

Senior PTI leaders indicted
F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: An anti-terrorism court in Faisalabad has indicted four senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders in connection with attack on house of PM advisor Rana Sanaullah. Following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan on May 9, enraged PTI protestors gathered outside the house of Rana Sanaullah and 'pelted stones.'

Court acquits PM, son
F.P. Report

LAHORE: An Anti-Corruption Court on Thursday acquitted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shehbaz in Ramzan Sugar Mills case. Anti-Corruption Court Judge Sardar Muhammad Iqbal Dogar announced the verdict reserved earlier. On July 11, 2017, NAB Lahore initiated an inquiry into the Ramzan Sugar Mills reference, alleging that Shehbaz Sharif and Hamza.



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Pak-China agree to boost cooperation

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan and China have agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in multiple sectors including counter-terrorism, defence, agriculture, information technology and others, reiterating that the attempt to undermine or disrupt bilateral ties were bound to fail.

The bilateral ties and cooperation were discussed as President Asif Ali Zardari, during his ongoing five-day state visit to China, met with President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhao Leji, according to a joint statement issued by the Foreign Office on Thursday encompassing the discussions and agreements reached during the visit.

"While the transformation not seen in a century is accelerating, the China-Pakistan relationship remains of strategic significance, and any attempt to disrupt or undermine it is bound to fail...The two sides agreed that the China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership is a choice by history and by the people, and enjoys broad support from all walks of life in both countries," it said.

During the visit, the two sides signed over a dozen documents covering cooperation on CPEC, trade, science and technology, people's livelihoods, and media, etc. During his stay in China, President Zardari will also attend the opening ceremony of the Ninth Asian Winter Games.

Besides enhancing cooperation in IT and emerging areas like artificial intelligence, big data and communication technology, the two sides agreed to expand cooperation in education, media, think tanks, youth, films and television to strengthen the bond between the two peoples and enhance mutual learning between civilizations. Pakistan and China agreed to conduct further consultation on trade liberalization under the framework of the Phase-II of China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement, and actively explore the possible bilateral concessional arrangements based on the spirit of mutual benefit and win-

Islamabad, Beijing sign three MoUs in RE, cement, fertilizer sectors

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan and China on Thursday signed three different Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to enhance cooperation in the areas of renewable energy, cement and fertilizer manufacturing sectors.

President Asif Ali Zardari along with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah witnessed the MoU signing ceremony here. An MoU was signed between Pakistan's Thatta Cement Company and China's Zhonggang Construction Group to help establish an additional production line at Thatta Cement to increase cement production by 5000 tons per day in Pakistan utilizing the locally sourced Pakistani coal.

Another MoU was signed between the Sindh Energy Department and China's Ming Yang Renewable Energy Company that would promote cooperation on various renewable energy projects in Pakistan. It also aims at facilitating the two sides to explore several renewable energy projects, fulfill the goals of carbon peaking, carbon neutrality, and emission reduction.

The third MoU was signed between the Sindh government and Meskay Femtee CG&M, Chinese company for a coal gasification and urea production plant which would be jointly established for making up direly needed coal gasification plant for the manufacturing of fertilizer.

win cooperation.

It was also agreed to promote the implementation of the eight major steps on high-quality Belt and Road cooperation in Pakistan and jointly build a growth corridor, a livelihood-enhancing corridor, an innovation corridor, a green corridor and an open corridor, to create an upgraded version of CPEC, in line with Pakistan's SEs framework.

Both sides reaffirmed to make efforts to advance the upgradation of ML-1 in a phased and secure manner and reiterated that the Karakoram Highway (Raikot-Thakot) realignment project is of great importance to the land connectivity between China and Pakistan, and agreed to reach an early consensus on its implementation and financing.

Two sides believed that having withstood the test of changing international circumstances, the enduring partnership and iron-clad friendship between China and Pakistan transcended geopolitical interests. The two sides have always understood and supported each other, and have been deepening strategic mutual trust and practical cooperation.

The Chinese side reiterated that the

China-Pakistan relationship was a priority in its foreign relations and of special significance in China's foreign policy. The Pakistani side also underscored that the Pakistan-China relationship was the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

Pakistan highly commended and expressed strong support for the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative put forth by President Xi Jinping. The two sides agreed to step up international cooperation in this regard to jointly tackle global challenges and foster a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind. President Zardari lauded the great development achievements made by the Chinese people and expressed firm support for the Chinese side in advancing the great cause of building a great modern socialist country in all respects.

The Chinese side gladly noted Pakistan's National Economic Transformation Plan (Uraan), applauding the new achievements attained by Pakistan in economic reform and national development and wished Pakistan stability, security, development and prosperity.



BEIJING: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting Premier of China, Li Qiang, at Great Hall of the People.

JCP approves nine names for additional judges at LHC

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on Thursday approved nine names for the position of additional judges at the Lahore High Court.

The meeting, chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi, reviewed the nominations for the high court appointments. The approved candidates are Hasan Nawaz Makhdoom, Malik Waqar Haider Awan, Sardar Akbar Ali Dogar, Malik Javed Iqbal Wains, Syed Ahsan Raza Kazmi, Muhammad Jawad Zafar, Khalid Ishaq, and Sultan Mahmood. Additionally, 16 more vacancies will be filled in phases.

