities and emphasized that Regional Police Officers (RPOs), City Police Officers (CPOs), District Police Officers (DPOs), and traffic officers should personally monitor security of programmes related to Kashmir Solidarity Day and traffic arrangements.

Foolproof security was being ensured for more than 450 programmes being held in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day.



KARACHI: Work in progress on the footpath of New MA Jinnah Road. —INP Photo

Pension reforms

Paramedics to protest in Front of Parliament House



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Paramedical Association of Naseerullah Khan Babar Memorial Hospital has announced a protest in front of the Parliament House in Islamabad on February 10 against the proposed pension reforms.

In this regard, the general body meeting of the Paramedical Association of Naseerullah Khan Babar Memorial Hospital was held on Wednesday, attended by the Provincial President of the Paramedical Association, Anwar Khan, former President Siraj Barki, Swabi Division President Fazal Hakeem, Shams-ul-Taj (Provincial Additional General Secretary), and Asif Khan Akhunzada, President of Naseerullah Khan Babar Memorial Hospital, Kohat Road.

Addressing the meeting, Provincial President Anwar Khan announced a protest sit-in in front of the Parliament House, Islamabad, on February 10 against the proposed pension reforms.

Anwar Khan criticized the government, claiming that public sector employees are being deceived under the guise of pension reforms.

He pointed out that in 2022, the provincial government imposed a 25% cut on pensions, while the federal government reduced pensions by 20%, totaling a 45% deduction, which he described as an act of injustice. He urged the government to reconsider its decision and resolve the

issue immediately.

He further demanded the acceleration of the promotion process for paramedical staff, highlighting the growing frustration among government employees due to delayed career advancements.

Speaking on the occasion, Asif Khan Akhunzada, President of Naseerullah Khan Babar Memorial Hospital, criticized the provincial government for failing to provide the necessary facilities despite the hospital's upgrade from Category B to Category A in 2018. He revealed that the hospital caters to around 6,000 patients daily, yet faces an acute shortage of staff and essential medical supplies.

"Our emergency and OPD cases have reached nearly 100,000 per month, but due to the lack of proper upgrades, we are struggling with severe staff shortages and insufficient medicines," said Akhunzada. He added that despite having advanced facilities such as MRI, CT scans, and specialized doctors, the hospital lacks the space needed to establish additional wards.

Akhunzada demanded immediate staff appointments and the provision of all facilities required for a Category A hospital. He stressed that all deprivations faced by government employees should be addressed and that they deserve their rightful benefits.

"We will raise our voices on every platform to secure the rights of our hospital staff," he concluded.

KP stands for oppressed Kashmiris of IIOJK

PESHAWAR (APP): Like other parts of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday marked Kashmir solidarity day by holding big rallies and demonstrations vowing to continue moral support of the legitimate freedom movement of the oppressed people of the Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) till they achieve freedom from the Indian yoke.

From Chitral to South Waziristan and Kohistan to Khyber, big protest demonstrations and rallies attended by people of all walks of life were held in all 37 districts of KP.

The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa expressed complete solidarity with the oppressed Kashmiris of IIOJK, who faced unending brutal oppression, human rights abuses and state terrorism for the last 78 years with steadfastness and bravery.

The demonstrations and rallies were also held in Peshawar, DI Khan, Chitral, Abbottabad, Mardan, Swat, Khyber, Manshera, Kohat, Bannu, Charsadda, Dir Lower, Malakand, Hangu, Bajaur and others districts of KP where people raised placards and banners inscribed with slogans like 'Kashmir Banay Ga Pakistan and India Go Out of Kashmir'.

In Peshawar, a big rally led by Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi was held to mark Kashmir Solidarity.

The rally was attended by Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hamid, and Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Mehsud besides Govt officials, politicians, students, academics, local government representatives and members of civil society.

The rally started from the Civil Secretariat was culminated in front of the Governor House.

Speaking at the rally, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi highlighted the strong bond between people of Pakistan and Kashmir, saying that they are inseparable.

He urged the international community to take action against the continued human rights violations and oppression at IIOJK.

The Governor also stressed the need for the Muslim Ummah to unite for the rights of oppressed Kashmiris of IIOJK and play proactive role in support for their legitimate struggle for right of self-determination.

The Governor reaffirmed that Pakistan would continue moral, political and diplomatic support for oppressed Kashmiris until they achieve freedom from Indian yoke. Despite political differences, he said that all Pakistanis are united on the Kashmir issue. He expressed confidence that the days of oppression at the held Kashmir would soon end.



PESHAWAR: Kashmir Solidarity Rally is passing through Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Road.

Theater drama highlights Indian forces' atrocities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) and Green Sky Entertainment jointly staged a theater drama at the Nishtar Hall, Peshawar, to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day.

The drama titled "Yes, I Am Kashmir" was aimed at expressing solidarity with Kashmiri brethren, who are facing oppression at the hands of the Indian armed forces in the occupied valley.

On this occasion, Additional Secretary Tourism and Culture Department Muhammad Nawaz Khan, Additional Secretary Youth Affairs Pir Abdullah Shah, KPCTA Director Umar Arshad Khan, Event Manager Haseena Shaukat and other officials were present.



Written by Naeem Iqbal Kohati and directed by Khalid Khattak, the drama depicted the Kashmiri people's freedom movement, their struggle for the right to self-determination, and the brutality of the Indian army, which continued to subject innocent Kashmiris to violence.

The story of the play

revolved around five main characters, performed by senior drama and stage film artists, including Batin Farooqi, Iram Sahar, Khalid Khattak, Tahir Qureshi, Asif Shehzad, Kaleem Khan, Musarrat Malik, Prince Iqbal, Rafiq Awan, and child star Hassan Munir.

The KPCTA organised

the drama as part of its commitment to raising a voice for the Kashmiri people, who continued to bravely resist the oppression of the Indian army. Local actors and actresses were also included in the play to support the authority's efforts in reviving theater and stage drama in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Kashmir Solidarity Day marked across KP

PESHAWAR (APP): On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, various districts across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) organized rallies and special events to express support for the people of Kashmir on Wednesday.

In Swabi district, a government-led rally was held where participants chanted slogans such as "Pakistan Zindabad" and "Kashmir will become Pakistan." The rally was attended by civil and police officials as well as members of civil society.

Chairman Rahim Jadoon reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for Kashmiris, emphasizing that February 5 serves as a day of renewed commitment to their cause.

In Nowshera district, a solidarity rally was led by Assistant Commissioner Dr. Ahmad Sher Zaman Dogar. The rally saw participation from district administration officials, lawyers, traders, religious scholars, civil society members, and students.

The rally started from Shobra Chowk and concluded at Kacheri Chowk, with participants holding banners condemning Indian atrocities in occupied Kashmir.

One minute of silence was observed, followed by collective prayers for Kashmir's freedom.

In Charsadda, a special event was organized, where

Deputy Commissioner Qaiser Khan, DPO Suleman Zafar, and Colonel Abid Aziz addressed the audience.

School children performed patriotic songs and delivered speeches about Kashmir.

Speakers regret over the United Nations' lackluster approach to resolve the Kashmir issue, stressing that self-determination is the fundamental right of Kashmiris.

In Bajaur district, a solidarity walk was held in Bajaur's Civil Colony Khar, with participation from the local administration, TMA officials, tribal elders, and students.

Deputy Commissioner Shahid Ali reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the Kashmiri cause, calling for an end to oppression in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

In Takhte Bhai tehsil of Mardan district, a passionate rally was led by Assistant Commissioner Junaid Khalid and TMO Rahman Sher along Malakand Road.

Participants carried placards and banners inscribed with pro-Kashmir slogans and chanted "Pakistan Zindabad" and "Kashmir will become Pakistan."

In Malakand, a rally Kashmir Solidarity rally started from the district secretariat and moved towards Bakhela Bazaar, drawing a significant number of participants from civil society.

In the tribal district of Mohmand, Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed with great enthusiasm. Local elders stated that February 5 is a day of acknowledgement for the continued suffering of Kashmiris.

In Haripur also, a large rally was taken out from the main bazaar to Sadiq Akbar Chowk in Haripur.

The district administration also organized multiple events across the city, with schools, colleges, and the University of Haripur participating in activities to highlight Indian injustices in Kashmir.

Even in Parachinar, where people are faced with difficult times due to security situation, a rally and various events were organized, with Assistant Commissioner Arshad Afridi leading the march.

The rally included members of civil society, Rescue 1122 personnel, civil defense volunteers, and revenue staff.

Participants carried banners supporting Kashmir's freedom and vowed continued solidarity with the Kashmiri people.

Kashmir Solidarity Day was marked with similar rallies and events across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, reflecting Pakistan's firm support for the people of Kashmir in their struggle for self-determination.

Walk held at KMU on Kashmir Solidarity Day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A special walk was organized at Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, led by Registrar Inamullah Khan Wazir and Dr. Ijaz Hussain.

The walk witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty members, university administration, and heads of various departments.

Participants carried banners and placards inscribed with slogans such as "Kashmir Will Become Pakistan," "We Stand with Our Kashmiri Brothers," and "Self-Determination is the Basic Right of Kashmiri People."

During the walk, attendees expressed their solidarity with the people of Kashmir and urged the international community to take notice of the ongoing Indian atrocities in occupied Kashmir and

play its role in granting Kashmiris their legitimate right to self-determination.

Addressing the participants at the conclusion of the walk, Registrar Inamullah Khan Wazir stated that the purpose of observing Kashmir Solidarity Day is to pay tribute to the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people and to highlight their plight at the global level.

He reaffirmed that KMU will continue to

support the Kashmiri people on all platforms and ensure that the world hears the message that Pakistanis stand firmly with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

He further added that for the past seven decades, the Kashmiri people have been enduring imprisonment, violence, and bloodshed under Indian occupation, and their sacrifices are unforgettable.

He expressed hope that

these sacrifices will soon yield results in the form of their freedom. He emphasized that every child in Pakistan, especially the youth, stands as a strong pillar of support for their Kashmiri brethren, and this unwavering solidarity will continue until Kashmir gains its freedom.

During the walk, participants chanted slogans in favor of the Kashmiri people and prayed for their liberation.

Various speakers at the event reiterated that Kashmir is not just a territorial dispute but a serious human rights issue that requires immediate intervention from the global community.

The university administration reaffirmed its commitment that KMU will continue to play its role in raising awareness about the Kashmir issue and advocating for the rights of the Kashmiri people through such initiatives in the future as well.





In brief

Shukriya Pakistan' rally F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Rallies and public gatherings were held across Azad Jammu and Kashmir to express solidarity with the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, a rally titled Shukriya Pakistan (Thank You, Pakistan) was held in Mirpur to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day. The event was organized under the joint banner of Jammu Kashmir Pir Panjal Freedom Movement, Muhajireen Ittehad Forum, and Jamaat-e-Islami Youth Azad Kashmir. The rally was led by Vice Chairman of Jammu Kashmir Pir Panjal Freedom Movement, Qazi Imran, along with Jamaat-e-Islami Mirpur Ameer Maulana Atiqur Rehman, President of Muhajireen Ittehad Forum Mirpur Zaheer Jarra, Bashir Ahmed Shagu, Khawaja Ayaz, Ijaz Mir (President of Refugee Action Committee Mirpur District), Shabbir Ahmed Chichi, Sardar Khurshid, and other prominent leaders. Addressing the rally, the leaders expressed deep gratitude to the government, armed forces, and people of Pakistan for dedicating February 5 to the oppressed people of Jammu and Kashmir. Similar rallies were held in Bagh, Rawalakot, Kotil and other areas of Azad Kashmir. Speakers on the occasion reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to the Kashmiri freedom struggle, vowing to continue their fight until the last Indian soldier leaves the occupied territory. They stressed that Pakistanis and Kashmiris are one, and no force in the world can break this unity.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Forty-six years ago, following the outbreak of one of the most popular contemporary uprisings in the world, the Islamic Revolution of Iran won on February 11, 1979, with the sacrifices of the Iranian people and under the leadership of the great man in the history of the country, Imam Khomeini.

Independence, freedom and the Islamic Republic were the three main demands of the Iranian nation, derived from the slogans of the people during the Islamic Revolution, for which the government and the people of Iran have made many sacrifices over the past four decades.

The denial of foreign domination has been one of the fundamental principles of the revolution. Before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Pahlavi monarchy was an affiliated government, and the decisions of the king and the ruling body were made under the influence of the orders of the Western hegemonic countries, especially the United States.

Liberation from oppression, repression and tyranny of the monarchy were among the demands of the protesting freedom-loving people who had risen up against the Pahlavi monarchy to achieve their demands.

Establishing a democratic system of government based on religious teachings and values and high cultural elements of Iran was one of the other goals of the people, which was achieved by establishing the Islamic Republic through a referendum to determine the ruling system of the country and the Iranian people, including women and Men determined their destiny for the first time. Following a free referendum, the Islamic Republic replaced the authoritarian monarchy with a decisive 98% of the Iranian people, and the Iranian people voted in favor of the new Constitution. According to the new Constitution, the legislative and executive



KOHAT: Kashmir Solidarity Day rally was organized under the leadership of Commissioner Kohat Division Motasim Billah.

Buledi expresses solidarity with Kashmiri Women

QUETTA (APP): On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, Advisor to Chief Minister of Balochistan for Woman Development, Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi emphasized the significant role of the Kashmiri women who are playing in the struggle for their right to self-determination.

Rubaba reaffirmed the commitment of the

provincial government and the people of Balochistan to stand in complete solidarity with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

She said, "We stand with the Kashmiri people in their struggle for freedom, and we will continue to raise our voices in support of their cause."

She called on the international community to seriously take note of the

atrocities committed by Indian forces against Kashmiri women. "We must intensify our efforts in support of the rights of Kashmiri women," she added.

Dr. Bledi concluded by stressing that the resolution of the Kashmir issue should reflect the wishes and aspirations of the Kashmiri people, as it is the foundation for lasting peace in the region.

JI holds march to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) organised a march here on Wednesday to mark Kashmir Day and express solidarity with Kashmiri people.

Central JI General Secretary Ameer-ul-Azeem led the march while District Ameer Mahboob-uz-Zaman Butt, Yasir Khara, Ajmal Badar and others were also present.

The march commenced from Chiniot Bazaar and the participants marched up to Kutchehry Bazaar Chowk.

They were holding banners and placards and chanting slogans against Indian cruelty and barbarism in the illegally occupied Kashmir valley.

Addressing the gathering, Ameer-ul-Azeem paid tribute to the Kashmiri leadership and people for their resilience in the face of Indian oppression.

He said that Pakistani nation stands with Kashmir brethren in their struggle for freedom till the last drop of blood.

He declared Kashmir's independence a national agenda and that the nation would not tolerate any deviation from this cause.

Ihtisham visits hospitals following public and media complaints

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Advisor for Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ihtisham Ali, made unannounced late-night visits to District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Charsadda and Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ) Tangi to address public and media complaints. During the visits, he inspected various hospital departments and reviewed the availability of emergency medicines and medical equipment. He also interacted with patients to gather feedback about hospital

management and services. Expressing dissatisfaction over mismanagement and the absence of a female medical officer at DHQ Charsadda, the Advisor ordered an immediate inquiry. He further inquired about the availability of medicines for patients. "Despite previous complaints about THQ Tangi, everything was found in order during the visit." Advisor health added.

The Advisor highlighted that administrative issues are being given special attention. He emphasized that the gov-

ernment provides resources for medicines, salaries, and accommodation, yet the lack of adequate healthcare services remains incomprehensible. "If anything goes wrong in the health department, I am responsible, while the MS at hospitals and DHOs in districts are accountable," he stated. The Advisor added that Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur does not compromise on health matters, and providing the public with quality healthcare services remains the government's top priority.

Kashmir Solidarity Day marked in Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: To mark Kashmir Solidarity Day a special ceremony was held at Pakhtunkhwa House Mardan. Commissioner Division Mardan Nisar Ahmed was the chief guest on the occasion.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, DPO Zahoor Babar Afridi, Secretary to Commissioner Sara Tawab, ADC Finance Fahad Iftikhar, government officials, media, civil society, school students participated in the ceremony.

One minute silence was observed to express solidarity with the Kashmiri brothers.

The children of the school presented national songs, anthems, speeches and tableaux in which the sacrifices of Kashmiri Muslims were highlighted and the cruelty and brutality of the Indian occupation army was depicted.

The speakers condemned the atrocities of the Indian occupying army on the Kashmiri Muslims. They described the silence of the international conscience on the violations of human rights in Kashmir as criminal.

Speaking at the event, Commissioner Mardan Nisar Ahmed said that the freedom struggle of Kashmiri Muslims will definitely succeed. He said that the Kashmir issue should be resolved according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and the resolutions of the United Nations.

He urged the United Nations and human rights organizations to take notice of Indian atrocities and serious violations of human rights in Kashmir. Commissioner Mardan said that this day makes us realize how important freedom is and our forefathers crossed the river of fire and blood to get freedom for us which we should cherish.

He said that India has tried to change the demography of Occupied Kashmir by ending its special status.

Pakistan stands with its Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their struggle for freedom and due to the sacrifices of Kashmiri Muslims, Kashmir will become independent and a part of Pakistan.

In the end, Commissioner Mardan Nisar Ahmed and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Azmatullah Wazir led a walk to express solidarity

with Kashmiri people.

Rally organized in Kohat

On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the Staff of Regional Information Office Kohat and Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kohat also took out a joint rally led by Regional Information Officer Kohat Irshad Afridi.

Legendary Actor of Pashto Films Industry Asif Khan who came for the program of Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kohat also specially participated in the rally. In the rally, slogans were raised in favor of Kashmiris and the Indian atrocities and brutalities were strongly condemned.

The participants of the rally demanded that the Kashmiris should be given their right to self-determination and the atrocities on them should be stopped immediately.

On this occasion, Kashmiris were praised for making unprecedented sacrifices and continuing their freedom movement despite oppression. On Kashmir Solidarity Day, the pledge was renewed to continue religious, political, moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris at all levels.

Anniversary of victory of Islamic Revolution of Iran

organs of the country will be elected by the people. In this regard, on average, one election is held in the country every year, and through this, the participation of the people in determining the fate of the country is guaranteed. Today, from the highest officials of the country to the members of city councils and local councils, they are elected by direct and indirect popular vote. So far, dozens of elections have been held for members of the Assembly of Leadership Experts, the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), the President, and town Councils.

The Iranian people's movement has been the source of great and glorious changes in the political, economic, social, cultural and scientific fields of the country and despite the difficult conditions caused by the imposition of imposed war and sanctions; it has continued to grow and has achieved great achievements in different areas.