The Lahore High Court has a total of 60 judge positions, but until now, only 34 judges were serving, leaving 26 positions vacant. The last time judges were appointed was on May 7, 2021, when 13 lawyers were inducted. Since then, no new judges had been appointed, leading to a backlog of pending cases and delays in justice.

Several previous chief justices attempted to fill the vacancies, but objections from senior Supreme Court judges hindered the appointments. After assuming office, Lahore High Court Chief Justice Aalia Neelum prioritised filling these vacancies. She conducted interviews to ensure the selection of competent, honest, and capable lawyers.

Legal experts have lauded Chief Justice Aalia Neelum for ensuring a transparent selection process. Senior lawyer Ahsan Bhoon said that the appointed judges are highly competent and reputable. Supreme Court Advocate Chaudhry Naseer Kamboh praised her for strengthening the system through merit-based appointments.

Jawan martyred, 12 more militants killed

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Hassan Khel, North Waziristan District on reported presence of khwarij.

During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location, as a result of which, twelve khwarij were sent to hell. However, during intense fire exchange, Lance Naik Muhammad Ibrahim (age: 34 years, resident of District Hangu), having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians.

Trump says Israel would hand over Gaza to US

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that Israel would hand over Gaza to the United States after fighting was over and the enclave's population was already resettled elsewhere, which he said meant no US troops would be needed on the ground.

"The Gaza Strip would be turned over to the United States by Israel at the conclusion of fighting," he said. Palestinians "would have already been resettled in far safer and more beautiful communities, with new and modern homes, in the region." "No soldiers by the US" would be needed," he said. Earlier, amid a tide of support in Israel for what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Trump's "remarkable" proposal, Defence Minister Israel Katz said he had ordered the army to prepare a plan to allow Gaza residents who wished to leave to exit the enclave voluntarily.

"I welcome President Trump's bold plan. Gaza residents should be allowed the freedom to leave and emigrate, as is the norm around the world," Katz said on X. He said his plan would include exit options via land crossings, as well as special arrangements for departure by sea and air. Trump's unexpected announcement on Wednesday, which sparked anger around the Middle East, came as Israel and Hamas were expected to begin talks in Doha on the second stage of a ceasefire deal for Gaza, intended to open the way for a full withdrawal of Israeli forces and an end to the war.

Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia rebuffed the proposal outright and Jordan's King Abdullah, who will meet Trump at the White House next week, said on Wednesday he rejected any attempts to annex land and displace Palestinians. Egypt also weighed in, saying it would not be part of any proposal to displace Palestinians from neighbouring Gaza, where residents reacted with fury to the suggestion.

"We will not sell our land for you, real estate developer. We are hungry, homeless, and desperate but we are not collaborators," said Abdel Ghani, a father of four living with his family in the ruins of their Gaza City home. "If (Trump) wants to help, let him come and rebuild for us here." What effect Trump's shock proposal may have on the ceasefire talks remains unclear. Only 13 of a group of 33 Israeli hostages due for release in the first phase have so far been returned, with three more due to come out on Saturday. Five Thai

hostages have also been released.

Hamas official Basem Naim accused Israel's defence minister Katz of trying to cover up "for a state that has failed to achieve any of its objectives in the war on Gaza", and said Palestinians are too attached to their land to ever leave. Displacement of Palestinians has been one of the most sensitive issues in the Middle East for decades. Forced or coerced displacement of a population under military occupation is a war crime, banned under the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Details of how any such plan might work have been vague. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar said different thinking was needed on Gaza's future but that any departures would have to be voluntary and states would have to be willing to take them. "We don't have details yet, but we can talk about principles," Sa'ar told a news conference with his Italian counterpart Antonio Tajani. "Everything must be based on the free will of (the) individual and, on the other hand, of a will of a state that is ready to absorb," he said.

A number of far-right Israeli politicians have openly called for Palestinians to be moved from Gaza and there was strong support for Trump's push among both security hawks and the Jewish settler movement, which wants to reclaim land in Gaza used for Jewish settlements until 2005. Giora Eiland, an Israeli former general who attracted wide attention in an earlier stage of the war with his "Generals' Plan" for a forced displacement of people from northern Gaza, said Trump's plan was "logical" and aid should not be allowed to reach displaced people returning to northern Gaza.

Israel's military campaign killed tens of thousands of people after Hamas' October 7, 2023 cross-border attack on Israel touched off the war, and has forced Palestinians to repeatedly move around within Gaza in search of safety. But many say they will never leave the enclave because they fear permanent displacement, like the "Nakba", or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands were dispossessed from homes in the war at the birth of the state of Israel in 1948.

Katz said countries that have opposed Israel's military operations in Gaza should take in the Palestinians. "Countries like Spain, Ireland, Norway, and others, which have levelled accusations and false claims against Israel over its actions in Gaza, are legally obligated to allow any Gaza resident to enter their territories," he said.

Pakistan to ensure security of Chinese personnel: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reaffirmed that ensuring the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan was the foremost responsibility of the Pakistani government as China's All-weather Strategic Cooperative partner and the host country.

In a statement during his weekly press briefing, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said on Thursday that during the visit of President Asif Ali Zardari to China, Pakistani reiterated its strongest condemnation of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan involving Chinese personnel. President Asif Ali Zardari is currently on a state visit to China scheduled from 4-8 February 2025.

During the visit, he said President Zardari held talks with President Xi Jinping in a warm and friendly atmosphere. They had an in-depth exchange of views on China-

Pakistan relations and on the international and regional issues of mutual interests. Li Qiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, and Zhao Leiji, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, met with President Zardari respectively.

The Pakistani side highly commended and expressed strong support for the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative put forth by President Xi Jinping. The two sides agreed to step up international cooperation in this regard.

"The Pakistani side reaffirmed its firm commitment to the one-China principle. It is of the view that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the People's Republic of China and the Taiwan question is the core of China's core interests. Pakistan will also firmly support China on issues related

to Xinjiang, Xizang, Hong Kong and the South China Sea," he added.

The Spokesperson said the Pakistan side spoke highly of the Belt and Road Initiative put forth by President Xi Jinping. The two sides agreed to promote the implementation of the eight major steps on high-quality Belt and Road cooperation in Pakistan and jointly build a growth corridor, a livelihood-enhancing corridor, an innovation corridor, a green corridor and an open corridor, to create an upgraded version of CPEC, in line with Pakistan's SEs framework.

The two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in industrialization, development of export oriented industries, agriculture cooperation, alleviation of power shortages, and communication technologies, health-care, education, climate response, disaster prevention and alleviation, he continued.

Three cops martyred in attack

F.P. Report

KARAK: Unknown terrorists shot killed three policemen martyred and six injured at Bahadur Khel police post. According to details, last night, unknown terrorists attacked Bahadur Khel police post from all sides with light and heavy weapons in an attempt to capture it.

The personnel present at the post bravely responded to the attack. The terrorists retreated in an encounter that lasted for about 2 hours. Three policemen embraced martyrdom and foiled the attempt to capture the post. The deceased policemen named Taimur Hayat, Nageeb (Driver), Adnan Elite wounded, Saddam Asghar.

The terrorist attack on the Bahadur Khel police post in the backward area of Karak is an extremely cowardly and shameful act. These thoughts were expressed by Asad Zaman Khattak, Vice President of the Tahit Nusrati Bar Association, in a written press statement. He said that terrorists attacked a police post in the darkness of last night, as a result of which three poor policemen were martyred while six policemen were injured. Karak district is an educated district.

Saif blasts federal ministers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, has stated that Imran Khan's letter has caused immense distress among the fed ministers of the illegitimate government.

Dr. Saif said that even before Imran Khan's letter reached the concerned authorities, the fed ministers began spreading propaganda. He added that the fake government's sanity had been shaken by a single letter, and one can only imagine their state after Imran Khan's release.

SOE's privatization process

PM reviews task management system

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday chaired a review meeting on the task management system established for the privatization process of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and its monitoring.

During the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office, the Prime Minister emphasized that the privatization of SOEs was an integral part of the government's Uraan Pakistan economic reform and transformation initiative, according to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressed the importance of collective effort for the development of Pakistan. "I will not allow further losses in SOEs that are wasting the valuable resources of the Pakistani people. The government's role is not to run businesses but to create policies and provide facilities for business and investment," he stated. He further mentioned that the government was making rapid progress in enhancing the economy

Shehbaz inquires after health of Fazlur Rehman

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday visited the residence of Chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) Maulana Fazlur Rehman and inquired after his health. The prime minister prayed for his health. Maulana Fazlur Rehman thanked the prime minister for his visit and best wishes. During the meeting, they discussed national and political issues. Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar were also present on the occasion.

through timely and necessary reforms. The privatization of designated institutions must be expedited, he said, while ensuring that transparency is not compromised.

Prime Minister Shehbaz instructed the hiring of reputable lawyers to address any legal barriers hindering the privatization process. "I am personally overseeing the privatization efforts, and no delays will be tolerated," he added.

The meeting also included a review of the task management system designed for the privatization process. It was shared that the privatization of fed-

eral government institutions would proceed in three phases.

In the first phase, ten institutions will be privatized; in the second phase, thirteen institutions; and the final phase will address the remaining institutions. The Prime Minister directed that the privatization process be accelerated, with a clear mandate to complete it within the stipulated timelines. Federal Ministers Abdul Aleem Khan, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Ahad Khan Cheema, and other senior officials were in attendance at the meeting.

Funeral of Prince Karim Aga Khan Day of mourning to be marked

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will observe a national day of mourning on Saturday (February 8) on the occasion of Prince Karim Aga Khan's funeral.

"Expressing profound grief on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan on the sad demise of His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan, the Prime Minister has declared a day of national mourning in Pakistan on Saturday, the 8th of February, 2025, on the occasion of the funeral of His High Highness," said a notification issued by the issued by the Cabinet Division. The national flag will fly at half-mast throughout the country on the day, added the notification.

Earlier, the GB government declared three days

of mourning following the passing of the Aga Khan. The Aga Khan, known for his triumphs in horse racing, dazzling wealth and development work around the world, died in Lisbon at the age of 88, according to the Aga Khan Development Network on social media.

The 49th hereditary imam or spiritual leader of the world's 15 million Ismailis, his name also became synonymous with success as a racehorse owner, with the thoroughbred Shergar among his most famous. Prince Shah Karim Al Hussein was born on December 13, 1936 in Geneva and spent his early childhood in Nairobi, Kenya.