As a result of the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, our nation and government have determined their destiny according to their will and have taken their own path in the current turbulent world by adopting an independent policy. The model that Iranians have set for the past forty years in the international community has emerged from independence based on constructive interaction with the world.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important manifestations of the Islamic Revolution has been the changes in the field of Iranian foreign policy, which has led to the formation of an independent, active, innovative foreign policy based on the three principles of dignity, wisdom and expediency.

At the same time, this foreign policy is based on the two strong and inviolable pillars of non-interference in the affairs of others and not allowing others to interfere in the internal affairs of the

country. Defending the rights of the oppressed nations of the world (especially Muslims) in international forums has been one of the principles of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this regard, the government and people of Iran have always called for the realization of the just ideals of the oppressed nation of Palestine and have supported their resistance against the evils and crimes of the occupying and racist Zionist regime. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that all Palestinians (regardless of their religion or ethnicity) have the right to determine the fate of their occupied territories through a comprehensive referendum and to provide grounds for the return of all Palestinian refugees to their ancestral homeland.

In order to continue Iran's peaceful foreign policy, the different governments have made many efforts in the past eight years to de-escalate tensions and develop foreign relations with other countries. Important examples of these efforts include the initial settlement of the nuclear issue, a fruitful presence in international forums especially the United Nations to defend the rights of the great nation of Iran against US aggression, and to help resolve regional crises, strengthening regional and trans-regional relations and cooperation and fighting against the great threat of Takfiri terrorists in the region. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to establish better and greater mutual trust with the countries of the region and the world and to develop national and regional security. Constructive interaction based on equality, mutual respect and common interests is the basis of Iran's relations with other countries.

The Iranian government also seeks effective and constructive interaction with the outside world, building mutual understanding and mutual trust with neighbors

and other regional and international actors.

In the field of regional interaction, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made an effective practical effort to establish regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism and extremism and to establish security in the region and is always ready to expand this cooperation. In addition, efforts to promote regional convergence and strengthen economic ties and joint ventures have been on the government's foreign policy agenda.

Over the past years, the Iranian government has always sought to strengthen friendly ties with neighboring countries and non-hostile countries of the world and has played an active role in establishing peace between the countries of the region by presenting peaceful plans and efforts. Examples of Iran's engagement in peaceful settlements of the international disputes in recent years have been mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, helping to advance the Afghan peace process, establishing peace in Tajikistan, and so on.

Despite various conspiracies of some countries in the Persian Gulf region against the Iranian nation and especially their active participation in full support of Saddam Hussein's regime during the eight years of the imposed war, the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to resolve any misunderstandings in the region and establish stability and security in the sensitive region of the Persian Gulf has repeatedly extended its hand of friendship to the countries of this region and has announced its readiness to cooperate with them. The proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to sign a non-aggression pact and present the "Hormoz Peace Plan" as a forum for discussing regional issues with the participation of regional countries and with the aim of forming a coalition for peace and peaceful settlement of issues can be observed as a sample.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the denial of hegemony and belligerence, believes in a common destiny for the whole of human society, respecting international norms and paying attention to the principle of sovereignty of countries. Accordingly, just as it authoritatively prevents the domineering from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, it is also reluctant to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

A- effect has the Islamic Revolution of Iran in the region

With the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the whole region was affected by its message of independence and freedom. At the same time, the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the years after the revolution as a government supporting the oppressed nations was highlighted in the international community and made many sacrifices to maintain and expand security in the region and the world.

Preventing violence and fighting terrorism and extremism on a global scale has been at the heart of the Iranian government's foreign policy and strategy. The idea was put forward by Iran at the United Nations and approved by the UN General Assembly in the form of a Plan called: WAVE: 'World against violence and extremism'.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is committed to the fight against terrorism in all its forms and emphasizes the collective effort to prevent the institutionalization of extremism and terrorism. In this regard, Iran has a serious interest in interaction and close relations with all neighbors and countries in the region, and tries to work with regional governments to institutionalize indigenous and endogenous models of security in a way that is in the public interest.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always strived to ensure and strengthen peace, stability and tranquility at

the international level, especially in the region and the surrounding area. Undoubtedly, adherence to the provisions of the nuclear agreement, as well as stubborn confrontation with terrorism and sectarianism on the one hand, tolerance and restraint against misperception and provocative sectarian policies of certain countries, are the best proof of correctness of the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran. With the resolute support of its people, the Iranian government is confronting terrorist, counter-revolutionary and separatist groups. So, in addition to providing security inside the country, it has been able to play an important role in helping countries in the region to establish peace and security. The invitation of some countries, including Syria and Iraq, to provide effective assistance in the fight against terrorist groups and to eradicate these groups, including ISIS, from the region is a proof for that.

In line with the golden principle of "First Neighbours" in its foreign policy, the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully prepared to develop cooperation in various fields with countries around the world, especially its neighbors, and seeks to increase its economic, political and cultural interactions with neighbors and other regional countries.

B- obstacles and problems of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the revolution

The United States government, which had taken control of the government and resources of the country by carrying out a coup d'état on 1953 against the elected government of the Iranian people, has opposed the independent and neutral policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran since the beginning of the victory. Therefore, by sabotaging, putting pressure and imposing tough sanctions against the Iranian nation, it has tried to create obstacles in the way of the country's economic development and welfare. Under the

member states to fulfill their obligations caused Iran to reciprocate. With the provisions of JCPOA, Iran suspended the implementation of part of its obligations under Article 36 of JCPOA. Obviously, Iran cannot and should not alone bear the burden of fulfilling all the obligations of this agreement.

In order to destroy JCPOA and UN Security Council Resolution 2231, the previous US administration, while declaring economic war, even resorted to economic terrorism against the Iranian nation and pursued a policy of delusional maximum pressure to repeat the scenario of regime change while this political regime arises from the Iranian people's vote. In this regard, the Trump administration went so far as to commit war crimes. The brutal assassination of Martyr General Qassem Soleimani, one of the high-ranking commanders of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the most effective figure in the fight against terrorist groups in the region, such as ISIS, is one of the examples of these American crimes.

Another crime is the intensification of sanctions against the Iranian people during the Corona pandemic and depriving the Iranian government of access to its financial resources to provide the necessary medicine and medical equipment to fight the Covid-19 virus. The Iranian people have suffered greatly as a result of these sanctions, and large numbers of Iranians and foreign immigrants residing in the country have fallen victim to US inhumane policies. In recent years, despite the efforts of governments to create an atmosphere of Iranophobia, the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on a moderation and constructive interaction approach, resolving disputes and resolving misunderstandings through dialogue and cooperation, including the signing and Adherence to a nuclear agreement.



Sweden mourns victims of deadliest gun attack, suspect's motive unknown

OREBRO, Sweden (Reuters): Survivors of Sweden's worst mass shooting on Wednesday recalled trying to save the lives of their comrades at a school for adults in Orebro, a day after a gunman killed 11 people on what the prime minister called a "dark day" in the country's history.

Police said there was no evidence the suspect, named by Swedish media as Rickard Andersson, a 35-year-old unemployed recluse, had "ideological motives". A police source also named Andersson as the suspect.

A police spokesperson declined to comment on the name of the suspect.

At least 11 people were killed and several more wounded in the attack at the Risbergkska adult education centre in Orebro, a city of more than 100,000 people some 200 km (125 miles) west of Stockholm, on Tuesday. The police discovered Andersson's body at the scene.

Police believe the killer, who they said was not previously known to them, acted alone.

"We will get back on what motives there are," local police chief Roberto Eid Forest told a press conference earlier on Wednesday.

Five of the six wounded who were treated in hospital - four women and two men - had required surgery for gun-

shot wounds and remained in a serious condition, regional authorities said.

The exact number of those wounded in the attack has not been confirmed by police.

Some students were in class, while others were having lunch when the gunman began firing at around 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

"A guy next to me was shot in the shoulder. He was bleeding a lot. When I looked behind me I saw three people on the floor bleeding. Everyone was shocked. They said: 'Go out! Get out!'," a student named Marwa told broadcaster TV4.

"I took my friend's shawl and tied it tightly around his shoulder so that he wouldn't bleed so much."

Hellen Werme, 35, a nursing student, said that after hearing shots she had hidden under a bed to evade the gunman.

"The teacher shouted for us to lock the door and get down on the floor," the mother-of-two told Reuters. "I thought that this was my last time, my last day. That I'm getting shot today."

Werme said she still had not been able to get in touch with five of her classmates who were in a different part of the school when the shooting occurred.

"I never want to go back there," she said. Many students in

Sweden's adult school system are immigrants seeking qualifications to help them find jobs in the Nordic country, while also learning Swedish.

The Campus Risbergkska school has around 2,700 pupils, around 800 of whom were enrolled in Swedish For Immigrants courses, according to information provided by the local authority.

It said that students, who vary in age from 18 to 70, came from a range of backgrounds and nationalities.

Flags were flying at half-mast in Orebro, as well as at parliament and the royal palace in Stockholm.

King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia visited the school and attended a memorial service at the St Nikolai church in central Orebro.

"A grieving process is hard to do alone," the king told reporters after laying white flowers at a memorial site with candles near the school. "I think all of Sweden feels it has experienced this traumatic event."

The royal couple were joined by Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in the trip to Orebro.

"Feb. 4 will forever mark a dark day in Swedish history," Kristersson said in a statement. "We are a country in mourning and we must all come together.

"Together, we must help the injured and their relatives bear the grief and weight of this day."

Candles and flowers have been placed near the single-storey school in Haga Street, where police officers continued their investigations.

The morning after the attack, Orebro was still in shock over the worst mass murder in Swedish history.

"That it could happen in Orebro, that was totally unexpected," Mayor John Johansson told broadcaster SVT. "I understand that children, our youth, are very afraid today. So am I."

Police said they did not see any general threat against schools or pre-schools in the country, nor against adult education schools, including Swedish classes for immigrants.

Sweden has been struggling with a wave of shootings and bombings caused by an endemic gang crime problem that has seen the country of 10 million people record by far the highest per capita rate of gun violence in the European Union in recent years.

However, fatal attacks at schools are rare.

Ten people were killed in seven incidents of deadly violence at schools between 2010 and 2022, according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.



OREBRO: Mourners gather to place flowers and candles outside Risbergkska School in Orebro the day after the school shooting in which over 10 people lost their lives, in Sweden.

British journalist blacklisted from the country Concerns grow over press freedoms in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (AP): Cambodia's Interior Ministry confirmed Wednesday it had blocked a British journalist known for his reporting on human rights abuses and environmental issues—an incident that comes amid growing concerns over press freedom in the Southeast Asian nation.

Gerald Flynn, a reporter with US-based conservation news website Mongabay, was denied reentry into the country over problems with his visa after a brief trip to neighboring Thailand in January, said Interior Ministry spokesperson Touch Sokhak. He said Flynn claimed to be an electrician on his original visa application but instead worked as a journalist. "He cheated Cambodia," Sokhak said.

But Flynn called the claim "bizarre," noting that the blacklisting came only days after he had been featured as a source in a France24 documentary scrutinizing Cambodia's carbon offsetting projects. "I have only ever worked as a journalist in Cambodia and have always represented myself as such to the government," Flynn said in a statement sent to The Associated Press. "The lack of believable explanation or evidence from the government, coupled with the timing of my blacklisting, suggests I was denied entry to Cambodia as a result of my investigative journalism, which has often tied powerful elites to environmental destruction."

In a statement this week, Mongabay said Flynn had been a journalist in Cambodia for five years and had always represented himself as such. "He has consistently held a valid government-issued

press pass during his five years," the publication said. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, who in 2023 succeeded his father, Hun Sen, after nearly four decades of authoritarian rule, has shown few signs of political liberalization, cracking down on political opponents and critics.

In September, award-winning reporter Mech Dara was arrested and quickly convicted on charges of incitement following reports he published exposing online scams and corruption. At the time, the US State Department said it was "deeply troubled" by his arrest, and about four dozen Cambodian media organizations and civil society groups issued a joint statement calling for his immediate release and to "stop all forms of harassment against media

organizations and journalists."

In December, another journalist, Chhoeung Chheng, was shot and killed while reporting on the transport of illegally cut timber in Siem Reap province. The Committee to Protect Journalists said the slaying showed the "grave danger" environmental reporters face in Cambodia and called for the government to do more to protect them.

The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand said it was "deeply concerned" about the blacklisting of Flynn, who served as president of the Overseas Press Club in Cambodia. "This is another nail in the coffin of the free press in Cambodia, which has seen local and foreign journalists severely intimidated in recent years and numerous news organizations driven out of business."

Texas man set to be executed for killing a pastor in his own church

TEXAS (AP): A Texas man convicted of beating and suffocating a Dallas-area pastor in his own church during a robbery was facing execution on Wednesday, the second scheduled execution in the US so far this year.

Steven Lawayne Nelson was condemned for the 2011 killing of Rev. Clint Dobson, 28, who was beaten, strangled, and suffocated with a plastic bag inside NorthPointe Baptist Church in Arlington. Dobson's secretary also was severely beaten and left for dead, but she survived.

Nelson, 37, is scheduled to receive a lethal injection Wednesday evening at the state penitentiary in Huntsville. Nelson would be the first Texas death row inmate executed since Robert Roberson's Oct. 17, 2024, execution date was delayed in what would have been the first in the US tied to a diagnosis of shaken baby syndrome and the first of four scheduled in Texas over the next three months.

South Carolina carried

out the nation's first execution of 2025 on Friday. Marion Bowman Jr. was convicted of murder in the shooting death of a friend whose burned body was found in the trunk of a car in 2001.

Nelson was a laborer and high school dropout with a long history of legal trouble and arrests that started as early as age 6. Nelson recently married while on death row and has pleaded for mercy, claiming that he had only served as a robbery lookout and blamed two other men for killing Dobson.

Nelson testified at trial and has maintained that he waited outside the church for about 25 minutes before going in and seeing that Dobson and Judy Elliott had been beaten, and he insisted Dobson was still alive. Nelson said he took Dobson's laptop and that one of the other men gave him Elliott's car keys and credit cards.

The victims were later found by Elliott's husband, the church's part-time music minister, who didn't immediately recog-

nize her because she had been so severely beaten.

Trial evidence showed Nelson's fingerprints and pieces of his broken belt at the crime scene, drops of the victims' blood on his sneakers, and surveillance video showing him driving Elliott's car and using her credit cards. Investigators also said the two men Nelson blamed for the attack had alibis: Phone records placed one of them 30 miles (48 kilometers) away, and phone records and a sign-in sheet placed the other man in a chemistry class.

Nelson's attorneys appealed on claims of bad legal representation at his trial and sentencing, saying his lawyers did little to challenge the alibis of the other men or present mitigating evidence of a troubled childhood in Oklahoma and Texas. His appeals have been denied by state and federal courts, and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals denied a stay of execution on Jan. 28.

Nelson's attorneys this week asked the US Supreme Court to inter-

vene and halt his execution to give them more time to challenge his conviction.

While awaiting trial, Nelson was indicted in the killing of another jail inmate. He was never tried on that charge after his guilty verdict and death sentence.

During his trial, Nelson broke an electronic shock cuff off his ankle and later broke a water pipe in a holding cell, flooding the courtroom with foul black water. He also regularly unshackled his handcuffs and ankle restraints by using a key he was hiding in his genitals.

Texas has three more executions scheduled before the end of April. The first is scheduled for Feb. 13. Richard Lee Tabler was condemned for gunning down a strip club manager and the manager's friend on Thanksgiving weekend in 2004. Tabler also acknowledged killing two dancers from the club. He was charged with their slayings but was never tried.



AUSTIN, TEXAS: A Waffle House sign is displayed outside of the storefront in Austin, Texas. Waffle House has announced that it will be adding a 50-cent surcharge to all egg products because of soaring egg prices caused by the bird flu. The average price for a dozen eggs in the U.S. has increased approximately 50% in the last year.

Luisa Gonzalez, the Ecuador presidential candidate seeking to raise social spending

QUITO, Feb 5 (Reuters) - Ecuadorian leftist Luisa Gonzalez says her plans to spend on social welfare and impose harsher penalties for criminals will work better than what she calls the ad-hoc policies of incumbent President Daniel Noboa, but she faces an uphill battle to win Sunday's presidential election.

Gonzalez, who lost to Noboa in a 2023 snap election when he was voted in to serve the remainder of his predecessor's term, is the candidate for the Citizens' Revolution party led by her mentor, former President Rafael Correa.

Several polls point to an April run-off between 47-year-old lawyer Gonzalez, who would be the first woman elected Ecuador's president, and business heir Noboa, 37. Others

have Noboa winning in the first round.

"The country cannot improve," Gonzalez said during a radio interview in late January. "It requires knowledge, a team and experience, that's clearly what we have in Citizens' Revolution and with Luisa Gonzalez."

Gonzalez says she would respond to Ecuador's drug trade-fueled crime wave with major military and police operations and that she would pursue allegedly corrupt judges and prosecutors. She also wants to construct renewable energy projects and provide low-interest credit for small and women-run businesses, as well as increase social spending in violent areas.

Gonzalez and 14 other candidates have excoriated

Noboa over continued violence on the streets, but none have suggested a major security strategy that differs significantly from the tough-on-crime measures he is already enacting.

Gonzalez first met Correa at a government event in the Andean city of Riobamba. She began working with his office in 2008, going on to lead two government secretariats, and was elected to the legislature in 2021.

Correa, who governed until 2017 and now lives in Belgium, was sentenced in 2020 to eight years in prison on corruption charges he says are political persecution.

Some legislature candidates for Citizens' Revolution have said Correa will return to Ecuador if Gonzalez wins and that former vice-presi-

dent Jorge Glas, who is in prison on corruption convictions, will be free to take up a Mexican offer of asylum.

"Luisa is an intelligent woman and totally capable of getting us out of the mire we are trapped in," said Mayito Villacis, 20, in the coastal city of Guayaquil. "We must recover our country and erase Noboa from our history." Gonzalez, who describes herself as a single mother, animal lover and sportswoman, has said she, not Correa, will take decisions if she is elected president.

"I won't stop until Ecuador has been revived," Gonzalez said in a campaign video. "Whenever they tell me something is impossible, that's when I'm most convinced it's possible."

Modi's party seeks to regain control of New Delhi region

NEW DELHI (AP): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party was trying to regain power in the federal territory that includes New Delhi on Wednesday as residents voted in a state legislative election.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party hasn't won the territory that includes India's capital of 20 million people in over a quarter-century.

The BJP is up against the Aam Aadmi Party led by Arvind Kejriwal, which runs New Delhi and has built widespread support with its welfare policies and anti-corruption movement. But Kejriwal, a popular anti-corruption crusader, suffered a setback after he and other AAP leaders faced graft allegations.

Election results are due Saturday. More than 15 million people are eligible to vote.

The BJP failed to secure a majority on its own in last year's national election but formed the government with coalition partners. It has gained some lost ground by winning two state elections in northern Haryana and western Maharashtra states.

Ahead of this election, both Modi and Kejriwal offered to revamp government schools and provide free health services and electricity, along with a monthly stipend of over 2,000 rupees (\$25) to poor women.

Modi's party hopes to benefit after last week's federal budget slashed income taxes on the salaried middle class, one of its key voting

blocs. The AAP won 62 out of 70 seats in a landslide victory in the last state legislature election in 2020, leaving BJP with eight and the Congress party with none. The BJP was voted out of power in Delhi in 1998 by the Congress party, which ran the government for 15 years.

Political analyst Neerja Chowdhury said this time, the corruption case has dented Kejriwal's image.

Kejriwal was arrested last year along with two key party leaders on charges of receiving bribes from a liquor distributor. They have denied the accusations, saying they are part of a political conspiracy. The Supreme Court allowed the release

of Kejriwal and other ministers on bail. Kejriwal later relinquished the chief minister's post to his most senior party leader.

Opposition parties widely condemned Kejriwal's arrest, accusing Modi's government of misusing federal investigation agencies to harass and weaken political opponents. They pointed to several raids, arrests and corruption investigations of key opposition figures before the national election.

Kejriwal formed the AAP in 2012 after tapping into public anger over corruption scandals. His pro-poor policies have focused on fixing state-run schools and providing cheap electricity, free health care and bus transport for women.



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Peace without Palestinians is not possible

WHEN US President Donald Trump proposed an American takeover of a depopulated Gaza Strip on Tuesday, some were tempted to dismiss his remarks as an example of Mr Trump's distinctive, off-the-cuff style. They are wrong to do so, and there are several reasons to take these pronouncements seriously.

Mr Trump's plan to occupy Gaza – with the aid of US troops, if necessary – was delivered in considered remarks during a news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House. It is Mr Netanyahu's military – largely armed and supported by the US – that has left Gaza in ruins and cost the lives of more than 47,500 Palestinians.

The almost immediate reaction from Saudi Arabia also showed that such remarkable proposals cannot be ignored as a flight of fancy. The kingdom stressed its rejection of any attempt to displace Gazans and said it would not move towards establishing ties with Israel without the creation of a Palestinian state.

This reaction from Riyadh was in line with Monday's letter from the foreign ministers of five Arab countries – including the UAE – and a senior Palestinian representative. Addressed to Mr Trump's Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, the signatories said reconstruction "should be through direct engagement with and participation of the people of Gaza. Palestinians will live in their land and rebuild it".

Indeed, Egypt and Jordan's repeated rejection of any plan that involves uprooting and forcibly relocating Palestinians to their territory should also underline how seriously Cairo and Amman are taking some of the ideas emanating from the White House.

Although Mr Netanyahu on Tuesday credited Mr Trump for "thinking outside the box with fresh ideas" in reality there is no need for such radical proposals because the answer to the conflict is already well known – a comprehensive peace process that ends Israel's occupation and establishes a sovereign Palestine alongside an Israeli state inside its internationally recognised 1967 borders.

There are several possible reasons why Mr Trump may have chosen this moment to make such an intervention. He is still in the honeymoon period of his second term and arguably chalked up an early win as Canada and Mexico manoeuvred to avoid a costly trade war with the US.

However, as political realities set in, many legislators, including from Mr Trump's Republican Party, will look askance at any suggestion that US troops be sent to another Middle Eastern conflict zone – especially given Mr Trump's stated position that US soldiers should not be embroiled in other countries' wars. Some members of Congress from both parties have already articulated their concerns about Mr Trump's proposal.

There is a chain of logic that explains why grandiose schemes such as turning a Gaza emptied of Palestinians into the "Riviera of the Middle East" are currently being thrown around at the highest level. Successive US administrations have prioritised Israel's positions while largely ignoring the concerns and ideas of Palestinian representatives. This has led to the present situation where Palestinian aspirations and nationhood simply do not figure in US policymaking.

The dangerous absence of Palestinian voices must end. The two-state solution remains the consensus position of the Arab world and wider international community, as stipulated in a number of UN Security Council resolutions. To put it another way, the vast majority of the world believes Palestine is for the Palestinian people.

For 15 months, the Israeli government has tried to make Gaza unliveable for Palestinians but not only are they still there, despite their suffering, Palestinians have already been marching en masse to go home and rebuild their communities. Such people cannot be sidelined. It is time for political reality to replace threats of displacement.

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Daunting times for Starmer as UK caught between US and EU

Mohamed Chebaro

If only those who conceived and pushed through the UK's Brexit adventure could have allowed themselves to hear the voices of reason that warned against leaving the EU both before and after the referendum, including today, five years on from the divorce taking effect.

The UK has always had euroskeptics among its society, but it seems today that they are a small minority, as the population overwhelmingly believes that Brexit has been more of a failure than a success.

In 2016, many of the 52 percent who voted "leave" were surely duped into doing so. The other 48 percent struggled to make the rest understand that breaking away from the EU would weaken us all. Those words were repeated by Starmer this week, when he became the first UK prime minister since Brexit to attend a pre-summit dinner of the 27 EU heads of state.

Starmer called on the gathered leaders to "maximize the industrial weight and clout that we have together," amid the unfolding and ever-evolving threats to Europe blowing from the East, as well as from across the Atlantic.

Since claiming a landslide election victory in July last year, Starmer has worked to improve ties with the EU following years of toxic relations under the previous Conservative governments. He is hoping to agree to scrap some of the red tape that is hampering trade in a bid to recover some of the economic growth the UK has lost as a result of Brexit.

During his visit to Brussels, Starmer urged the EU leaders to reengage with the UK. But no one knows how far he will go, trapped as he is by the fear of reneging on his election manifesto promise that the UK will not rejoin the EU customs union or allow freedom of movement. And there is also the fear of drawing the wrath of the unpredictable US presidency of Donald Trump.

The European leaders must have rolled their eyes when Starmer claimed that the UK is not choosing between the US and the EU.

London could surely choose to maintain its long-ambivalent role of keeping one foot in Europe and the other in America. But times have changed and the risk of tripping up in this endeavor due to the imbalances in today's world are greater than ever.

The bare-bones Brexit trade deal saw the UK leave the EU's single market and customs union. It meant goods could continue to move without tariffs or quotas, but it brought new red tape, costs and delays for businesses, especially

country had remained in the EU, with economic productivity 4 percent less than it otherwise would have been.

Brexit supporters often argued that any short-term pain would be offset by the country's new freedom to strike trade deals around the world. Since Brexit, the UK has signed trade agreements with countries including Australia, New Zealand and Canada, with only minor effects on its overall growth. Now, however, the most hardcore advocates of Brexit, like Reform UK leader Nigel

The Conservative leadership at the time ignored all warnings by experts, including the government's own Office for Budget Responsibility, which maintains that UK exports and imports will both be about 15 percent lower in the long run than if the country had remained in the EU, with economic productivity 4 percent less than it otherwise would have been. Brexit supporters often argued that any short-term pain would be offset by the country's new freedom to strike trade deals around the world. Since Brexit, the UK has signed trade agreements with countries including Australia, New Zealand and Canada, with only minor effects on its overall growth. Now, however, the most hardcore advocates of Brexit, like Reform UK leader Nigel Farage, have changed their position and admitted that the benefits of leaving the EU have so far failed to materialize.

for small and mid-sized companies, whose costs have increased and their competitiveness reduced.

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Farage, have changed their position and admitted that the benefits of leaving the EU have so far failed to materialize.

To be fair, Brexit has not played out as either its supporters or opponents anticipated, despite the facts of common sense and pure mathematics that have prevailed in recent years. Being a member of an economic grouping of more

than half a billion consumers and part of a 28-country trading bloc surely offer more than a lone Britain can attain in a highly politically and economically competitive and divided world.

Yes, no one saw the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions coming or Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but Brexit made everything harder for the UK.

The desire to reduce migration was a major reason many Brits voted to leave. But Brexit has had the opposite impact five years on. Net migration is today far higher than before 2020 because the number of visas granted for workers and students from around the world has soared.

And the figures that ought to encourage Starmer's government to forge ahead with seeking a more aligned position with the EU on trade and commerce are everywhere. Brexit has cost the City of London 40,000 financial services jobs, according to its lord mayor, while the fishing industry is on course to lose £300 million (\$374 million) by next year as a result of being outside the EU.

Maybe the government is being extremely careful and mindful of the new tariffs being imposed by America in a world that is ushering in more protectionist political leaders. Trump has raised the stakes for Britain, which is now caught between its near neighbors in Europe and its transatlantic "special relationship."

Starmer and the UK cannot be envied as, on one side, we have America, with which we do 17.6 percent of our trade, threatening to impose destructive tariffs if London makes any steps that are deemed below par for Trump. On the other, we have the EU, with which we do more than 46 percent of our trade, offering to boost our trade ties, as well as improving relations in terms of security and defense in an increasingly volatile world.

For me, the choice is a no-brainer, but for Starmer it must be a daunting period, as there is a risk of getting the country into trouble whatever he does.

Arab Americans continue to lose out with 'MENA' designation

Ray Hanania

Arab Americans have been lobbying for years to be treated the same as other minority and racial groups when it comes to receiving benefits both nationally and at state level.

Those benefits include federal and state grants awarded to promote the culture of racial minorities that are recognized by the US Census Bureau. There is also the potential for political empowerment.

Being identified as "Arab" would empower the community. Unfortunately, Arab Americans instead have to use a diluted category called "MENA" (Middle East and North Africa).

As of April 2024, every state technically has a "MENA" category, after the US Census Bureau added it for race and ethnicity data collection. Every state will now collect data on this group. Unfortunately, this designation is yet to produce any results. Arab Americans have neither received more state grants nor enjoyed political empowerment through "population consolidation."

MENA dilutes the Arab identity by mixing it with non-Arabs from the Middle East region. In the 2020 Census – the first that offered MENA as an option – 2.5 million Americans identified as such. They are divided into 27 subcategories, seven of which do not identify as Arab.

The largest of the 27 groups is Iranian (413,842), followed by the largest Arab group, Lebanese (328,137). Nearly 889,000, or a third of the MENA category, are non-Arab. As well as the Iranians, they include Israelis (137,023), Chaldeans (47,029), Assyrians (42,372), Kurds (19,755) and a generic "other" category (228,229).

The 1.6 million American Arabs are only 62 percent of the total, which is a dilution of their identity under the misguided MENA label.

If Arabs received 66 percent of all federal grants awarded to racial groups, I guess it would be OK. But federal funding for Arab cultural activities and identity, such as for cultural centers, plays, artistry, education centers and businesses, is almost nonexistent. The biggest recipients of federal funding for their cultural activities, according to the US Census, are African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans. But it is not just about money. It is also about political empowerment, which could drive funding distribution. Arab Americans are almost completely excluded from consideration when congressional and state legislative district maps are redrawn.

When you put as many of one ethnic group into a district as possible, you give that ethnic group a stronger political voice. In Illinois, for example, when legislators have redrawn the district boundaries, they have specifically created districts that include as many Hispanic voters as possible to help augment

their voice in the voting process and in government.

In one example, Illinois had two concentrations of Hispanic voters that were geographically separated from each other. But despite the distance between the two areas, they were linked by a narrow "umbilical cord" on the map, ensuring Illinois Hispanics could speak with one voice and increase their chances of electing a member of their community to Congress.

This happened in 1993, when Luis Gutierrez, a former cab driver and elected member of the Chicago City Council, won the congressional seat in that awkwardly shaped 4th District, becoming Illinois' first Latino representative. He served until 2019, championing the rights of Hispanics in Washington.

Arab Americans in Illinois are in the same situation, with two large concentrations of population in the Chicago suburbs, one in the north and one in the south.

The MENA designation was supposed to help empower Arab political voices by consolidating the community into redrawn districts. However, no district has been redrawn to allow Arabs to focus their voter power, because they are not recognized. In fact, the opposite has happened.

In 2021, pro-Palestinian candidate Marie Newman won the Illinois 3rd Congressional District, which was often identified as having a large concentration of pro-Palestinian voters. However, that year, Illinois split this district and merged it with five others, severely weakening Arab political empowerment in the state.

Newman, who strongly represented the interests of Arab Americans in Illinois while in office from 2021 to 2023, was forced to run against a more entrenched rival after the district was carved up. She lost the election and Arab Americans lost her voice in Congress.

Illinois also has a law that requires 25 percent of all state funding to be awarded to recognized minority business enterprises. In 2023, African American Rep. Cyril Nichols, whose Illinois district includes a large Arab American population, pushed for the recognition of "Arab" as an official category for the purposes of awarding such contracts in Illinois. However, certain Arab leaders rejected the move and instead supported "MENA."

In 2024, Illinois awarded \$100 million in state contracts to minority business enterprises, including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans and women. Neither MENA nor Arab were included in the program.

Arab Americans need to go back to the drawing board and demand that "Arab" be recognized as a category in the US Census. They also need to demand that they be included in minority business enterprise funding programs and, for the sake of self-respect, make people call us what we are, not what they want us to be.

What next after Al-Sharaa's visit to Saudi Arabia?

Hassan Al-Mustafa

Saudi Arabia is taking a proactive and serious approach to the dramatic shifts in the Syrian Arab Republic following the collapse of Bashar Assad's regime. The Kingdom is determined to play a strategic role that safeguards its national interests while ensuring stability in Syria – a key element of broader Arab security. This strategy has direct implications for the stability of neighboring countries, including Saudi Arabia itself.

Rather than reacting to events, Riyadh has positioned itself as a key player from the outset, engaging in political, humanitarian and diplomatic efforts through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These initiatives include dialogue with influential nations involved in the Syrian crisis.

The withdrawal of Iran and its allied militias, coupled with the reduced mili-

tary and political presence of Russia, has created a significant power vacuum. Regional powers like Türkiye are eager to fill this void, seeking influence in Damascus through soft power strategies.

In response, Saudi Arabia has not merely observed these changes, it has sought to shape them. By doing so, the Kingdom aims to maintain regional balance in the Middle East, while facilitating Syria's return to the Arab fold, helping its gradual transition toward stability and reconstruction and building a civil state beyond ethnic and sectarian divisions.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia, as custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, carries forward an enlightenment project aimed at reviving moderate Islam based on mutual respect and the rejection of violence and fundamentalism. To counter

radical groups, the Kingdom approaches extremist groups with measured wisdom, implementing direct security measures against terrorist cells while addressing ideological issues and challenging extremist rhetoric. Thus, the Saudi interest in Syrian stability partly stems from a desire to prevent the country from becoming a haven for terrorism or a platform for violent ideologies spreading across the Arab world. Supporting Damascus aligns with reinforcing moderation and addressing extremist thought methodically.

It is also worth noting that millions of Syrians reside in Saudi Arabia, treated not as refugees but as legal residents granted free education, employment opportunities and dignified living conditions. Riyadh seeks to send positive sig-

nals that this care extends to their homeland, emphasizing that Saudi policy seeks to help Syrians rebuild their modern nation-state without interfering in its internal affairs.

Observers of Saudi Arabia note its continuous modernization of society, laws and state structures. Vision 2030 has initiated fundamental transformations that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman intends to sustain long-term. This vision's success requires not just strong economic performance but also regional stability, making Syria's security a strategic Saudi interest for sustaining its development and megaprojects.

Against this backdrop, Ahmad Al-Sharaa's visit to Saudi Arabia this week and his reception by the crown prince carries significant

weight. According to the Saudi Press Agency, the pair discussed Syrian developments, bilateral relations and regional issues, exploring ways to support Syria's security and stability while strengthening cooperation across various fields.

The crown prince's reception of Al-Sharaa signals Riyadh's support for Damascus' political transition and genuine desire for positive developments in security, stability and development, leading toward an inclusive national government representing all Syrian demographics.

However, this does not translate to unconditional Saudi support for every action by Syria's new leadership. Riyadh's policy typically avoids giving any party a blank check or acting as a guardian of other nations' political administrations. Instead, it supports broad principles of security,

stability, reconstruction, development and filling any security or political vacuums. Riyadh seeks to avoid destabilizing tremors that could unsettle the Syrian landscape, leaving the finer details and specific implementations to Syrian discretion. The Kingdom may agree or disagree with particular decisions, offering advice when requested by Damascus.

Al-Sharaa's Saudi visit, while providing political backing and potentially opening doors to other capitals, presents a historic opportunity for Syria. Success depends on it developing credible, practical plans that engage all Syrians in political processes and state reconstruction, avoiding revenge politics and sectarian or ethnic quotas. This approach can build trust and foster sustainable cooperation between the two nations.

Mitigating AI’s climate costs

The escalating climate crisis and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence are set to reshape our world, transforming our political systems, economies and daily lives. What is often overlooked, however, is the myriad ways climate change and AI overlap and influence one another.

Much of the current debate sidesteps the complexity of this relationship. While techno-optimists tout AI as a panacea for the world’s problems, technoskeptics highlight its environmental costs, warning that emerging technologies could end up exacerbating the crisis they aim to solve. In fact, AI has the potential to help us achieve critical climate targets and well-crafted policies can and must mitigate its environmental costs. Against this backdrop, French President Emmanuel Macron’s AI Action Summit in Paris next week offers a unique opportunity to chart a more sustainable course.

Silicon Valley technologists’ wildly optimistic predictions about AI’s potential role in tackling the climate crisis underscore the need for a nuanced approach. In September, for example, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman published an essay in which he envisioned a future where “nearly limitless intelligence and abundant energy” enable “astounding triumphs,” such as “fixing the climate,” “establishing a space colony” and unlocking the mysteries of physics.

A month later, former Google CEO Eric Schmidt echoed this sentiment, acknowledging AI’s climate impact but stating, “I’d rather bet on AI solving the problem than constraining it.” And tech giants like Google and Microsoft often highlight their use of AI to promote sustainability. Yet their carbon dioxide emissions have surged by 48 percent and 29 percent since 2019 and

2020, respectively, largely owing to the growing energy demand of massive data centers.