He later returned to Switzerland, attending the exclusive Le Rosey School

before going to the United States to study Islamic history at Harvard. When his grandfather Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan died in 1957, he became the imam of the Ismailis, at the age of 20. His grandfather chose Karim as his successor over his son - Karim's father Prince Aly Khan.

The Aga Khan set up the Aga Khan Development Network in 1967. The group of international development agencies employs 80,000 people helping to build schools and hospitals and providing electricity for millions of people in the poorest parts of Africa and Asia. "Few persons bridge so many divides — between the spiritual and the material; East and West; Muslim and Christian — as gracefully as he does," Vanity Fair wrote in its 2013 article.

Standing Committee on Maritime Affairs meets

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Standing Committee meeting on Maritime Affairs met under the Chairmanship of Mr. Abdul Qadir Patel, MNA. Taking up different agenda items related to the attached departments of the ministry, the Chairman stressed that the committee represents the will of the people and is here to help the government / executive in making the departments more efficient and stronger.

While having the follow up on the recommendations made in the previous meeting, the committee again recommended for the permanent chairman of KPT. After meeting the members of KPT Board of Trustees the committee also stressed that issues of dredging and maintenance of surrounding roads should be dealt and resolved on war footing basis and all process should be carried out in transparent manner and in the best interest of the organization.

The committee also discussed the issue of sea fears and noted that it is on the decrease, as Pakistan



Maritime Academy was one institution which used to produce sea farers, the technical persons suited for this particular arena. The committee asked the Ministry and Mercantile Marine Department to work in unison to get the students from the local community to get themselves registered in this field. The committee also showed interest in the projects related to Korangi Fisheries Harbor Authority, especially the progress of modification of auction hall and the construction of flake ice plant adjacent to KOFHA.

It was also noted that a PSDP project of the establishment of Export oriented Fisheries facilities and infrastructure at KOPFHA

worth Rs. 1048.61 Million has been approved by CDWP on the 7th June 2024 and expectedly the work is to commence very soon. The committee also asked to get the necessary promotions in the KOFHA be done immediately as these were stalled for quite some time.

Beside the Chairman, Mr. Arshad Sahi MNA, Malik Shakir Bashir Awan MNA, Mr. Khurram Munawar Manj MNA, Mr. Hassan Sabir MNA, Syed Rafiullah MNA, Sardar Nabeel Ahmed Gabol MNA, Mr. Mohammad Usman Badani MNA, Secy MoMA, Chairman KPT and senior officers from MoMA and attached depts attended the said meeting.

Bank AL Habib's Golf Tournament commenced

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The first round of the Bank AL Habib 14th Rashid D. Habib National Professional Golf Tournament commenced at Karachi Golf Club, delivering an exhilarating day of competition as top professional golfers showcased their talent on the course.

Ahmed Baig and Muhammad Zubair dominated the leaderboard, both carding an impressive 65 (-7), setting the pace for the tournament. Their stellar performances were marked by precise driving and superb putting, making them the players to watch in the coming rounds. Close on their heels, Muhammad Munir posted a solid 67 (-5), followed by Mudassir Iqbal with a 68 (-4), keeping the competition intense.

The course played exceptionally well, with ideal weather conditions favoring aggressive play. The par-5 holes proved to be the biggest scoring opportunities, with many players taking advantage to gain strokes on the field. Notably, Ahmed Baig's consistency across the front and back nine helped him secure his top spot, while Zubair's precision on the greens solidified his position.

Following closely behind, Muhammad Sajjad, Muhammad Sharif PN, and Taltat Ijaz each finished with a score of 69 (-3), positioning themselves within striking distance of the leaders.

With such a tightly contested leaderboard, the next rounds promise to deliver thrilling golf action. Two of the amateurs broke 80 namely Sadiq Habib (77) and Arsalan Shikoh Khan (78).

"This championship always brings out the best in the players, and today was no exception," said tournament director Commodore Zafar and the chief referee Col Zahid. "The competition is heating up, and we anticipate an exciting battle over the next three days."



KARACHI: A view of destroyed Hijrat Colony after removing of encroachments.

Punjab Governor flays Rangers' force for filing FIRs against farmers

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Governor Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan strongly condemned the Rangers' force for filing FIRs against farmers and harassing them in villages. Despite, the government's acknowledgement of over-billing, there is no justification for the Rangers to collect electricity bills from farmers. He said that it is not appropriate to make bread cheaper in cities by snatching food from farmers.

He expressed these views during a meeting with an 80-member delegation of farmer organizations of Pakistan Kisan Ittehad and People's Party South Punjab at the Governor House Lahore, who met him under the leadership of Chief Coordinator South Punjab Abdul Qadir Shaheen. In the meeting, a detailed discussion was held regarding the difficulties faced by farmers, government indifference, inflation, and the crisis in the agricultural sector. Farmer leaders vehemently criticized the government's current policies, labeling them as "anti-agriculture" and detrimental to the interests of the farming community and demanded immediate reforms.

Speaking on the occasion, Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that the agriculture sector is the backbone of the country's economy. He said that the government will have to take concrete steps to develop the agriculture sector and provide more relief to the farmers and cultivators. The Governor of Punjab said that the Pakistan Peoples Party is the only political party that has always raised its voice for the rights of farmers.