To be sure, the advances in data processing, mathematics and computation fueling the rise of AI could accelerate scientific research and enable us to tackle urgent global challenges. For example, specialized models like DeepMind’s AlphaFold

In fact, not only are we nowhere near a superintelligent AGI, but no one can predict when (or if) it will even become a possibility. Even if the most optimistic AI proponents are correct and an AGI emerges within the next five years, leading to breakthroughs like stable nuclear fusion or increased solar-cell efficiency, humanity would still have to contend with the messy economic and political realities of the clean-energy transition. After all, many of the technologies required to achieve net-zero emissions already exist. While they could be more efficient or affordable, the barriers to their deployment and scaling reflect the conflicting political, economic, financial and societal interests that shape the global geopolitical landscape. Altman and other techno-optimists’ assurances that AI will solve the climate crisis gloss over these realities and relying on such promises is risky, given data centers’ massive carbon footprint. Already, data centers account for 2 percent to 4 percent of total electricity consumption in the US, the EU and China, and more than 20 percent in Ireland.

have revolutionized our understanding of protein structures, with far-reaching implications for biological sciences.

But these advances, the result of years of interdisciplinary collaboration between AI researchers and scientists, are a far cry from an omniscient artificial general intelligence, or AGI, capable of instantly solving complex scientific and technological problems.

Sherif Elsayed-Ali

In fact, not only are we nowhere near a superintelligent AGI, but no one can predict when (or if) it will even become a possibility. Even if the most optimistic AI proponents are correct and an AGI emerges within the next five years, leading to breakthroughs like stable nuclear fusion or increased solar-cell efficiency, humanity would still have to contend with the messy

that AI will solve the climate crisis gloss over these realities and relying on such promises is risky, given data centers’ massive carbon footprint. Already, data centers account for 2 percent to 4 percent of total electricity consumption in the US, the EU and China, and more than 20 percent in Ireland. The major offenders — Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Google and

and therefore lower costs, may lead to greater demand for new AI functionalities — and higher overall energy consumption.

Instead of asking whether AI can help us achieve climate goals, we should ensure that energy and resource-hungry data centers do not push the planet past environmental tipping points before these technologies can deliver on their promises. To that end, governments must increase transparency and incentivize emissions cuts.

There are two immediate steps that policymakers can take to mitigate AI’s environmental impact. First, they should require the largest owners and operators of data centers to disclose location-based emissions data, reflecting actual electricity consumption. Such a requirement could eventually be expanded to all cloud-based services. Since AI and cloud services are typically billed based on resource usage and time, existing systems could be adapted to provide customers with detailed emissions reports.

Second, policymakers should adopt the International Monetary Fund’s recommendation to introduce a targeted tax on data center emissions. They should also consider requiring all new data centers to include renewable energy infrastructure, ensuring that their electricity demands do not place additional strain on power grids.

While these measures will not entirely offset data centers’ climate impact, they represent an important first step toward holding the tech industry accountable for its greenhouse gas emissions.

By devising effective policies, we can cut through Silicon Valley’s hype and transform AI into a net positive development for the environment. Only with a stable climate can humanity afford the luxury of pursuing AI pioneers’ grand ambitions.

UAE’s Year of Community is at the core of thoughtful urban design

Saeed Mohammed Al Qatami

The UAE’s declaration of 2025 as the Year of Community highlights the nation’s focus on building cohesive, collaborative communities. This vision perfectly complements the growing need for thoughtful urban design that fosters inclusivity, sustainability and well-being for all. As the UAE embraces this national initiative, it calls on all of us to contribute to the shared vision of progress, a theme that resonates deeply with the evolving approach to urban living.

We are privileged to call the UAE home — one of the world’s fastest-growing countries, with priorities in areas such as innovation, sustainability and the well-being of its people. The vibrant real estate markets across various emirates highlight the UAE’s status as a global hub for property investments. Dubai reached unprecedented levels in real estate transactions in 2024, with a total value exceeding Dh760.7 billion from 226,000 deals. These remarkable figures solidify Dubai’s status as a prime destination for diverse and lucrative investment opportunities, breaking previous records.

Cities like Dubai are the epicentres of human life. In fact, more than 4.4 billion people are now living in urban areas worldwide. According to the World Bank, this number is projected to reach 70% by 2050. This growing urbanisation presents both challenges and opportunities for developers, policymakers and urban planners to reimagine our cities with well-being at their core.

After all, the environments in which we live, work and play shape our overall health and well-being more profoundly than genetics or individual lifestyle choices.

Cities are growing and evolving in an organic manner. However, urban spaces can be thoughtfully redesigned with intention, so as to foster physical, mental, and social well-being. The question is: how do we create communities that enable healthier living? The answer lies in a strategic approach that integrates wellness, sustainability and community engagement into the very fabric of urban design.

Designing for wellness Walkable neighbourhoods with green spaces, for instance, encourage physical activity and provide mental respite from the urban hustle. Carefully planned elements such as meandering paths, rooftop gardens, and quiet zones create areas for relaxation and introspection. Sensory gardens and open-air wellness areas further enhance emotional well-being, offering much-needed refuge from the stresses of city life.

A great example of this is our Midtown community in Dubai Production City, where thoughtfully designed green spaces and shared areas foster both physical and mental well-being, creating a balanced environment for residents to thrive. The community boasts a range of thoughtful amenities, retail services, and dining options, enhancing the lifestyle for residents and making it an attractive community.

A rising global epidemic is loneliness, particularly among youth and the elderly. It underscores the need

for social infrastructure that fosters human connection. Globally, cities such as London and Gothenburg have introduced “chatty benches” to encourage conversations among strangers. These are simple yet remarkably effective measures that combat urban isolation. Similarly, well-designed parks, shared spaces, and community events can play a crucial role in nurturing social bonds and promoting mental health.

Integrating retail, hospitality, and commercial elements within residential communities not only enhances convenience but also enriches the urban experience. A mixed-use development approach brings economic vitality, fosters job creation and

Dubai Production City, setting new benchmarks in urban living. By enhancing pedestrian mobility and soft transport options within the community, Park Five embodies wellness-centric design principles that align with Dubai’s larger sustainability goals.

Technology also plays a crucial role in enhancing community well-being. IoT-enabled homes, energy-efficient systems, and smart waste management solutions offer convenience while reducing environmental impact. Digital community platforms further foster social engagement by promoting events, fitness challenges and shared resources, helping to create vibrant, connected neighbourhoods.

Innovation meets access-

In today’s real estate market, wellness is no longer a luxury or a “nice to have”. Investors expect it. Governments worldwide are responding to this shift by embedding well-being into urban policies. Dubai recently approved the Dubai Walk Master Plan — an ambitious initiative that aims to transform Dubai into a pedestrian-friendly city, encouraging active lifestyles and making walking an integral part of daily life. This vision will position Dubai as one of the world’s healthiest and most sustainable cities. We at Deyaar are embracing this vision with community-focused projects such as the recently launched Park Five in Dubai Production City, setting new benchmarks in urban living. By enhancing pedestrian mobility and soft transport options within the community, Park Five embodies wellness-centric design principles that align with Dubai’s larger sustainability goals.

boosts local businesses by attracting both residents and visitors, contributing to an enriched, connected way of life.

What’s more, strong social connections help promote overall well-being. Neighbourhoods and local businesses flourish on the back of these networks. Mixed-use communities that weave residential, commercial, and recreational spaces into one seamless urban fabric help make life more vibrant and rewarding.

Smart Solutions for Smarter Living

In today’s real estate market, wellness is no longer a luxury or a “nice to have”. Investors expect it. Governments worldwide are responding to this shift by embedding well-being into urban policies. Dubai recently approved the Dubai Walk Master Plan — an ambitious initiative that aims to transform Dubai into a pedestrian-friendly city, encouraging active lifestyles and making walking an integral part of daily life. This vision will position Dubai as one of the world’s healthiest and most sustainable cities.

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sibility

While the pursuit of wellness-driven communities is promising, it comes with its share of challenges. Balancing affordability with high-quality infrastructure remains a critical consideration, particularly in fast-growing urban areas. The evolving dynamics of modern life — such as the rise of remote work and increasing demand for wellness amenities— require flexible, future-proof solutions that cater to diverse lifestyles.

Collaboration between governments, developers, and communities will be key to addressing these challenges and ensuring that wellness is accessible to all. By prioritising inclusivity and sustainability, urban spaces can be transformed into environments that enhance quality of life at every level.

As cities continue to expand, the need for thoughtful urban design has never been greater. Developers like Deyaar are leading the way, offering a blueprint for the future — one that balances innovation with well-being and sustainability. Together, we can build communities that not only accommodate growth but enhance the lives of those who call them home.

Youth lead the charge in climate fight

Abdullah Belhaif Al Nuaimi

One of the most significant cultural figures of the 20th century, the ‘King of Pop’ Michael Jackson wrote and sang the ‘Earth Song’, creating environmental awareness due to conflicts and climate change. The lyrics had questions: What about sunrise? What about rain? What about all the things that you said we were to gain?

This was in 1995. Three decades later, the world is still searching for answers.

Clearly, we missed the message that we must give back to the environment what we take and take only as much as we need, but as is the human tendency, greed took precedence and the result is the calamities all around.

Moreover, without proper guidelines on the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) goals on the carbon emissions needed to be reduced, it’s still being figured out how to eliminate the dreadful impact of climate change and its effects on the habitat.

However, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has long prioritised youth engagement around climate issues and provided platforms to share their ideas and advocate for global actions.

It feels young people can lead projects that build climate resilience at schools, colleges, hospitals and

community centres; train in green skills across sectors; protect ecosystems by preserving water sources and forests; turn waste into energy; adopt sustainable lifestyles, and encourage governments to enact policies and fund climate adaptation measures.

While discerning that young people are aware of climate change, UNICEF launched ‘The Green Rising’ project with an ambitious plan to mobilise 10 million youngsters to take concrete climate actions in their countries and communities by 2025.

Vanessa Nakate, the organisation’s Goodwill Ambassador stated, “We need young people in the rooms where decisions about our planet are being made because young people are not only on the front line of the climate crisis, but we are also on the front lines of the fight for climate justice.”

The guiding light

With robust technology at their fingertips, present-day activism is not blurred. Youngsters are discussing the perils of environmental degradation and contributing to the green transition.

As Gen Z are the ones to suffer the most on inheriting a smoky planet from elders, peace coalitions like the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security (GCYPS) and the United

Network of Young (UNOY) Peacebuilders are asserting themselves to strengthen youth participation in bringing harmony to the negotiating table of the warring factions.

Active and vocal in their views on the impacts of war on civilians and climate change, they are striving to turn around the Earth’s climate with support from seniors. The youth are aware that warmer temperatures have altered the living pattern, leading to an abundance of allergens causing lung infection, rising asthma cases, and cardiac arrests at a young age.

The above-normal temperatures have caused disruptions and a mismatch between pollinators and plants.

It’s comforting that the youth is leading the global movement to demand more action from governments and other entities to tackle climate change. Utilising their skills and creativity to raise awareness, educate others, and implement solutions, their activism is likely to brighten the lives of many and bring about positive change.

International Youth Day

The youth have better tools and opportunities to make a difference. With access to education, technology, and science, they can alert and address the challenges of climate

change from any corner of the world. While utilising the space in the international arena to hear their pleas, they influence decision-making processes that affect their future.

For instance, at the COP forums, they organise and participate in events and activities including the Conference of Youth (COY), an annual event that prepares youngsters to participate in debates. They engage with stakeholders, such as governments, civil society, media and businesses to speak out and influence opinions. Expected to advocate ambitious and inclusive climate actions, the Youth and Future Generations Day emphasises initiatives and perspectives on climate change.

In 2002, the UN designated Aug. 12, as International Youth Day (IYD). It was conceptualised by young people at the World Youth Forum in Vienna, Austria, in 1991. Hosted by the Government of Portugal alongside the UN in 1998, it was adopted in a resolution by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

With education as the key to their agenda, the purpose has been to draw attention to cultural and legal issues and encourage participation, especially of the vulnerable.

Turning the tide

Philippines: Marcos-Duterte feud escalates into cliffhanger, instability to hit jobs, booming economy

Philippine politics just got even wilder. A once-formidable alliance between President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Vice President Sara Duterte, has turned into open warfare.

This all-out political showdown could take the country into the abyss of uncertainty — but one thing’s for sure: if it drags on, say goodbye to a smooth economic recovery and hello to vanishing jobs.

On Wednesday (February 5), the 316-member House of Representatives — controlled by Marcos’s allies and led by the president’s cousin Speaker Martin Romualdez — voted to impeach Sara Duterte, with 215 votes.

Romualdez is himself reportedly eyeing a presidential run in 2028, after Marcos Jr’s term end. The

Philippine Constitution allows only a single, six-year term for president and vice president.

While the exact details of the charges against Vice President Sara Duterte remain a mystery, what’s clear is that she’s facing not one, not two, but at least four complaints — all tied to alleged misuse of public funds.

It’s the fourth impeachment complaint against the 46-year-old vice president, who is calling foul, denying every single accusation.

Where Marcos Jr stands Meanwhile, 67-year-old President Marcos Jr. is playing it cool — for now. Last month, he made it clear that he’s not jumping on the impeachment train.

The utter decimation of the Marcos-Duterte tandem has fractured the ruling coalition and deepened

divisions.

Their bitter public feud reached a boiling point in November 2024, when Duterte allegedly made a shocking statement: she would have Marcos assassinated if someone did the same to her.

As their conflict worsens, political analysts warn that the Philippines is entering a period of instability that could paralyze governance and weaken the country’s ability to implement crucial reforms.

From alliance to open warfare

The Marcos-Duterte partnership was forged in 2021 out of political necessity, combining two of the Philippines’ most dominant political dynasties.

Marcos (whose political bailiwick is the country’s north) needed Duterte’s popularity in Mindanao, in

the country’s south.

Duterte rode on the Marcos family’s influence in Luzon. Their “UniTeam” campaign promised unity and continuity, riding on the legacies of their powerful fathers — Ferdinand Marcos Sr. and Rodrigo Duterte.

Under the watch of Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022), he allowed the remains of Marcos Sr. to be buried in the “Libingan ng mga Bayani”, the burial ground of the country’s heroes, a long-cherished moment by the Marcoses.

Marcos Sr died in 1989, just three years after he was deposed in a civilian-backed coup led by a cousin, General Fidel Ramos and Juan Ponce-Enrile. Both are members the powerful Ilocano-

Jay Hilotin

speaking tribe, dominant in the north of mainland Luzon (where Manila is).

Fast forward to the present: The Marcos-Duterte “UniTeam” has since turned into an all-out power struggle. Ramos died in 2022, and Enrile (a former Senate president and a Harvard-trained lawyer) is now Marcos Jr’s chief legal counsel.

A nation at risk: Fallout from the feud

The political tug-of-war between Marcos and Duterte is not just a personal battle — it has dire consequences for the country.

The latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey shows both leaders taking heavy political damage:

Marcos’ net satisfaction rating plunged 13 points to

+19, his worst since taking office.

Duterte’s rating dropped 6 points to +21, with growing dissatisfaction in key regions.

Noisy democracy The Philippines isn’t just one of Southeast Asia’s oldest democracies — it’s also the most boisterous, chaotic, and downright entertaining (the top senator is an actor).

With no signs of reconciliation, and no neutral senior statesman to manage the trouble on top (social media platforms are not helping either — as they are driven by ad-oriented algorithms, designed to make money as they fan the flames of extreme partisanship), what happens next is anyone’s guess.

Think of it as the region’s ultimate political telenovela.

Here’s the catch — while the drama unfolds,

once-mighty “UniTeam” alliance is now a shattered dream, leaving the nation to brace for further chaos.

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Think of it as the region’s ultimate political telenovela.

Here’s the catch — while the drama unfolds,

the country’s economic engines are firing on all cylinders.

Tax-collections are up, while getting more efficient (Php2 trillion in taxes were paid using online channels in 2024).

Manufacturing, tourism, energy, and infrastructure are booming like never before. The last thing the Philippines needs right now? More uncertainty throwing a wrench in the way of progress.

Uncertainty is the enemy of progress

So, while the political drama unfolds like a prime-time teleserye, let’s just hope the economy doesn’t become collateral damage.

But hey, this is the Philippines — where we sometimes trip over our own feet while our neighbours sprint ahead, chuckling all the way to progress.



SMEDA pledges support to modernize Pakistan's gems, jewellery sector

LAHORE (APP): The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Socrat Aman Rana has assured the representatives of Gems and Jewellery sector to utilize all available resources to modernize the country's gems and jewellery sector according to the global standards.

He added that SMEDA will also collaborate with the association to develop programmes for technical and financial consultations. He was speaking during a meeting with a 15-member delegation from the Lahore Division Sarafa and Jewelers Association (LDS&JA) and the Gold and Gems Art Promotion Council of

Pakistan (GGAPCP) led by Muhammad Ahmed the other day.

Aman Rana informed the delegation that the current government is giving the highest priority to the development of SMEs, more so than previous governments.

He mentioned that funds have been allocated at both provincial and federal levels, which jewelers can access by fulfilling the necessary requirements.

He further stated that SMEDA will provide strong support to make various training programs and easy loan schemes for jewelers, based on the association's recommendations, feasible for the gems and jewelry sector as well.

Muhammad Ahmed, Chairman of the Lahore Division Sarafa & Jewelers Association and President of the Gold and Gems Art Promotion Council of Pakistan, said that India is earning billions of dollars by adding value to its gems, while there are no international-standard labs available in our country, and the government should focus on this issue.

In response, SMEDA's CEO assured that SMEDA will offer full support to the association in establishing an international lab. He also emphasised the urgent need for marketing and branding of the gems and jewellery sector both domestically and internationally, and SMEDA will

work with the association to design various programs in this regard.

During the event, the Council's Director of Strategic Research and E-commerce Wing, Nasir Arif Janjua, informed the SMEDA CEO that the council has already initiated the process of bringing the gems and jewellery sector into the domestic e-commerce market, with the first programme already completed.

SMEDA CEO informed the delegation that SMEDA is designing a comprehensive e-commerce programme that will be applicable to all sectors and the gems and jewellery sector can greatly benefit from this initiative.



DUBAI: Pakistan Pavilion inaugurated at AI Everything Global 2025 by Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to the UAE, alongside Abu Bakar, CEO of PSEB and Trade Counselor Ali Zeb Khan.

Pakistani Envoy to KSA boosts trade ties

LAHORE (APP): Convener Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) regional committee on food Shahid Imran Wednesday said Saudi Arabia has emerged as one of the biggest import markets in the Middle East and Pakistan must fully exploit potential to maximum extent by boosting international standards exports.

Talking to a delegation of food exporters led by Mian Zahid Iqbal Arain, he said that "Pak exporters are still unaware of its import potential and we must maximize the capitalization of export potential of Saudi Arabia particularly in agriculture, textile, construction and IT sectors including snacks after the recent reforms in the Kingdom."

He said that KSA has opened its economy with revolutionary reforms to attract foreign businesses and now Pakistani investors could register their companies with or without any Saudi sponsor. He said vast scope exists for the Pakistani business community to contribute their productive role in other sectors.

Shahid Imran urged exporters to explore Saudi markets to harvest maximum benefits from its emerging potential. He said that various international exhibitions including Asia Cup Football, Water Games, Expos and World Cup Football are scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia and Pakistanis must participate in these events to establish direct contacts with their Saudi Arabian counterparts. Ambassador of Pakistan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Ahmad Farooq was facilitating all desirable Pak exporters and exercising his sphere of diplomatic influence in arranging business meetings with their Saudi counterparts.

He added that this was yielding a positive impact, with more and more Pakistani delegations visiting the Kingdom, he concluded.

PFC appreciates Maria's role at summit

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq has congratulated Ms Maria Tauqir, General Manager Interiors Pakistan, for successfully highlighting the potentials of Pakistani women entrepreneurs at Davos summit held recently in Switzerland.

The council's spokesman told media here Wednesday that in a felicitation letter addressed to her, the PFC chief said that with the positive feedback from the recent Davos summit, it is cleared that Pakistan is increasingly being recognized globally for its business potential, innovative spirit, and the resilience of its people.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said, it is an honour for Ms Maria Tauqir to be a host of the two-day Davos summit that mega event not only enhanced the visibility of Pakistan's private sector but also strengthened the global perception of Pakistan as a country brimming with opportunities for investment and collaboration.

Mian Kashif said the summit was a testament to the growing importance of Pakistan in the global business community, highlighting its readiness to contribute to international development and trade. He said, the forum acted as a bridge for forging new international partnerships, and for Pakistan, it was an invaluable opportunity to present itself as an ideal destination for investment.

The forum's diverse participation reinforced the importance of collaboration across borders to solve global challenges, with Pakistan positioned as an essential player in these dialogues.

Chawla Group brings Dongfeng EVs to Pakistan

F.P. Report

LAHORE: In a landmark move for Pakistan's electric vehicle (EV) industry, Chawla Group, one of the country's most reputable and diversified business groups, has secured exclusive dealership rights for Dongfeng, a global automotive leader, to bring world-class EVs to Pakistani roads through official and fully compliant legal channels.

This partnership is more than just a dealership agreement—it represents a long-term commitment to quality, reliability, and customer satisfaction. Chawla Group is setting a new standard in Pakistan's EV industry by ensuring comprehensive after-sales service, warranties, and a seamless ownership experience for customers.

A Trusted Name, A Proven Track Record

With decades of experience across multiple industries, Chawla Group is known for its uncompromising commitment to excellence. Their reputation for transparency, customer-centric service, and

strict quality control ensures that Pakistani EV buyers will have a premium ownership experience, backed by warranty protections and prompt complaint resolution mechanisms.

As part of this bold expansion into the green mobility sector, Chawla Group and Dongfeng have outlined a clear roadmap for introducing cutting-edge electric vehicles across Pakistan:

September 2024 - Exclusive dealership agreement signed

December 2024 - Nationwide dealer network strategy finalized

January 2025 - First test units arrive in Pakistan

January 2025 - Construction begins on Pakistan's first Dongfeng showroom & service center in Gulberg, Lahore

March 2025 - Official brand launch with a high-profile delegation from Dongfeng China

A Customer-First Approach to EV Ownership

Unlike many new entrants into the EV space, Chawla Group and Dongfeng are committed to

ensuring that Pakistani customers have access to:

Authorized sales channels with full legal compliance

Industry-leading after-sales service & dedicated support centers

Manufacturer-backed warranties for peace of mind

A responsive customer care system with quick complaint resolution

"This isn't just about bringing a global EV brand to Pakistan—it's about setting a new benchmark for reliability, customer satisfaction, and sustainable mobility," said Ahmad Chawla. "We're making EV ownership a hassle-free experience, supported by world-class after-sales service and a nationwide network of service centers."

With its commitment to quality, legal compliance, and customer satisfaction, Chawla Group is pioneering a new era of EV adoption in Pakistan—ensuring that every Dongfeng vehicle sold comes with the trust, reliability, and service excellence that Pakistani customers deserve.

Stocks, dollar drop as tariff tensions intensify

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets mostly fell, the dollar slid and gold hit a record high Wednesday over fears about a trade war between superpowers China and the United States.

Chinese e-commerce firms took a hit from news that the US Postal Service was suspending inbound parcels from China and Hong Kong, a move that followed tit-for-tat tariffs.

European markets also struggled, with carmakers and luxury industries suffering losses. Tensions between the United States

and China have soared in recent days as the world's two largest economies slapped a volley of import tariffs on each other.

Analysts noted that China's tariff response this week was relatively modest, providing some hope that a full-blown crisis could be avoided.

But "the problem with trade wars is they can escalate quickly, leading to potential issues such as inflation, job losses and even recession", said Kate Marshall, lead investment analyst at Hargreaves

Lansdown. Hong Kong's stock market closed down nearly one percent, with e-commerce giant JD.com sinking almost four percent and rival Alibaba also falling. Shanghai dropped after it returned from a week-long break, while Tokyo reversed earlier losses. Amid the uncertainty, gold hit a fresh peak above \$2,866 an ounce as investors rushed into the haven metal. The tepid performance came despite a positive lead from Wall Street, after the United States delayed its 25 percent duties on imports from Canada and Mexico.

Tech firms were also under pressure after disappointing earnings led Google-parent Alphabet to sink 7.5 percent in after-hours trade in New York.

Chip-maker Advanced Micro Devices also sank in post-close business. The tech sector has already been roiled by the unveiling of a new chatbot by Chinese startup DeepSeek, stoking concerns about the eye-watering investments made in AI in recent years.

In other company news, shares in Japan's Nissan fell around five percent following reports that the car-maker had decided to withdraw from merger talks with rival Honda.

PRGMEA rejects 12 per cent CAF of newly-launched policy

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) on Wednesday said the Pakistan's first-ever National Carbon Market Policy, launched in November last year, demonstrates country's commitment to emissions reduction, however, it lags behind regional counterparts in ambition, sectoral coverage, and global integration, potentially limiting its effectiveness in attracting climate finance and investment.

PRGMEA regional chairman Dr. Ayyazuddin, in a statement issued here on Monday, observed the new policy marked a significant step towards integrating carbon trading into its broader climate strategy, suggesting the government to encourage investment in Carbon capture and storage (CCS) and renewable energy through public-private partnerships, besides revisiting the high Carbon Adjustment Factor (CAF) to a more flexible rate, ensuring participation from startups and SMEs.

He also recommended the launching of nationwide awareness campaigns and capacity-building programs

to involve communities and private sectors, decentralizing governance, encouraging regional collaboration and enabling cross-border carbon trading.

Dr. Ayyazuddin stated that the government has pledged to reduce its GHG emissions by 50% by 2030, with 15% being unconditional and 35% conditional on international support. While India has pledged 45% reduction in emission intensity of GDP by 2030, China's goal of peaking emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, and Bangladesh's NDC proposed for 12 million tons (5%) unconditional reduction in GHG emission from Business as Usual (BAU) scenario by 2030 and a further 24 million tons (10%) conditional reduction in GHG emission with support from the international community taking the base year 2011. Bangladesh also has a strong focus on renewable energy alongside its conditional and unconditional targets. Sectoral coverage for Pakistan is narrow, where high-emission sectors such as cement, steel, and transportation are underrepresented in the country's strategy, while regional peers like India and China prioritize these

industries. Advanced technologies such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) and green hydrogen production are also areas where Pakistan lags.

Pakistan is currently developing a nascent voluntary carbon market, operating without a formal compliance framework. In comparison, India's market is more mature with its well-established PAT Scheme (since 2012) and discussions underway for a broader carbon trading mechanism (the proposed CCTS framework). Meanwhile, Ghana is in an emerging phase—with initiatives largely centered on REDD+ forestry projects—and Bangladesh has not yet established a formal market, instead prioritizing renewables and blended finance. China, on the other hand, leads the field with the largest compliance market globally, having launched its national ETS in 2021 covering around 40% of national emissions.

Pakistan's carbon market efforts currently focus on sectors such as agriculture and a developing energy sector. This contrasts with India's emphasis on heavy industry (including cement, steel, aluminum, and power), Ghana's focus on

forestry alongside renewable energy and transport, and Bangladesh's concentration on renewable energy (primarily solar and wind) and agriculture.

In Pakistan, the Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination leads the policy framework, ensuring alignment with international climate commitments. In contrast, India's energy efficiency programs are overseen by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE); Ghana's carbon market initiatives are administered by an EPA-led Carbon Market Office; Bangladesh's environmental policies are managed by its Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change; and China's extensive ETS is regulated by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE).

By addressing the mentioned challenges, Pakistan can strengthen its carbon markets policy, attract international investments, and become a key player in global climate action. While the 2024 policy is a step forward, bold reforms and enhanced integration with international markets will be crucial in achieving meaningful climate targets and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Rwanda's tourism policy give vision for innovative travel market

ISLAMABAD (APP): High Commissioner of Rwanda to Pakistan, Fatou Harerimana on Wednesday said that Rwanda's tourism policy vision provides modern and innovative facilities for foreign tourists in line with the modern global tourism market, according to international standards.

The culture and society of Rwanda not only have its own distinct international uniqueness, diverse Socio-Cultural heritage, eloquence, mental breadth,

cleanliness, unique wildlife, flora and fauna, but also the country has organized reputed international sports events and culture, she said in a release issued here.

High Commissioner of Rwanda to Pakistan, Fatou Harerimana said this while addressing the 4th annual edition of 'The Sustainable Destination Forum, organized by Pakistan Travel Mart.

"Rwanda is now on top in the African region, in Information Technology

(IT) and internet access and its youth is an asset for promoting the international and domestic travel market, which will play a significant role in the development of this industry in the future.

She said that known as the land of a thousand hills, Rwanda's stunning scenery and warm, friendly people offer unique experiences in one of the most remarkable countries in the world.

The envoy said that the country is blessed with extraordinary biodiversity, with incredible wildlife living throughout its volcanoes, montane rainforest and sweeping plains.

She said that foreign travellers come from far and wide to catch a glimpse of the magnificent gorillas, yet there is so much more to see and experience.

Meanwhile highlighting the 'Visit Rwanda' campaign by the government of Rwanda, she said that 'Visit Rwanda' campaign 'as a brand has established a positive reputation with mil-

lions of people from across the globe that are associating with it and has provided a platform for Rwanda to showcase its tourism attractions, cultural heritage, and investment opportunities to the whole world.

She noted that through the 'Visit Rwanda' campaign, the country entered into a partnership with the Arsenal football club as well as France's Paris Saint-Germain.

She said that these partnerships have returned impressive dividends.

Fatou Harerimana said that through this campaign, investors from across the globe opt to invest in the travel market in the country which is a positive sign of continued investor confidence in the promotion of the travel market in the country.

Fatou Harerimana said that this campaign has been successful in promoting Rwanda's unique attractions, such as mountain gorillas, stunning natural scenery, and cultural heritage.

Gold prices up by Rs5,300 per tola to Rs299,600

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs5,300 and was sold at Rs299,600 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs294,300 on previous trading day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs4,158 to Rs256,859 from Rs252,314 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs235,454 from Rs231,296. The prices of per tola silver also increased by Rs36 to Rs3,350 whereas that of ten gram rose by Rs31.08 to Rs2,872.08. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$53 to \$2,868 from \$2,815, the Association reported.

Oil giants TotalEnergies, Equinor reduce low-carbon investments

PARIS (AFP/APP): French oil and gas giant TotalEnergies said Wednesday it would reduce its low-carbon energy investments while Norwegian peer Equinor scaled back its renewables ambitions as the companies reported sharp drops in annual profits.

Major fossil fuel companies have seen their profits fall as crude prices have dropped over demand concerns after soaring in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Despite pressure from climate campaigners for the industry to phase out

fossil fuels, companies are reducing investment in renewables and boosting their more profitable oil and gas output.

TotalEnergies said Wednesday it would reduce its investments in low-carbon energy, mainly for electricity, by \$500 million -- from \$5 billion to \$4.5 billion.

The French oil and gas major reported a net profit of \$15.8 billion for 2024 -- still sizeable but 26 percent lower than in the previous year. It was around \$1 billion less than forecast by analysts surveyed by

Bloomberg and financial data firm FactSet.

This followed two years of record profits, which reached \$21.4 billion in 2023.

"The oil and gas landscape was less favourable (in 2024)," TotalEnergies chief executive Patrick Poyanne told reporters.

"In the end, it will still be the third highest results in (company) history," he added.

Equinor said its net profit fell by a quarter to \$8.8 billion in 2024.

The Norwegian company said it now planned a

renewable capacity of between 10 and 12 gigawatts in 2030, down from a previous forecast of 12 to 16 GW.

It added that its ambition to allocate 50 percent of capital investment to renewable and low-carbon projects "is retired".

Emissions from fossil fuels keep rising despite a global pledge to move the world away from coal, oil and gas.

Under the Paris accord on climate change, the world agreed to try and keep warming to this safer 1.5C threshold.

Equinor also announced plans to increase oil and gas production by more than 10 percent between 2024 and 2027. It increased its expected production for 2030 from two million barrels per day to 2.2 million.

"We are taking strong measures to adapt to the market as we see it," chief executive Anders Opedal told Norwegian newspaper Dagens Naeringsliv.

"It's the market that is changing. My job is to create value for shareholders in a constantly evolving market," he said.

Climate campaigners slammed the company's announcement.

"Equinor continues to rake in colossal profits by accelerating climate change, which causes more extreme weather events, ice melting, and human deaths," said Frode Pleym, head of Greenpeace Norway.

"When more than 99 percent of its energy production remains fossil-based and the company further reduces its renewable ambitions, it is impossible to take its ecological commitments seriously,"

he said.

The NGO urged the Norwegian government, which owns a 67-percent stake in Equinor, to respond to the company's decision to scale back renewables plans.

Equinor and TotalEnergies are not alone.

British oil majors BP and Shell have also scaled back various climate objectives to focus more on oil and gas in order to raise profits, drawing criticism from environmental activists.

Italy's Enel cut its renewable energy ambi-

tions by around five billion euros for the 2024-2026 period in a new strategic plan published in 2023.

US majors ExxonMobil and Chevron remain focused on oil and gas production.

The outlook for global oil production varies.

The International Energy Agency, which advises developed countries, sees oil production peaking by the end of the decade.

The Saudi-led OPEC oil cartel expects output to continue growing until at least 2050.



In brief

Zhou joins Ferrari as reserve driver

M A R A N E L L O (Agencies): China's Zhou Guanyu is to be one of two Ferrari reserve drivers in 2025. The 25-year-old, who was dropped by Sauber at the end of last season after three years with the Swiss team, joins Italian Antonio Giovinazzi. Zhou, who was a member of the Ferrari driver academy from 2015 to 2018, will support race drivers Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc. Reserve drivers typically do simulator work to assist the race team, including over race weekends as teams work to perfect their car set-up, and perform selected testing duties, including tyre tests. This week, though, Ferrari are using Hamilton and Leclerc to conduct a tyre test for Pirelli on 4 and 5 February at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya. McLaren are also at the test, with Lando Norris driving on Tuesday. The test is a further opportunity for Hamilton to continue his familiarisation work with his new team, after crashing during a test in the 2023 car last week. Both teams are assisting Pirelli with development work on its 2026 tyres, and Ferrari are using a 2024 car modified to simulate expected performance levels following the introduction of new engine and chassis rules next year. On Tuesday, Hamilton competed 87 laps, Leclerc 86 and Norris, in a modified 2023 car, 159. Norris was fastest, followed by Hamilton and Leclerc. Headline lap times are irrelevant because the drivers were completing different programmes. Zhou scored 16 points for Sauber in 68 grands prix for the team. Giovinazzi has been part of the Ferrari driver roster since 2017 and raced for Alfa Romeo from 2019-21, scoring 21 points in 62 starts.

England name XI for first India ODI

NAGPUR (Agencies): Joe Root will play his first one-day international since the 2023 World Cup in the opening match of England's series against India on Thursday in Nagpur. The 34-year-old has been named at number three in England's XI, behind openers Phil Salt and Ben Duckett. Jacob Bethell has been preferred to Jamie Overton at number seven with Brydon Carse, Jofra Archer and Saqib Mahmood the three-man pace attack. Wicketkeeper Jamie Smith is out with a calf injury. England XI to play India: Phil Salt (wk), Ben Duckett, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jos Buttler (capt), Liam Livingstone, Jacob Bethell, Brydon Carse, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid, Saqib Mahmood. The three-match series, which begins at 08:00 GMT, acts as England's preparation for the Champions Trophy next month. England have lost their past three ODI series but this contest is their first in the 50-over format with Brendon McCullum as their white-ball coach. They lost 4-1 to India in the preceding T20s. Root's last ODI was the final match of their dismal World Cup defence against Pakistan in Kolkata on 11 November 2023. This series and the Champions Trophy that follows mark the start of the journey towards the 2027 World Cup in South Africa in 50-over cricket. Root was a key part of England's 2019 World Cup win but has struggled for form in the format since, with his options limited because of clashes in the schedule between England's red and white-ball teams. He averages 28.95 in 28 matches since the 2019 World Cup and has not scored an ODI century since his 100 not out against West Indies in the group stage of that competition.

Australia's Cummins set to miss Champions Trophy

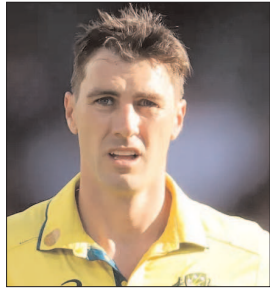
SYDNEY (Agencies): Australia captain Pat Cummins is "hugely unlikely" to be fit for the Champions Trophy, says coach Andrew McDonald.

Fast bowler Cummins, 31, is absent from the ongoing Test series in Sri Lanka because of the birth of his second child, but also has an ankle problem.

Fellow paceman Josh Hazlewood, who has been sidelined with calf and side issues and was named in Australia's preliminary squad alongside Cummins, is also a doubt.