He said that except the Pakistan Peoples Party, all governments have harassed farmers and cultivators. The Governor of Punjab said that the PPP cannot leave farmers and cultivators alone. He said that it is a matter of great regret that the government is using high-handed tactics to file FIRs against farmers and cultivators in villages and harass them with the help of Rangers. The Governor of Punjab said that the atrocities against farmers will be taken notice not only by me but also by my leadership. He said that due to the high cost of fertilizers and seeds, the farmers are already crushed and the overcharges of electricity have broken the back of the farmers.

In these circumstances, there is no justification for collecting electricity bills from farmers through the Rangers. He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party cannot leave the farmers and cultivators alone. The Governor of Punjab said that it has become difficult for farmers to survive in the current inflation. He said that a 3-member special committee has been formed at the Governor House, Lahore to solve the problems of farmers and cultivators.

The Governor of Punjab further said that he will raise the problems of farmers in his meeting with the President, Prime Minister and Chairman PPP, Bilawal Bhutto. He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party will not leave the farmers and cultivators alone, so the cultivators also have the right not to leave the PPP alone. The Governor of Punjab said that agricultural reforms were first carried out by Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, which was the best step for the farmers and cultivators.

On this occasion, the leaders of the Kisan Ittehad expressed full confidence in the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party, especially Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and announced their joining the party. He said that the PPP is the only political party that has always raised the voice of the downtrodden classes, labourers and farmers and has taken practical steps to solve their problems in a real sense. Central leaders of the Kisan Ittehad Mian Amir Wattoo, District President Bahawalnagar Malik Muhammad Saleem, Haseeb Anwar, Malik Zulfiqar Awan, Ghulam Mustafa Wattoo, Sardar Yahya Kanwal and other officials held the PML-N government and the Sharif family responsible for the poor state of the agriculture sector, saying that farmers are being harassed as a result of revengeful actions.

He said that raids are being carried out on farmers' houses and camps with the help of WAPDA and Rangers, and a conspiracy is being hatched to destroy agriculture by removing electricity meters and transformers from tube wells. The farmer leaders alleged that an artificial shortage of fertilizer is being created and distributed to favored individuals, while ordinary farmers are being forced to buy it in the black market at many times higher prices. Similarly, farmers are being exploited by increasing the prices of agricultural chemicals. He said that due to the wrong policies of the government, small farmers have become miserable. Despite the huge increase in the cost of production of crops, they are not getting a fair price, due to which they are facing a severe financial crisis.

Pakistan HC Canada marks Kashmir Solidarity Day

F.P. Report

OTTAWA: The Pakistan High Commission in Ottawa and its three Consulates in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal commemorated the Kashmir Solidarity Day, reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering support for the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in their just struggle for self-determination.

On this occasion, a series of programmes were arranged including pictorial exhibitions, documentary screening and media interactions to highlight the human rights violations in the IIOJK and to express solidarity with the Kashmiris facing the worst kind of oppression under illegal Indian occupation,

says a press release received here on Thursday from Ottawa.

A special event was held at the High Commission attended by members of the Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora, media, academics, and human rights activists. On this occasion, messages of the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan were read out to the audience.

Moreover, various documentaries on Kashmiris' struggle were screened and broadcast on the social and local electronic media. The High Commissioner of Pakistan Muhammad Saleem highlighted the Indian brazenness subjecting the defenceless Kashmiris to endless atrocities.

In a video message, the High Commissioner also

reiterated that international human rights organizations, the media as well as UN human rights mechanisms, have been unanimous in their condemnation of India's illegal and inhuman actions in the IIOJK.

He underscored that IIOJK was the most militarised region in the world. He called upon the international community to stop India of massive violations of human rights in IIOJK, rescind the unilateral and illegal measures and implement the United Nations' 13 Resolutions. There is a need for concerted efforts to mobilize international public opinion that this protracted conflict cannot be addressed without granting right to self-determination to the people of Kashmir, he added.

Plants for Pakistan: A game-changer program to offset climate change's effects

PESHAWAR (APP): Forests play an important role in maintaining ecological balance, bring rains & snowfalls and counterbalancing the effects of climate change.

Acted as carbon sinks and regulating water cycles, forest prevent soil erosion, providing habitats for diverse wildlife, influencing local climates, and filtering pollutants, thus contributing to a healthy and stable ecosystem on earth.

Keeping in view of the forest significance, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Forest Department has chalked out comprehensive strategy to bring non productive lands under forestry cover during upcoming spring season.

From Khyber to Kohistan and Waziristan to Chitral, the Plant for Pakistan campaign was being launched in KP where farmers, general public and officials of forest department officials will plant trees of different species. Besides national building departments, the students will actively participate in the campaign in the province and will plant

saplings. Ibrahim Khan, Deputy Project Director, 10 billion trees told APP that spring plantation was being launched in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where saplings would be sown through farm forestry, mass plantation and rehabilitation of the existing forests resources. As per National Forest Policy 2018, Pakistan was losing about 27,000 hectares of forests per year mostly in community and private lands in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan.

Ibrahim said that Pakistan was among 10 countries which was highly vulnerable to the climate change and the 2022 devastating floods had substantiated to this fact. The government while taking cognizance of increasing incidents of climate change and high rate of deforestation had launched first phase of billion trees afforestation project (BTAP) in 2014 in KP under the green growth initiative (GGI).