"Patty is hugely unlikely, which is a bit of shame, and we've also got Josh Hazlewood, who is battling [to be fit] at the moment," McDonald told radio station SEN. "So that medical information will land over the next couple of days and we'll be able to shore that up and let everyone know the direction."

Cummins' absence



would leave 50-over world champions Australia with a decision to make over the captaincy, with all-rounder and vice-captain Mitchell Marsh already out with a back issue.

McDonald said Steve Smith, who is currently leading in Cummins' absence in Sri Lanka and has captained Australia in 59 one-day internationals, and fellow batter Travis Head are the two options being considered.

Head has never been captain in ODIs but has been in charge for one T20 - a defeat by England in Cardiff last year.

"Pat Cummins hasn't been able to resume any type of bowling so he's heavily unlikely, so that would mean that we do need a captain," McDonald said.

"They'll be the two that we look at for that leadership post."

The Champions Trophy, held in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, begins on 19 February. Australia are in a group with England, Afghanistan and South Africa and meet England in their opening fixture on 22 February.

Teams have until Wednesday, 12 February to make changes to their preliminary squads. Left-armers Mitchell Starc and seamer Nathan Ellis are currently the only fit quick bowlers in Australia's squad.

Seamer Sean Abbott, left-armers Spencer Johnson and quick Lance Morris were part of the squad beaten 2-1 at home by Pakistan in Australia's most recent ODI series.

Ronaldo says he is the best soccer player ever



MADRID (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo approaches his 40th birthday with the same confidence and self-esteem as he has always boasted throughout his successful career.

Ronaldo, the former Real Madrid star who now plays for Saudi Arabia's Al-Nassr, will turn 40 on Wednesday and apparently has no doubt about who should be considered the best soccer player ever.

"I am the greatest scorer in history," Ronaldo said in an interview with Spanish television channel La Sexta.

"Although I am not left-footed, I am in the top 10 in history for goals scored with the left foot. These are numbers, I am the most complete player who has ever existed. "I play well with my head, I take good free kicks, I am fast, I am strong, I jump... I have never seen anyone better than me."

The Portugal star holds most scoring records in men's international soccer, including most appearances with 217 and most goals with 135.

He had said it before, more than once, that he feels he will go out as the

best ever in the history of soccer. Whenever he was asked about the discussion of who is better, him or Lionel Messi, he always praised the Argentine but ended siding with himself.

Ronaldo's most recent comments prompted a few reactions in the soccer world. "I have a lot of respect for Cristiano and I don't have to analyze his opinions. It's what he thinks. I have my own thoughts and it isn't that," said Javier

Mascherano, a former teammate of Messi and his current coach at Inter Miami.

Powerplay Sports store to provide best equipment to athletes: Jahangir

KARACHI (APP): Squash legend and former world champion Jahangir Khan has emphasized the need for athletes to have access to international-standard sports equipment to enhance Pakistan's sports ecosystem.

He stated that high-quality gear is essential for athletes to perform with confidence and focus, according to a news release on Wednesday. In today's digital era, sports equipment of global standards can now be easily acquired through quality online platforms.

Jahangir Khan made these remarks at the launch ceremony of Powerplay Sports' online store at Legends Arena, Karachi.

The event was attended by Omar Saeed, CEO of international sports equipment brand Combaxx Sports, Farah Saeed, Vice President of the Softball Federation of Pakistan, Zubair Macha, General Manager of Combaxx

Sports, and Saad Asif, Director of Powerplay Sports.

Extending his best wishes to Powerplay Sports, Jahangir Khan highlighted that the availability of international brands manufacturing cricket, squash, padel tennis, taekwondo, judo, karate, and softball equipment will allow young Pakistani athletes to access world-class gear within the country.

He expressed hope that athletes, especially young sports enthusiasts, would greatly benefit from Powerplay's online sports store.

Omar Saeed, CEO of Combaxx Sports, announced that all internationally certified Combaxx Sports products would be available on the Powerplay online store. Furthermore, as a technical partner, Combaxx Sports will sponsor two athletes (one male and one female) annually for overseas training.

release.

Richard Kettleborough, a veteran of 108 Men's ODIs, and who stood in the final of the last edition played in the United Kingdom in 2017, is among six umpires who return for another Champions Trophy.

Chris Gaffaney, Kumar Dharmasena, Richard Illingworth, Paul Reiffel and Rod Tucker, all members of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel

of Umpires, are others who also featured in 2017. Kettleborough and Illingworth, who stood together for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 final in Ahmedabad, are joined by Michael Gough, Adrian Holdstock, Ahsan Raza, Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, Alex Wharf and Joel Wilson, all of whom officiated at the World Cup in India.

David Boon, Ranjan Madugalle and Andrew Pycroft, all members of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, comprise the three-member team of referees.

Boon was referee in the 2017 final while Pycroft also officiated in the tournament. Madugalle returns after officiating the 2013 final.

Sean Easey, ICC Senior Manager – Umpires and Referees: "We are pleased to



ABU DHABI: Ons Jabeur of Tunisia in action in her second round match against Wakana Sonobe of Japan during day four of the Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open, part of the Hologic WTA Tour.

Aaqib justifies Faheem's inclusion in squad

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's interim white-ball head coach Aaqib Javed Wednesday provided an explanation for the inclusion of all-rounder Faheem Ashraf in the national squad.

Addressing the media in Lahore, Javed highlighted the rationale behind selecting Faheem, emphasizing his dual ability to contribute both as a pace bowler and a batsman.

"Faheem Ashraf has been included in the squad because he provides an option with both pace and batting," Javed stated. His remarks come amid discussions about the composition of Pakistan's playing XI and the strategy leading up to the upcoming Champions Trophy.

He further clarified that only one specialist spinner is generally included in the playing XI, making it easier to adjust the squad in case of an injury. "In the top seven batters, we always have a spin-bowling option as well," he noted, adding that with the presence of leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed, it is unlikely that Pakistan will field two specialist spinners in the XI. Regarding the squad's stability, the interim head coach expressed confidence in the current selection. "In my view, this is likely to be the final squad," he remarked.

Zacky Farms/Din Polo qualify for final

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): CTI Shipping edged out Zacky Farms/Din Polo with a 7-6 victory. However, Zacky Farms/Din Polo secured a place in the main final based on a superior goal average in the 4th Junior Polo Championship, sponsored by TCL and organized by Lahore Garrison Polo Grounds.

The thrilling match at Pakistan Park Cavalry Ground was attended by families with children and former polo players. Club Secretary Maj (Retd) Babar Mehboob Awan, TCL's Muhammad Owais, and other distinguished guests were also present on the occasion.

In a nail-biting contest, CTI Shipping clinched victory in the final moments of the match. Mustafa Fahd led the charge for CTI Shipping, scoring an impressive five goals, while Syed Ayaan Salman added two. For Zacky Farms/Din Polo, Zackaria Daud Ali Khan netted three goals, with Ibrahim Muzammil contributing two. With a superior goal difference, Zacky Farms/Din Polo advanced to the main final, while CTI Shipping qualified for the subsidiary final.

Tri-nation series: New Zealand team arrives in Lahore under tight security

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The New Zealand cricket team arrived in Lahore on Wednesday after traveling from Auckland via Dubai to participate in the upcoming tri-nation series in Pakistan.

According to media reports, the team was escorted to their hotel under tight security measures, ensuring the safety of players ahead of the series.

The New Zealand squad is scheduled to take a complete rest today before commencing their practice ses-

sions tomorrow.

A press conference was held earlier, featuring the captains of both Pakistan and New Zealand, where they discussed their strategies and expectations for the series. The South African team is set to arrive in Lahore on Friday and will begin their first training session the following day.

The tri-nation series, which runs from February 8 to 14, will be played on a single league basis.

The first two matches will take place at Lahore's

Gaddafi Stadium, with the final league match and the grand finale scheduled for Karachi's National Bank Stadium.

The series kicks off with Pakistan facing New Zealand on February 8 at Gaddafi Stadium, followed by New Zealand versus South Africa on February 10. Pakistan's day-night match against South Africa will take place at Karachi's National Stadium on February 12. The final will be held on February 14 in Karachi.

Pakistan cycling team to participate in Asian C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 14-member cycling team from Pakistan has left for Thailand to compete in the Asian Road Cycling Championship 2025 which runs from February 7 to 16.

According to a press release issued here on Wednesday, the team includes six elite cyclists, two officials and six masters participants, among whom are two female cyclists.

In the Elite category, cyclists Ali Ilyas, Rizwan Usman, Muhammad Shan and Farman Muhammad

will represent Pakistan.

The U23 category will feature Yousaf and Azan Raheed. The Masters category includes Rabia Gareeb, Zainab Rizwan, Atif Husain Qazi, Danish Naseem, Rehan Hyder and Umayr Sahlan Masud.

Mr. Ishtiaq Mubeen will manage the team with Naeem Ahmed as the mechanic.

The Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF), led by President Syed Azhar Ali Shah, aims to provide international exposure for Pakistani cyclists.

This championship will allow the team to compete against top riders from Asia, enhancing their skills and experience.

President Shah expressed confidence in the team, stating, "Our cyclists have trained hard for this event, and we hope for strong performances. PCF is dedicated to developing cycling in Pakistan and helping our athletes gain international experience as they prepare for future competitions, including the 2028 Olympics."

Halep announces retirement after home defeat



B U C H A R E S T (Agencies): Former tennis world No. 1 Simona Halep announced her retirement on Tuesday after her first-round defeat at the WTA Cluj-Napoca tournament in her native Romania.

The 33-year-old lost 6-1, 6-1 to 72nd-ranked Italian Lucia Bronzetti.

"I don't know if it is with joy or sadness that I speak to you but I made this decision in my soul and conscience. I have always been lucid. My body no longer follows, but today I wanted to play and say my good-

byes on the court," Halep told the Romanian crowd.

The two-time Grand Slam champion, who had been working to re-establish herself after a doping ban, pulled out of Australian Open qualifying last month citing pain in her knee and shoulder.

Halep returned to tennis in March last year after her career had been on hold since Oct. 7, 2022, after testing positive for roxadustat at the US Open.

The winner of the 2018 French Open and 2019 Wimbledon singles titles

was then caught up in a second affair, over "irregularities" in the data of her biological passport.

She was handed a four-year ban by the ITIA, but successfully appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), arguing her positive test for roxadustat — used to treat anaemia and banned as a blood-doping agent — was the result of a tainted supplement.

She denied knowingly doping and her ban was reduced from four years to nine months. But she never managed to regain the level that allowed her to rise to the top of the world rankings in October 2017, a position she occupied for a total of 64 weeks in her career.

Halep won 24 WTA titles over her 19-year career including the French Open in 2018 and Wimbledon in 2019. She also played in three other Grand Slam finals — the French Open in 2014 and 2017 and the Australian Open in 2018.

Match officials for ICC Men's CT confirmed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Cricket Council has confirmed the match officials for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 to be held in Pakistan and United Arab Emirates (UAE) from February 19 to March 9.

A team of 12 umpires will take charge of the proceedings in the 8-team tournament to be played in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi in Pakistan and Dubai in the UAE, said a press

release.

Richard Kettleborough, a veteran of 108 Men's ODIs, and who stood in the final of the last edition played in the United Kingdom in 2017, is among six umpires who return for another Champions Trophy.

Chris Gaffaney, Kumar Dharmasena, Richard Illingworth, Paul Reiffel and Rod Tucker, all members of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel

of Umpires, are others who also featured in 2017.

Kettleborough and Illingworth, who stood together for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 final in Ahmedabad, are joined by Michael Gough, Adrian Holdstock, Ahsan Raza, Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, Alex Wharf and Joel Wilson, all of whom officiated at the World Cup in India.

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Boon was referee in the 2017 final while Pycroft also officiated in the tournament. Madugalle returns after officiating the 2013 final.

Sean Easey, ICC Senior Manager – Umpires and Referees: "We are pleased to

announce our panel of match officials for the upcoming Men's Champions Trophy. This is a credentialled officiating team whose expertise will be valuable in this high-profile tournament.

"We always try to name the most suitable and deserving officials for any event, and we are confident this group will do a fine job across the matches in Pakistan and the UAE. I wish them all the best and

hope they have a memorable tournament."

Umpires: Kumar Dharmasena, Chris Gaffaney, Michael Gough, Adrian Holdstock, Richard Illingworth, Richard Kettleborough, Ahsan Raza, Paul Reiffel, Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, Rodney Tucker, Alex Wharf, Joel Wilson.

Match Referees: David Boon, Ranjan Madugalle, Andrew Pycroft.



In brief

ANF recovers 69 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover over 69 kg drugs worth Rs 110 million and arrested a female drug dealer, said an ANF spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 1 kg hashish was recovered from a female drug dealer arrested near a university on Lalazar Road, Rawalpindi. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. 51 kg heroin and 6000 intoxicated tablets were recovered during two operations conducted in two different areas of Balochistan. 15 kg heroin was recovered from the secret cavities of a car intercepted near M-1 Motorway, Islamabad. In fifth operation, 2 kg heroin was recovered from a village in Narowal district. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

Police arrest 18 law breakers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders, gamblers and other law-breakers here on Wednesday arrested 18 accused besides recovering over 2 kg heroin, 3 kg charras, 49 liquor bottles, 60 liter liquor, weapon and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Taxila police rounded up an accused namely Mehandi Shah and recovered 2200 grams heroin while Saddar Baroni police netted Shakeel with 1680 grams charras. Race Course police held Waqas and recovered 1100 grams charras. Similarly, Saddar Wah police nabbed Aman Ali on recovery of 600 grams charras. The spokesman informed that Jatli police in an operation arrested a bootlegger namely Ahmed Shafique and recovered 48 liquor bottles from his possession. Mandra police conducted a raid and rounded up three gamblers, Asim, Nisar and Asif and recovered Rs 8570 cash stake money, two mobile phones and other items from their possession. Bani police netted an accused for setting off fireworks and recovered fire-crackers from his possession. Pirwahdhai police in their operation against kite sellers conducted raids and arrested two, Iftikhar and Hassan and recovered 400 kites and 10 kite flying string rolls. Rawalpindi district police conducted search operations in different areas and held four renting rules violators namely Nasir, Zainullah, Kamran and Saif ur Rehman. The spokesman further informed that Wah Cantt police arrested an accused Hashim on recovery of 60 liters liquor while Bani police apprehended Rashid and recovered a liquor bottle. Dhamial police held Dilawar for possessing a 30 bore pistol and ammunition. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.

Lambasts world's deafening silence on Kashmir, urges action for just solution

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mushaal Hussein Mullick, the wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Mohammad Yasin Malik, has categorically stated that they will not be silenced and will not give up, vowing to continue the just freedom struggle until they break the shackles of Indian slavery.

Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed across the both sides of the line of control and worldwide aimed at shaking the dormant conscience of the world powers and UN bodies once again to settle the decades-long Kashmir dispute, on Wednesday, she said.

Speaking as the chief guest at an event organized by the Pakistan Cultural Forum to

express unwavering support for the Kashmiri people's struggle for freedom and self-determination, Mushaal stated that the Indian government, notorious for its oppressive policies, has turned the once heaven-like valley into a hell through decades of systematic oppression and suppression.

Prominent figures from various walks of life, including politicians, intellectuals and artists partake in the event.

Earlier, Mushaal, who is also the Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation, led a Kashmir Solidarity Walk with members of civil society from Kulsum International Hospital to D Chowk.

The walk aimed to highlight the repressive and cruel policies of the notorious Narendra Modi-led Indian government, including forced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

Mushaal emphasized that the day serves as a reminder to the global community of its responsibility toward the oppressed Kashmiri people. She urged the United Nations (UN) to honor the promises made to the Kashmiris 78 years ago and to support their struggle for the right to self-determination.

The Chairperson emphasized the need for collective action to raise awareness

about the plight of the Kashmiri people and to pressure the international community to intervene in resolving the longstanding dispute.

She also paid tribute to the sacrifices of Kashmiri martyrs and vowed that they would continue their struggle until a just resolution of the Kashmir dispute is achieved, in accordance with the UN-agreed formula and the aspirations of the people of the scenic valley.

Mushaal urged the international community to break its deafening silence and take immediate notice of the egregious human rights abuses perpetrated in occupied Kashmir.

She emphasized the imperative of collective action to halt

the bloodshed and work towards a durable, peaceful resolution of the protracted conflict, aligning with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and UN resolutions.

The Chairperson highlighted the Indian atrocities and inhuman acts inflicted upon prisoners, particularly her husband Yasin Malik, and others.

Mushaal emphasized that the international community's silence on the Kashmir issue was deafening, as despite the gross human rights violations, forced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings, the world miserably failed to take any action.

She went on to say that the so-called human rights organi-

zations remained tight lipped and observed criminal silence over the unabated war crimes being committed by the supremacist Indian government.

Mushaal said that her husband has been languishing in notorious Tihar Jail, India, for years. She expressed concern about his health and well-being, fearing that he may be awarded a death sentence in the falsely framed, concocted and politically-motivated cases.

The chairperson appealed to the world leaders to uphold international human rights obligations and help implement the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions on Kashmir to find lasting and durable solution to the conflict.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of women participating in Kashmir Solidarity walk at D Chowk to show solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir against the occupation of India and facing atrocity in IOJK.

Salik stands strong at Islamabad rally for Kashmir Solidarity Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhary Salik Hussain, has strongly condemned the violation of human rights in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

Federal Minister participated in a rally held at D Chowk here to show solidarity with the Kashmiris.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the cause of the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination. Federal Minister, Chaudhary Salik Hussain expressed his deep concern over the ongoing oppression and injustices faced by the Kashmiri

people.

He emphasized that the international community must take immediate action to address these violations and work towards a peaceful and just resolution of the Kashmir issue, said a press release.

The Minister acknowledged the significant role of Hurriyat leaders in their steadfast struggle for the rights of the Kashmiri people. He praised their courage and resilience in the face of tremendous adversity, highlighting their contributions to the ongoing fight for justice and freedom in the region.

Chaudhary Salik Hussain reaffirmed Pakistan's firm stance on the right of the Kashmiri

people to self-determination as enshrined in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.

He called for the immediate implementation of the UNSC resolution, which calls for a free and fair plebiscite to allow the people of Kashmir to determine their own future.

The Minister concluded by reiterating that Pakistan will continue to advocate for the just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute on all international forums and that the government remains committed to standing in solidarity with the Kashmiri people in their quest for justice and freedom.

PAC organized rally to mark Kashmir solidarity day

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council (PAC), on Wednesday organized a protest rally to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day. The rally, from Murree Road to the Arts Council was led by Riffat Abbasi MPA, Director PAC, Sajjad Hussain, former Director Waqar Ahmed, Deputy Director Muhammad Shakoor, Assistant Director Muhammad Suleman, and Sarfaraz Khan also participated in the rally.

The participants of the rally carried banners and placards written with slogans for demanding freedom for Indian occupied Kashmir. They chanted "Kashmir will become Pakistan" and "We will take our freedom" in loud voices, expressing strong protest against the atrocities being committed by the Indian forces in Illegal Indian Occupied Kashmir.

Addressing the rally, Riffat Abbasi stated that Kashmir Solidarity Day is a reaffirmation that Pakistan will continue its diplomatic, moral, and political support for the Kashmiri people until they achieve their right to self-determination, as per the United Nations resolutions. She urged the international community to take notice of the ongoing oppression in occupied Kashmir and to play its role in ensuring the legitimate rights of the Kashmiri people. Director Punjab Arts Council, Sajjad Hussain highlighted that the Arts Council commemorates Kashmir Solidarity Day every year with great enthusiasm to send a message to the world that Kashmir is the lifeline of Pakistan.

NA Speaker pays homage to Karim Aga's philanthropic efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has expressed deep sorrow over the passing of the spiritual leader of the Ismaili community and founder of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), Prince Karim Aga Khan.

He termed his demise an irreparable loss and a profound tragedy that has left the entire nation in mourning. While paying tribute to Prince Karim Aga Khan's extraordinary contributions, Ayaz Sadiq described him as a visionary, philanthropist, and a leader of social welfare.

"Under his leadership, AKDN successfully completed numerous projects in education, healthcare, and social development across Pakistan and the world, benefiting future generations", Ayaz Sadiq added.

He said that Prince Karim Aga Khan's tireless efforts for the upliftment of underprivileged and middle-class communities will always be

remembered. His contributions to education, healthcare, and human development are truly commendable, he added.

Further, he highlighted that AKDN's services in Pakistan's remote and underdeveloped regions are a testament to Prince Karim Aga Khan's unwavering commitment to the welfare of the people of Pakistan.

Honouring his legacy, Ayaz Sadiq highlighted Prince Karim Aga Khan's contributions to promoting peace, love, tolerance, and coexistence. "His teachings and social services are an inspiration for us all", he added.

Ayaz Sadiq extended his heartfelt condolences to Prince Karim Aga Khan's family, the Ismaili community, and his followers. He also offered prayers for the eternal peace of the departed soul and for strength and patience for the bereaved family and all those mourning this great loss during this difficult time.

1,500 Police personnel ensure security for Kashmir Solidarity Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police has paid tribute to the resilience and sacrifices of the people of Kashmir on Kashmir Solidarity Day, reaffirming its support for their struggle for freedom. A public relations officer told APP that the Inspector General of Islamabad Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi said that the police force is ensuring fool-proof security for events and rallies organized in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day. IG Rizvi said that over 1,500 officers and personnel have been deployed for security duties to maintain peace and order during the events. He said that Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Jawad Tariq is personally overseeing all security arrangements to ensure a smooth and secure environment for participants. He said that ICT Police officers are also at the forefront in expressing solidarity with oppressed Kashmiris facing Indian atrocities in the occupied territory.

DIG Tariq orders action against criminal gangs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, Muhammad Jawad Tariq, chaired an important meeting on Wednesday at the zonal offices of the Anti-Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) and Anti-Vehicle Lifting Unit (AVLU) to review crime control strategies.

A public relations officer told APP that the DIG Tariq directed officers to launch an indiscriminate crackdown on car and motorcycle thieves, land grabbers, drug peddlers, illegal arms holders, and those involved in kite flying and selling.

DIG Tariq ordered decisive action against suspected criminal groups and stressed the need to arrest absconding suspects without delay.

He said crime meetings

were held late at night in Sawan Zone, Rural Zone, ARDU, and AVLU, attended by zonal SPs, SDPOs, SHOs, and unit in-charges.

During the meetings, DIG Tariq reviewed the performance of all zones and instructed officers to enhance crime control measures and improve investigation standards.

He emphasized the timely submission of case challans and directed officers to intensify operations against vehicle theft, drug trafficking, and illegal weapons.

DIG emphasized officers must integrate modern technology with traditional policing methods to strengthen investigations, particularly in serious crimes. He stressed the immediate arrest of absconding suspects and urged officers to ensure

strong prosecution by collecting solid evidence.

DIG Tariq further directed officers to ensure the prompt resolution of citizens' complaints at police stations, emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy against crimes involving women and children.

He ordered strict action against kite sellers, professional beggars, and their facilitators, while also calling for enhanced patrolling to improve security.

DIG Tariq warned that misconduct, corruption, and inappropriate behaviour would not be tolerated, urging officers to maintain discipline and professionalism. He reiterated that protecting the lives and property of citizens remains the top priority and that any negligence in this regard would not be accepted.

CDA accelerates development projects across key sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) has reaffirmed its commitment to expediting development projects in various sectors of Islamabad, with a particular focus on completing long-delayed initiatives.

This was announced during a high-level meeting chaired by CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa at the CDA Headquarters on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by CDA board members and senior officers from relevant departments.

During the briefing, it was revealed that development work in Sector C-14 is progressing on schedule, with roads, drainage, and sewage systems expected to be completed within the next two months.

Chairman Randhawa expressed confidence that the sector's development would be finalized ahead of the planned timeline.

He also directed offi-

cials to ensure that possession of plots in Sector C-14 is handed over to allottees upon payment of their final installments.

To enhance transparency, Chairman Randhawa emphasized the need to keep allottees informed about the progress of development work through the CDA website and other communication platforms.

He further instructed officials to expedite arrangements for the provision of electricity and other essential facilities in the sector.

In a forward-looking move, Randhawa also proposed the installation of state-of-the-art solar lights in Sector C-14, aligning with sustainable development goals.

The meeting also addressed the long-standing delays in Sector E-12, with Chairman Randhawa directing officials to remove all obstacles hindering its development.

He stressed that work in Sector E-12 should commence immediately, mir-

roring the progress seen in other sectors.

Meanwhile, developmental work in Sector I-12 was reported to be nearing completion, with significant progress achieved in recent months.

Chairman Randhawa reiterated the importance of addressing all challenges to ensure the timely completion of development projects across all sectors.

To ensure effective implementation, the Chairman instructed the Member Engineering and Member Estate to conduct site visits to Sector C-14 and review the provision of civic facilities.

This hands-on approach underscores the CDA's commitment to delivering high-quality infrastructure and services to residents.

The meeting concluded with a renewed focus on accelerating development projects and addressing delays, reflecting the CDA's dedication to transforming Islamabad into a modern and well-planned capital city.

Romina reaffirms strong support for Kashmir's struggle

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam has reaffirmed unwavering support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their long-standing struggle for self-determination, justice, and human rights.

In her message, Romina Khurshid underscored that Kashmir Solidarity Day serves not only as a reminder of the ongoing atrocities faced by the Kashmiri people under Indian occupation, but also as an important occasion to reiterate Pakistan's firm commitment to their cause. She emphasized that Pakistan stands in full solidarity with the Kashmiri brothers and sisters as they continue their peaceful strug-

gle for their inalienable rights, which remain denied by the Indian government. Romina stated that Kashmir Solidarity Day is a significant occasion that highlights the plight of the Kashmiri people while also calling upon the international community to uphold the rights of Kashmiris to freedom, dignity, and justice.

She reminded the global community of its obligations to recognize the legitimacy of the Kashmiri people's demands for self-determination as enshrined in international law, particularly the United Nations resolutions on Kashmir. "The Kashmiri people have endured immense suffering over the years. Pakistan will continue to advocate for their rights until they are fully realized," said Romina

Khurshid Alam in her statement. "We salute the unwavering resilience and courage of the Kashmiri people, who continue to struggle for their right to self-determination in the face of grave adversity. Pakistan will keep raising their voice on every international forum, ensuring the world does not ignore their struggle for justice and peace," she added.

Romina Khurshid stated that the hearts of Pakistanis and Kashmiris beat together. She emphasized that every Pakistani stands united with the people of Kashmir in their rightful struggle for justice and self-determination. This solidarity reflects Pakistani people's unwavering commitment to supporting the Kashmiri people in their pursuit of freedom, dignity, and peace.

Shopkeeper alleges tortured

KABUL (Amu TV): A shopkeeper in the Panjshir claims he was detained and tortured by Taliban members after attempting to collect a debt. The shopkeeper operated a grocery store in a local market. According to his account, several Taliban members had borrowed 300,000 Afghanis worth of goods from him. But when he attempted to recover the money, he says, he was accused of “opposing the regime,” dragged from his shop, taken to an undisclosed location, and beaten.

Taliban flog 5 men, women

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban publicly flogged two women and three men in the provinces of Kunduz and Faryab, accusing them of “moral corruption” and fleeing from home, according to statements issued by the Taliban’s Supreme Court. Each of the individuals received 39 lashes and was sentenced to prison terms ranging from one to two years, the court said in separate announcements. The punishments, it added, were carried out after approval from Taliban judicial authorities.

Program launched to uplift small industries

HERAT (TOLOnews): Local officials in Herat have announced the launch of a major program aimed at fostering the growth of small industries in the province.

The goal of this program is to expand small industries in order to reduce dependence on imported goods and create job opportunities for young people.

Mohammad Bashir Seerat, the head of Herat’s Industry and Commerce Department, stated: “The objective of this program is to cultivate a culture of sup-

porting small industries and to increase the use of domestic products in Afghanistan.”

Hamidullah Khadem, the head of the Herat Chamber of Industries and Mines, said: “We must create favorable conditions for work and production in Afghanistan. Every day, millions of Afghanis are spent on purchasing products that we have the capability to produce domestically.”

Several small business owners have called for greater support and more facilities from the interim

government.

According to them, there is sufficient capacity for expanding domestic production, which could replace imported goods.

Fahim Amiri, a local entrepreneur, said: “From now on, we can produce our basic necessities in Herat, and we have been given promising assurances in this regard.”

Statistics indicate that more than 2,000 small industries are currently active in Herat, with 1,200 managed by women and nearly 700 by men.

Five people held in Khost family murder

KHOST (TOLOnews): The Khost Police Command says that three individuals who were arrested on charges of killing 13 members of a family in the Ali Sher and Tere Zayi district of Khost province have confessed to their crime.

Meanwhile, the relatives of the victims are demanding the punishment of all those involved in the incident. The victims’ family members state that they have no personal enmity with anyone and urge the authorities to punish those responsible for the crime.

“We ask the government to investigate this matter and arrest those responsible for the incident,” said Aref, a family member of the victims. “The criminals and perpetrators of this incident, along with their accomplices, must be arrested as soon as possible,” said Mohammad Yousuf, another family member.

“The perpetrators of this incident must be properly punished,” said Wali Khan, another member of the victims’ family.

However, the Khost Police Commander stated that five individuals have been arrested in connection with this case.

According to officials, among the detainees, a father and his two sons have confessed to their crime, but investigations are still ongoing to determine the motive behind the killings.

“Thirty or thirty-five years ago, their brother was killed, and these individuals were involved in his murder. A person named Mangal is known to be cruel, but the reason behind this recent incident has not yet been determined,” said Abdullah Hamad, the Khost Police Commander.

The Khost Police Commander further added that efforts are ongoing to ensure that all individuals involved in this case are arrested and brought to justice.

Refugees minister meets with Japan’s envoy

KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, has met with Takayoshi Kuromaya, the Japanese Ambassador to Afghanistan, for talks on various issues including the need for urgent humanitarian aid.

Japan has been an unwavering supporter of Afghanistan since 2002 and has provided millions of dollars over the past few years to help combat the humanitarian crisis in the country.

This week’s meeting between Kabir and Kuromaya, involved discussions on Japan’s commitment to help foster stability in Afghanistan.

They also discussed the need to enhance mutual cooperation.

Kuromaya reaffirmed Japan’s dedication to supporting Afghanistan through aid in key areas such as healthcare, education, counter-narcotics efforts,



alternative livelihoods, water management, and climate change mitigation.

Kabir stressed the urgent need for humanitarian assistance, particularly for returning Afghan returnees and internally displaced persons.

Late last year, Japan announced it would provide

\$27.5 million in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

The announcement was made by the Japanese Embassy in Kabul after the World Food Programme (WFP) called for urgent funds to help Afghan people in crisis. In early December, the WFP said that nearly 15 million people

in Afghanistan don’t know where their next meal will come from.

“WFP urgently needs \$718 million to continue its operations over the next six months,” it said on X.

WFP has reported that 11.6 million people, 25% of the population, are currently in crisis.

Turabi urges cooperation for plan implementation



KABUL (TOLOnews): The National Disaster Management Authority has unveiled its strategic disaster management plan.

Nooruddin Turabi, the acting head of this authority stated that this five-year plan is designed for prevention and preparedness in disaster response, post-disaster assistance, demining, and reconstruction of areas affected by natural disasters.

“This strategic plan includes five key sections, formulated by the National Disaster Management Authority,” stated Nooruddin Turabi.

Turabi further mentioned that agreements worth over \$100 million have already been signed with various organizations. However, he emphasized that these contributions are not sufficient, and further support is needed.

“Organizations have provided significant assistance, and we have signed agreements worth more than \$100 million. We appreciate this support, but it does not mean that the aid is sufficient. More support is still needed,” he stated.

Some participants in the program highlighted that this five-year strategic plan is crucial for disaster risk reduction and prevention.

Abdul Rahman Hashimi, a representative of the Community World Service Asia (CWSA), stated: “The implementation of this plan will provide a better opportunity to combat natural disasters and prevent the damage they cause to people’s lives and society.”

According to officials at the National Disaster Management Authority, this plan will be implemented in the country from 2025 to 2029.

Radio Begum confirms shutdown, two arrested

KABUL (Amu TV): Radio Begum, a Kabul-based station focused on women’s empowerment and education, confirmed on Wednesday that it had been forced to halt operations following a Taliban raid in which two of its employees were arrested.

According to the station, Taliban intelligence officials, accompanied by staff from the Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture, stormed its office questioning employees and seizing equipment, including computers, hard drives, documents, and female journalists’ mobile phones. Two male staff members were taken into custody, the outlet said.

Following the raid, the Taliban’s Ministry of Information and Culture issued a statement announcing the station’s closure for “violating media regulations,” alleging that it had committed multiple infractions, including sharing content with a foreign-based television network.

The ministry added that the station’s broadcasts had been suspended due to “misuse of its broadcasting license” and that its operations would remain halted pending a “thorough review of related

documents and activities.”

The Taliban claimed the decision was based on “existing evidence” regarding the station’s operations.

Radio Begum declined to comment on the Taliban’s allegations but called for the immediate release of its employees.

“As long as our colleagues remain in detention, we will not issue any statements regarding the situation due to concerns for their safety,” the station said. “However, we officially urge the authorities of the Islamic Emirate (Taliban) to release them as soon as possible.”

Radio Begum, a station dedicated to women’s empowerment and education, was founded on March 8, 2021, by entrepreneur and journalist Hamida Aman. Operating under the Begum Organization for Women (BOW)—established in December 2020—the station broadcasts 24/7 from Kabul, reaching approximately three-quarters of Afghanistan.

Its programming included educational courses for middle and high school students, particularly aimed at girls who have been barred from formal education since the

Taliban’s return to power in August 2021. These lessons were broadcast in Dari in the morning and Pashto in the afternoon, Afghanistan’s two official languages.

In March 2024, BOW expanded its educational initiatives by launching Begum TV, a Paris-based satellite channel funded in part by the Malala Fund. The channel provides video courses covering Afghanistan’s national curriculum for grades 7–12, offering an alternative for girls unable to attend school under the Taliban’s restrictions.

The station’s management has yet to publicly respond to the suspension.

Since returning to power in 2021, the Taliban have imposed sweeping restrictions on the press, severely limiting independent journalism in Afghanistan. Many media outlets have been shut down, and journalists—particularly women—face censorship, harassment, and arrests.

Rights groups have repeatedly called on the Taliban to respect press freedom, warning that growing media restrictions are further isolating Afghanistan from the global community.

Arab sheikhs flock to Afghanistan

KABUL (Amu TV): In the past two months, groups of Arab sheikhs—totaling around 150 individuals—have arrived in the deserts and forests of southern Afghanistan to hunt rare birds, according to sources familiar with the matter.

These hunters, reportedly from the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, have been spotted in Kandahar, the deserts between Helmand and Uruzgan, and parts of Farah province. According to sources, they are targeting migratory birds that use these regions as a winter habitat.

A source close to the hunting parties told Amu TV that in addition to hunting birds, some of the sheikhs have also captured desert wildlife, including certain species of sand eels, which they transport abroad.

Other sources reported that some of the sheikhs have set up camps in border areas between Uruzgan and Helmand, where they regularly return during the hunting season.

Construction of four power plants resumes in Herat after four years

HERAT (TOLOnews): The construction of four power plants in Herat has resumed after nearly four years of suspension.

These power plants, built by Breshna Company, are being developed with a budget of \$2 million and will supply electricity to 40,000 families in the districts of Karkh, Pashtun Zarghun, Obeh, and Chesht in Herat.

Abdul Bari Omar, CEO of Breshna Company, stated: “These power plants, which remained incomplete and were previously financed by the World Bank, will now be completed with an investment of \$2 million from Breshna Company, providing electricity to approximately 40,000 families in four districts of Herat.”

Government officials emphasize that sufficient funds are available for implementing development projects in the country and assure that large-scale development projects will be launched to achieve self-sufficiency in Afghanistan.



Ahmad Jan Bilal, head of state-owned companies, said: “The Islamic Emirate has participated in development projects to the best of its ability and remains focused on the country’s progress.”

In the previous government, the construction of these four power plants was funded by the World Bank;

however, following recent political changes in the country, the World Bank withdrew its financial support for the project.

Alauddin Salim, head of the contracting company, stated: “This project was previously funded by the World Bank, but after recent developments and the establishment of the Islamic Emirate,

the World Bank refused to finance the remaining work on the project.”

The provision of electricity to eastern districts of Herat has been a longstanding demand of residents in these areas. Salma Dam, located in eastern Herat, is expected to supply part of the electricity needs of these districts.

Growers complain of low apple rate, lack of access to market

KABUL (Pajhwok): Gardeners in central Maidan Wardak province have complained about the non-availability of proper markets for apples saying 150,000 tonnes of apples produced this year 10 percent of which is export, one percent is stored and major portion is sold at a low rate or spoiled.

Gardeners and agricultural analysts are urging the government to build cold storage facilities and juice factories for apples and find a stable international market for them. Officials say they are making efforts in this regard.