Under GGI, he said focusing on six sectors namely forestry, protected

areas, national parks, clean energy, climate resilience, sanitation and water management were made. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Forest Department spokesman told APP that afforestation campaign were extended to merged areas to utilize its vast lands for plantation.

The KP Government has spent Rs675 billion since 2017 on protection and promotion of forest resources in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 26.7 percent land of the total area was brought under forestry cover. As result of massive afforestation under billion trees project, he said that forest cover in the province has reached 26.7% of the total land area, which surpasses international standards.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa accounts for 37% of the total forest cover in Pakistan, covering 37,000 square kilometers. The province holds 40-45% of the country's total forests, which absorb approximately 50% of the nation's carbon emissions. According to global research, an annual budget of Rs. 322 billion

is required to protect forests of this scale.

He said that beneath the province's forested land, there are vast reserves of minerals and agricultural potential, emphasizing that if utilized commercially, these resources could generate Rs. 215 billion in annual revenue. Similarly, he pointed out that the province's carbon credit value stands at approximately Rs. 100 billion annually.

He highlighted that more than 175,000 green jobs have been created in the province. These initiatives aimed at bringing barren lands under cultivation and improving water resource management. Plantation around CRBC (Chashma Right Bank Canal) project will bring 300,000 acres of barren land under cultivation, while the Mohmand Dam Canal, a Rs. 5 billion project, will cultivate over 200,000 acres of land. He that climate change is not just a challenge for Pakistan but for the entire world, and collective efforts are needed to address it.

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A massive rally and a dignified ceremony were held in Jhelum Valley's Chakothi district, near the Line of Control (LoC) in Azad Jammu and Kashmir in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day.

The events were organized under the banner of Tehreek-e-Jawan-e-Kashmir and Pakistan Basic Organization. A large number of Kashmiris, including political and social leaders, teachers, and schoolchildren, participated in the rally. Amid high-pitched pro-freedom slogans, demonstrators voiced their unwavering commitment to the Kashmir freedom movement while strongly condemning Indian occupation.

Following the rally, a ceremony was held, where Sardar Ajmal Mughal, President of Tehreek-e-Jawan-e-Kashmir, was the chief guest, and Asim Bashir, leader of Pakistan Zindabad


Punjab cabinet likely to be expanded

F.P. Report


LAHORE: Punjab likely to induct 10 ministers into its provincial cabinet, with majority of new faces hailing from the southern part of the province.

PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif has given the green signal for the cabinet expansion, expected to take place within the next two months. Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz will reportedly hold meetings with assembly members at the divisional level to finalize the names of the new ministers.

Basic Organization, presided over the event. Addressing the gathering, Sardar Ajmal Mughal reaffirmed that Pakistanis and Kashmiris worldwide had commemorated Kashmir Solidarity Day with great enthusiasm, sending a clear message to the world that the oppressed people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) are not alone in their struggle against Indian tyranny.



OFFICE OF THE HOSPITAL DIRECTOR
MEDICAL TEACHING INSTITUTION (MTI)
MARDAN MEDICAL COMPLEX MARDAN



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IFB No.01/Works/February, 2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was established under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical Teaching Institutions Reforms Act, 2015 to improve performance, enhance effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness for the provision of quality healthcare services to the people of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Hospital Director MTI-MMC Mardan, invites sealed bids (separately) from the Eligible Contractors registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in Category C-5 or above for Maintenance & Repair of the following works at MTI Mardan. The bidding procedure will be conducted through **"Single Stage Two Envelope Procedure"** of KPPRA Rules 2014.

S.#	Works Description	Bid Security of Estimated Cost
01	Maintenance & Repair Works for Flats & Hostels at MTI Mardan under framework Contract	2%
02	Maintenance & Repair Works at MTI-MMC Mardan under framework Contract	2%

Bidding shall be carried out initially for a period one year under Framework Contract in light of rule 31-A of KP-PPRA Rules 2014, from the date of signing of contract, extendable to another year up-to a maximum of three years.

Bid Solicitation Documents containing detailed description including BOQ, evaluation criteria and other terms and conditions may be obtained (separately against each category) from the undersigned office, between 09:00-15:00 hrs. on any working day (Monday to Friday) by depositing a sum of Rs. 3000/- as "Non-Refundable. The advertisement may also be downloaded from www.kppra.gov.pk and www.bkmc.gov.pk website.

The bid security should be (in original) @ 2% of the estimated cost in the form of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR)/ Demand Draft (DD)/ Pay Order or Bank Guarantee in the name of "Hospital Director MTI-MMC Mardan". An affidavit is mandatory in the technical bid that bid security is placed in the financial bid.

Bids complete in all respect should reach the undersigned by **11:00 hrs. on 27th February 2025 (Thursday)**. Only Technical bids shall be opened at 11:30 hrs on the same day in conference room of the Administration Block in the presence of procurement committee and the contractors/ representatives, who may choose to attend.

Each envelope shall contain separately Technical and Financial bid clearly marked in bold & legible letters. The firm shall provide their complete information along with its postal as well as valid email address and phone number/s on each of the respective envelope.