Apples are a particularly popular agricultural product in Maidan Wardak province, located west of the capital Kabul. Many residents of various dis-

tricts of the province have apple orchards and use them to meet their daily needs.

Mawlawi Niyaz Mohammad Abid, head of the Agriculture and Irrigation Department said the province’s apple harvest has reached 150,000 metric tonnes, a 25 percent increase compared to last year.

According to him, the distribution of improved seeds and chemical fertilizers to gardeners and farmers, implementation of development programs for them, as well as the availability of sufficient water played an important role in increasing fruit yields.

Gardeners complain lack of cold storage, low apple price

Some gardeners in Maidan Wardak province

told Pajhwok Afghan News that there is no suitable market for selling their apples and that not enough standard cold storage facilities have been built in the province to store them.

Purdal Khan Sahak, a resident of the Sahak area in the Nerkh district, said that his apple harvest was good this year and he harvested about 14 tons apples.

He, however, said until now he could sell 2.8 tonnes of apple to pay off his immediate debt. Seven kilograms of apple was sold at 70 afs, he added.

“The best apple in the orchard is sold for 120 Afghanis, but it is not possible for the entire orchard to be the best. There are also weak apples, which are not sold at that price. However, if all the apples

are sold for 120 Afghanis, the gardener will have a few rupees left over, but if the apples are sold for 80 or 100 Afghanis, not only does it not meet its expenses, but the gardener’s annual income is also wasted,” he said.

Sahak said he hoped that the remaining apples will be sold at a slightly higher price to at least cover his expenses.

“We have devoted the entire year to this garden and apples, borrowing everything from the store all year round, but when the end of the year and harvest time arrives, the markets are so bad that no one even bothers to look at them,” he said.

Sahak said: “I have dug the earth in the garden and put apples in it, so natural-

ly, the apple that is blemished, or has fallen to the ground while picking, or has been eaten by birds, is among the other apples, so it causes the other apples to spoil; my apples have also spoiled, but not many, but overall, this type of storage has up to fifteen percent waste and damage.”

Similarly, Said Abdullah Ruffi, a resident of the Takana area of Jalzair district of the province, says that his apple harvest is good this year, but he has not sold it yet due to low prices.

He said: “This year I have 168 tonnes of apple, but no buyer offered the price above 100 afs for seven kilograms, if I sell it at this price it could not meet its expenditures.”

He who stored his apples

in the orchard and covered them with tarpaulin and plastic said: “There is a saying that it worth nothing, this year apples worth nothing, let’s see to what extent this proverb is correct.”

Both gardeners have asked the government to build standard cold storage facilities for them so that apples can be stored in a standard manner.

In addition, a stable international market should be found for apples and other fruits so that apples and all fruits can be sold at a price that covers their costs and leaves some profit for the orchardists.

They say that due to the lack of standard cold storage facilities, gardeners either store their apples in a room or hide them in a

plastic bag in the garden or on the field, but this method does not preserve them properly; some of them rot, others lose weight, and their taste deteriorates.

Cold store and juice factor mandatory: Analysts

Eng. Zabiullah Fazli, an agriculture analyst and former technical and profession head of the Nan-garhar Canal Department, said the biggest problem facing farmers and gardeners, not only in Maidan Wardak, but throughout the country, is the lack of standard and sufficient cold storage facilities, due to farmers and gardeners sell their fruits and other agricultural products at low prices.

According to him, gardeners are suffering greatly

from this because when the time comes to harvest, the prices of fruits and other agricultural products drop by half, and the gardeners cannot cover the expenses they have incurred on their gardens and fields.

He added that traditional storage method of fruits also caused fruit to rotten, lose weight, and deteriorate in quality, causing Afghan fruits to lose their place in the global market.

Fazli asked the Islamic Emirate to pay attention to building cold storage facilities in the country, to encourage the country’s national traders to build various fruit juice factories in addition to building cold storage facilities in the country, and to find a stable international market for Afghan fruits.

KP Govt decides to modernize TMAs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to modernize the Urban Areas Development Authorities and Tehsil Municipal Administrations (TMAs) with the purpose to make them financially stable. For this purpose, new reforms will be introduced in the Urban Areas Development Authorities and TMAs across the province.

This decision was made during a meeting of the Local Government Department held here the other day, with the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the

chair. The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister for Local Government Arshad Ayub Khan, Advisor to Chief Minister for finance Muzzammil Aslam, Secretary Local Government Dr. Ambar Ali, and other officials from the Local Government Department.

The meeting was given a detailed briefing on the challenges faced by the Urban Areas Development Authorities and their solutions.

It was decided that new reforms will be implemented in all TMAs and Urban Areas Development Authorities by June of this year. To achieve this, international best prac-

tices will be adopted in these institutions. The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission Enterprise Risk Management Framework will be enforced in these institutions. Similarly, International Public Sector Accounting Standards will also be implemented in the TMAs and Urban Areas Development Authorities.

The meeting was informed that the new reforms will lead to financial stability and improved performance of the TMAs and Urban Areas Development Authorities.

The authorities told that reforms have already been implemented in the Urban Area Development

Authority Kohat, yielding positive results. Before these reforms, the Urban Area Development Authority Kohat had an annual deficit of Rs 49 million, whereas after the implementation of the new reforms, it is expected to have a surplus of Rs 25.7 million.

The Chief Minister has directed that the model of UADA Kohat be adopted in all TMAs and Urban Areas Development Authorities, emphasizing that making these institutions self-sufficient and enhancing their capacity is the need of the hour.

"The provincial government is committed to strengthening and stabilizing these institutions", he added.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur chairing a meeting regarding improvement of Urban Areas Development Authority.

Khyber police foil terrorist attack, recover weapons

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: A terrorist attack on a police team in Khyber was successfully thwarted after a fierce exchange of gunfire between security forces and militants. One terrorist was injured in the encounter, while others managed to escape, leaving behind weapons.

According to police sources, the incident took place in the jurisdiction of Melwad Police Station (Bara), specifically in the Miri Khel area, where officers were deployed to pro-

vide security for a polio vaccination team. Unidentified armed assailants suddenly opened fire on the police personnel and polio workers. However, the police acted swiftly, retaliating with full force, forcing the attackers to flee.

During the pursuit, one terrorist was reportedly injured, but he managed to escape along with his accomplices. Subsequently, police launched a search operation in the nearby mountainous areas and successfully recovered subma-

chine guns (SMGs) abandoned by the fleeing terrorists. Additionally, several suspects were taken into custody for questioning.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hameed, lauded the bravery of the police personnel involved in the operation. He commended their swift action and unwavering courage in the face of danger, reaffirming that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police remain ever-vigilant against terrorism.

"The sacrifices of our

officers will not go in vain. Our brave personnel are prepared to counter any threat with full force. Terrorists will receive a crushing response to any attempt to disrupt peace," said the IGP.

As a token of appreciation, the IGP announced cash rewards for the police team that successfully defended against the attack. Security forces remain on high alert, and further operations are expected to ensure the complete elimination of terrorist threats in the region.

Rahim Al-Hussaini named the new Aga Khan

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Rahim Al-Hussaini was named Wednesday as the new Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the world's millions of Ismaili Muslims, following the death of his father.

The 53-year-old was designated as the Aga Khan V, the 50th hereditary imam of the Shiite Ismaili Muslims, in his father's will. His father died Tuesday in Portugal.

The Aga Khan is considered by his followers to be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and is treated as a head of state.

The Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili religious community announced earlier that His Highness Prince Karim Al-Hussaini, the Aga Khan IV and 49th hereditary imam of the Shiite Ismaili Muslims, died surrounded by his family.

Rahim Al-Hussaini is the eldest son of the former Aga Khan. He was educated in the U.S., and has

served on the boards of various agencies within the Aga Khan Development Network, the spiritual leader's main philanthropic organization, according to a statement it released Wednesday.

The organization deals mainly with issues of health care, housing, education and rural economic development. It says it works in over 30 countries and has an annual budget of about \$1 billion for nonprofit development activities.

The Aga Khan Development Network said Prince Rahim was concerned with the organization's work to fight climate change and protect the environment.

The late Aga Khan was given the title of "His Highness" by Queen Elizabeth in July 1957, two weeks after his grandfather the Aga Khan III unexpectedly made him heir to the family's 1,300-year dynasty as leader of the Ismaili Muslim sect.

A defender of Islamic culture and values, he was widely regarded as a builder of bridges between Muslim societies and the West despite — or perhaps because of — his reticence to become involved in politics.

A network of hospitals bearing the Aga Khan's name are scattered in places where health care was lacking for the poorest, including Bangladesh, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, where he spent tens of millions of dollars in developing local economies.

Ismailis lived for many generations in Iran, Syria and South Asia before also settling in east Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East, as well as Europe, North America and Australia more recently. They consider it a duty to tithe up to 12.5% of their income to the Aga Khan as steward.

Rahim Al-Hussaini has three siblings, two brothers and one sister.

USAID workers scramble for answers

WASHINGTON (AP): U.S. aid workers around the world scrambled Wednesday to pack up households or take children out of school under a sudden Trump administration order that pulled almost all of them off the job and out of the field.

The order all but shut down the six-decade mission of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the federal government's primary agency for delivering humanitarian aid to other countries.

In Washington, Democratic lawmakers and several hundred supporters of the agency rallied outside the Capitol to protest the dismantling of the independent government organization that seeks to help people affected by wars, disasters, disease and poverty.

"We are witnessing in real time the most corrupt bargain in American history," Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen shouted to supporters at the rally, referring to billionaire Elon Musk, his support for President Donald Trump and his role in challenging USAID and other targeted agencies.

"Lock him up!" members of the crowd chanted. They expressed frustration as well at Democratic lawmakers, who promised court battles and other efforts to stop the attacks on federal agencies and programs. "Do your job!"

USAID has been one of the agencies hardest hit as the new administration and Musk's budget-cutting team target federal programs they say are wasteful or not aligned with a conservative agenda.

Sindh, China forge deeper economic ties: CM Murad

F.P. Report

BEIJING: In a significant step toward economic cooperation, a high-level delegation from the Sindh government, led by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, met with top executives of Chinese companies in Beijing.

The meetings focused on major infrastructure and energy projects, paving the way for enhanced bilateral partnerships. The delegation included Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, Provincial Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, and Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi.

The CM's discussions with Chinese companies heads centered on several key projects designed to boost Sindh's and Pakistan's economic

growth:

Revitalising Karachi's Transportation: Collaboration on the Karachi Circular Railway project aims to modernize the city's urban transport system. The CM said that the KCR project was pending with Chinese authorities for approval from 2016. He added the work on various BRT was in progress while two, Green and Orange were operation, but their genuine benefit would taken when KCR, the main feeder of the BRTs would be made operational.

Thar Coal's Energy Potential: Partnerships were explored to further develop Thar Coal resources and expand Pakistan's energy capacity. Murad Shah told the Chinese companies that apart from electricity, coal to gas, coal to diesel and

coal to urea like projects could be developed for which he invited them to come and invest.

Sustainable Transportation: The CM discussed the introduction of electric buses and taxis to promote cleaner, more efficient public transport.

Broader Infrastructure and Industrial Growth: Discussions encompassed wider investment opportunities in Sindh's infrastructure and industrial sectors the CM involved Chinese companies included Norinco, Beiben Trucks, China North Vehicle Company, and Jiangsu Trade Electro-Mechanical.

Chief Minister Shah expressed strong optimism about the potential of these collaborations, saying, "These projects represent not only significant progress for Sindh but also a crucial contribution to

Pakistan's national development agenda. The Karachi Circular Railway, Thar Coal development, and the adoption of modern electric transport will dramatically enhance public services and stimulate economic activity."

He further emphasised the importance of leveraging China's technological expertise to accelerate Sindh's development and create numerous job opportunities. These partnerships, he concluded, will lead to multiple joint ventures, fostering sustained economic and industrial growth for both Sindh and Pakistan.

The visit signifies a strengthened commitment to the Pakistan-China economic partnership and positions Sindh as a key player in Pakistan's ongoing economic transformation.

Sharjeel meets Chinese EV bus manufacturer in Beijing

F.P. Report

BEIJING: Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon met with a Chinese EV bus manufacturer in Beijing and invited them to invest in Sindh.

During his visit to the Chinese capital, Beijing, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon formally invited the Chinese company to establish an EV bus manufacturing plant in Karachi.

Sindh's Minister for Energy and Planning & Development, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, was also present at the

meeting. He assured full support from the Sindh government in promoting green energy and electric mobility.

Speaking during the meeting with officials from the Chinese EV bus manufacturing company, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Sindh government would provide all possible facilities, including tax incentives, land allocation, and streamlining regulatory approvals for investors. He emphasized that the government is striving to modernize public transport and reduce carbon

emissions. The establishment of an EV bus plant in Karachi would create employment opportunities and accelerate the transition to a cleaner and more efficient transportation system.

The representatives of the Chinese company welcomed Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon's invitation and expressed interest in exploring investment opportunities in Karachi. The Chinese investors assured the minister that a feasibility study would soon be conducted to assess the project's economic and technical viability.



Trump's Gaza proposal sparks global condemnation

WASHINGTON/PARIS (Reuters): President Donald Trump's proposal for the U.S. to take over war-ruined Gaza and create a "Riviera of the Middle East" after resettling Palestinians elsewhere has shattered U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, drawing global condemnation.

The shock move from Trump, a longtime New York property developer, drew rebukes from international powers including Russia, China and Germany, which said it would bring "new suffering and new hatred". Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia rejected the proposal outright.

Trump, in his first major Middle East policy announcement, said he envisioned building a resort where international communities could live in harmony after over 15 months of

Israeli bombardment devastated the tiny coastal enclave and killed more than 47,000 people, by Palestinian tallies.

It is not clear whether Trump will go ahead with his controversial proposal or is simply taking an extreme position as a bargaining strategy.

Trump said that he plans to visit Gaza, Israel and Saudi Arabia, but did not say when he will go.

"Everybody loves it," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Wednesday, referring to his Gaza idea.

Michael Milshtein, a former intelligence officer and one of Israel's leading specialists on Hamas, said Trump's comments put Israel on a collision course with its Arab neighbours.

"Maybe Trump is trying to promote pressure on the Arab states (so) they will

not create any obstacles if he tries to promote a normalisation between Saudi Arabia and Israel."

Trump offered no specifics as he announced his proposal while welcoming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House on Tuesday. He said he and his team had been discussing the possibility with Jordan, Egypt and other regional countries.

Netanyahu, who met on Wednesday with U.S. Vice President JD Vance, would not be drawn into discussing the proposal, other than to praise Trump for trying a new approach.

Jordan's King Abdullah said on Wednesday he rejected any moves to annex land and displace Palestinians. Egypt said it would back Gaza recovery plans, following a ceasefire that took effect on Jan. 19,

without Palestinians leaving the territory.

In Gaza, Palestinians living among the wreckage of their former homes said they would never accept the idea.

"Trump can go to hell, with his ideas, with his money, and with his beliefs. We are going nowhere. We are not some of his assets," said Samir Abu Basel in Gaza City.

In his first two weeks in office, Trump has talked about a U.S. takeover of Greenland, warned of the possible seizure of the Panama Canal and declared that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state.

Some critics have said his expansionist rhetoric echoes old-style imperialism, suggesting it could encourage Russia in its war in Ukraine and give China justification for invading self-ruled Taiwan.

Aman Dialogue 2025: Navigating maritime security cooperation

Ali Basit

In an era of evolving security challenges, Pakistan's Navy is set to launch a groundbreaking initiative, dubbed as AMAN Dialogue, that promises to reshape the landscape of international naval cooperation. Its inaugural session is to be held in tandem with AMAN Exercise 2025.

The AMAN Dialogue is an extension of the successful AMAN Exercise, which has earned a reputation for bringing together world navies to promote

maritime security and cooperation. While the exercise demonstrates practical collaboration, the Dialogue shifts focus to intellectual exchange and policy-driven discussions among naval practitioners. This dual approach of 'muscle and mind' sets the AMAN Dialogue apart from other international maritime forums.

Pakistan's strategic location in the Indian Ocean, with its close proximity to the Strait of Hormuz and the Arabian Sea, lends significant weight to this initiative. The Western Indian Ocean

Region is becoming a hotspot for major global powers' attention. The region is experiencing complex maritime issues ranging from non-traditional threats like piracy, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking, etc. to regional conflicts involving Israel, Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon, and Iran. These threats, with their pronounced impact at sea, demand a dialogue that seeks solutions tailored to regional settings while acknowledging their global ramifications.

The aim of AMAN Dialogue initiative is to

provide a dedicated platform to exchange views on pertinent regional security issues and solutions to address maritime security challenges at sea. The AMAN Dialogue will bring together heads of navies, coast guards, and defense forces to share their thoughtful insights on maritime issues.

International maritime forums - such as Sri Lanka's Galle Dialogue, China's Western Pacific Naval Symposium, and the United States' International Seapower Symposium - provide similar platforms. However,

AMAN Dialogue stands apart with its unique execution alongside a major multinational exercise, AMAN. This simultaneous conduct of naval exercise and high-level discussions represents a powerful convergence of thought and action, allowing for a seamless translation of strategic ideas/ thoughts into operational considerations.

Discussions at AMAN Dialogue will cover a broad spectrum of contemporary maritime issues, including the shifting security landscape in the Indian Ocean Region, the

transformative role of advanced technologies in naval operations, and non-traditional threats like piracy, illegal arms transfer and illegal trafficking, etc. Among others, the forum will discuss humanitarian assistance, disaster relief operations, and the blue economy's vast potential for sustainable growth.

Senior officers from navies and coast guards worldwide will contribute their unique perspectives on fostering collaborative maritime efforts. Their collective expertise will highlight the importance of synergy in addressing

shared maritime challenges and threats, focusing on enhancing regional security. At a time when maritime security and stability are more crucial than ever, the AMAN Dialogue 2025 represents a strong cooperative resolve.

It offers participants the chance to understand each other's challenges and capacities for collaboration toward common maritime goals. Beyond the professional exchange, the forum will spotlight Pakistan as a responsible maritime state dedicated to fostering peace and sta-

bility at sea.

Hosting the AMAN Dialogue alongside the AMAN Exercise is both timely and significant. This platform enables open dialogue on maintaining maritime order, especially as trade and the blue economy face growing traditional and non-traditional threats. By merging intellectual exchange with real-time naval exercises, the Dialogue presents an ideal fusion of theory and practice, promoting solutions that address regional dynamics and can be implemented at sea.