General Terms & Conditions:

- The bidders should be registered with FBR and reflected on Active Tax Payer list (ATL).
- All the bidders should also be registered with KP Revenue Authority (KPRA).
- The bidding shall be carried out in light of KP-PPRA Notification No. SRO No. (14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22, dated May 10th 2022.
- Incomplete, Conditional and Bids without Bid Security shall be considered as non-responsive.

Competent Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the bids as per provisions contained in Rule 47 of KPPRA Rules 2014.

Hospital Director
MTI-MMC Mardan

INF(P) 454/25

Efforts on for early completion of the New Peshawar Valley: Dr. Amjad



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Housing, stated that full efforts are being made to ensure the timely completion of the New Peshawar Valley project, which will be completed in accordance with the public's aspirations and will offer modern amenities.

He expressed these views while presiding over a review meeting in Peshawar regarding the completion of the Peshawar Valley project.



The meeting was attended by Secretary of the Housing Department, Khayam Hassan, Director General Imran Wazir, and other relevant officials.

On this occasion, the Secretary of Housing informed the Special Assistant about the progress made on the decisions taken in the previous meeting concerning the New Peshawar Valley, while the Director General of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Housing Authority briefed the attendees, stating that the New Peshawar Valley project is the largest housing

project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, covering an area of 106,000 kanals, including many villages and areas.

He mentioned that in the initial phase, the chairman of the jirga committee had settled compensation and other matters with the landowners, and weekly reports are being presented to the Secretary of Housing.

The Director General also informed the meeting participants that the major progress in the housing project so far is the expressway, which had been an obstacle to the completion of the New Peshawar

Valley Housing Scheme for the past 15 years.

He added that this housing project consists of eight phases and will meet modern residential requirements, including facilities such as a health zone, colleges and universities, mosques, and a sports complex.

The Special Assistant showed keen interest in the briefing, stating that all pending issues related to land should be resolved through the cooperation of the concerned Member of the National Assembly and jirgas.

He further mentioned that equal facilities will be provided in each phase of the New Peshawar Valley Housing Scheme. This housing project will be completed according to the vision of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and will prove to be a significant milestone in the province's development.



PESHAWAR: Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court, Mr. Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim awarding certificate to the trainer lawyer during the concluding ceremony of one-day training on Arbitration organized by International Mediation and Arbitration Center, Ministry of Law and Justice.

ADR can alleviate case backlogs: CJ PHC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the directives of the Federal Minister for Law and Justice, the International Mediation and Arbitration Center (IMAC) established by the Ministry of Law and Justice successfully concluded a one-day training on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) with a focus on Arbitration at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council, Peshawar. The training brought together legal professionals to enhance their understanding and practical skills in

Arbitration. The sessions covered key topics such as introduction to ADR, arbitration laws, best global practices and the future of arbitration.

The concluding ceremony was graced by the presence of the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court, Mr. Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim. While highlighting the pendency of 256,483 cases, the Chief Justice emphasized the importance of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). He stated that Peshawar High Court has recently inaugurated a dedicated inheri-

ritance court to address the pending inheritance dispute. He encouraged the legal community to adopt mediation and arbitration, recognizing its potential to reduce the backlog of cases. The Chief Justice appreciated the Federal Ministry of Law and Justice for organizing arbitration training for lawyers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He expressed hope that the training would equip lawyers with the necessary skills to navigate the evolving legal landscape.

Mr. Ehsan Ullah Khan, Registrar of IMAC, high-

lighted that this training series is part of the Ministry of Law and Justice's initiatives to raise awareness about ADR across Pakistan. The Vice Chairman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council highlighted the significance of Arbitration, likening it to the traditional Pashtoon Jirga system, and expressed the KP Bar Council's willingness to host future training programs with IMAC.

The participants appreciated the training, highlighting its comprehensive coverage and practical relevance.

UET Inter-Faculty cricket tournament concludes



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The closing ceremony of the much-anticipated UET Peshawar Inter-Faculty Cricket Tournament 2025 took place here today at the Video Conference Hall, UET Peshawar. The two-day tournament saw vibrant participation from four faculties including Faculty of Civil, Agricultural and Mining Engineering (FCAM), Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering (FECI), Faculty of Mechanical, Chemical and Industrial Engineering (FMCI), and Faculty of Architecture, Allied Sciences, and Humanities (FAASH).

In a thrilling final match, FCMI emerged as

the champion defeating FAAH who took the runner-up position. FCAM grabbed 3rd place after defeating FECL. Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali, Vice Chancellor UET Peshawar was declared as the man of the tournament while Dr. Zeeshan Zahir was declared as man of the match of the final.

The event concluded with the distribution of trophies by Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali, Vice Chancellor UET Peshawar who lauded the tournament for providing a platform for faculty members to demonstrate their skills and sportsmanship. The Vice Chancellor directed the Director Sports to organize Inter-University and Inter-Campus tournament in

near future. Faculty should take full advantage of such opportunities and participate in sports competitions, as sports are an important part of our lives that enhance physical and mental abilities, he added. The Vice Chancellor appreciated the efforts of the Chairman Sports Committee Prof. Dr. Rizwan M. Gul, Dr. Farid Ullah Khan, Chief Organizer of the tournament, Mr. Muhammad Ali, Director Sports and volunteers of UET Sports Society for organizing such a successful event. He also paid tribute to Prof. Dr. Amjad Ali, Dean FAASH, on his retirement, who led the AASH team in the tournament.

Earlier, Prof. Dr. Rizwan M. Gul, Chairman Sports Committee and Dr. Farid Ullah Khan said that the administration of UET Peshawar is well aware of the importance of sports. We are making every effort to provide the best sports opportunities to the students and faculty as well, as sports are essential for enhancing mental and physical abilities.

Sports Week at PCP to begin on Monday

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sports Week at the Paraplegic Center Peshawar will begin on Monday. Participants will include inpatients with disabilities, medical and administrative staff of the center and caregivers of the admitted patients. The event will feature a variety of sports, including badminton, volleyball, ludo, carrom board, table tennis, wheelchair tug-of-war, wheelchair basketball, bocia, and darts. Meanwhile, a meeting chaired by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Paraplegic Center Peshawar, Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, reviewed and finalized the arrangements for the event. The CEO directed all staff members, inpatients, caregivers, and officials of the 'Friends of Paraplegics' to actively participate in the Sports Week. To ensure the smooth execution of the event, 18 organizers have been appointed for various sports, while Hafizullah Khan has been designated as the Chief Organizer.

PHC extends MNA Asif Khan protective bail till 20th Feb

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Abdul Fayyaz has extended the protective bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Asif Khan till 20th

February and also sought details of cases registered against him from the Islamabad Police, on Thursday.

The counsel Mohsin Farooq advocate informed the court that the petitioner, Asif Khan, is a Member of the National Assembly and cases have been registered against him. He stated that two days ago, the petition-

er's sister had passed away, due to which he could not appear in court. He also stated that cases have been registered against the petitioner in Islamabad as well, and he wants to appear in the relevant courts, therefore, he should be granted protective bail and the Islamabad Police should also be asked to provide details of the cases.

During the hearing, Deputy Attorney General Dawlat Khan informed the court that the report from the Islamabad Police has not been received yet.

On this, the court extended the protective bail of Asif Khan till 20th February, sought a report from the Islamabad Police regarding the cases, and adjourned further hearing.

KPRA achieves record 46% surge in tax collection reaching 28.92 billion: Muzzamil Aslam

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on Finance and Interprovincial Coordination, Muzzamil Aslam, is pleased to announce that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) has continued its tradition of collecting additional taxes in January. According to KPRA statistics, tax collection from July to January has increased to a remarkable 28.92 billion, showing a significant 46% rise compared to the previous year. This substantial growth is a testament to the province's thriving economy and the government's efforts to promote fiscal responsibility. Advisor on Finance said that Notably, non-tax revenue in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa exceeds 55 percent, which will push the overall collection above 50 percent. This achievement is a result of the government's diversified revenue streams and effective financial management. Mr. Aslam expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur for his continuous support and congratulated the KPRA Director General Fozia Iqbal and other staff on collecting additional taxes.

World Read Aloud Day and Pakistan - II

Muhammad Abdullah Haroon

MOREOVER, the celebration of reading aloud extends beyond literacy-it fosters social cohesion. In a multi-ethnic country like Pakistan, storytelling can serve as a bridge between diverse cultures and communities. Engaging in shared reading experiences allows individuals to connect across cultural divides, fostering understanding and empathy. This sense of community is essential for social stability, particularly in a country facing economic challenges and regional disparities.

Where meagre funds pose a major constraint in the implementation of any policy, celebration of world read aloud day can become a comparatively an undemanding task for it requires nothing more than an allocation of a specific day when teachers read stories to students and encourage parents to be a part of the audiences. The stories should focus on local themes, cultures, and moral lessons, making literature relatable and engaging for both young and elderly audiences alike. By emphasising the importance of stories from our own heritage would help develop a sense of pride and identity as well as would play a key role in improving their language skills, polish their linguistic competence, enhance their sensitivity towards creativity, and hone their imagination towards new horizons of sophistication.

In communities with limited access to educational resources like Pakistan, libraries and mobile book programs can play a crucial role in making reading materials accessible. Libraries should be encouraged by the government and education ministries both at federal and provincial level, to celebrate World Read Aloud Day by hosting storytelling sessions, workshops, and community reading events. While these institutions face their financial challenges, partnerships with local businesses, NGOs, and government initiatives can provide the necessary funding and resources to support these programs. Engaging local artists and storytellers can further enrich the experience, capturing the attention of younger audiences and inspiring a new generation of readers. It has become a dire need of the hour to improve our connectivity through the internet. Special attention needs to be given to training teachers and educationists across the county so that not only do they be able to use Ai applications for classroom teaching/learning, and evaluation practices, but it must be extended to public libraries and community organisations. Celebration of World Read Aloud Day is one way libraries can exercise their AI usage to manage their collections more efficiently, ensuring that popular and diverse books are readily available for community events. Additionally, AI can assist in efficient organisation of reading sessions, tracking of attendance, and analysing community participation trends over time. This data-driven approach can also be used to enable libraries to make informed decisions about programming, ensuring that future events resonate with the community's interests and needs.

Another way to promote celebration of World Read Aloud Day in Pakistan is through an effective use of social media as a powerful tool. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram must be promoted as forums to share reading-related content, challenge followers to read aloud, and highlight the significance of literacy. Hashtags such as #WorldReadAloudDay and #ReadAloudPakistan can amplify these messages, encouraging a nationwide dialogue about the importance of reading. In a multi-ethnic country like Pakistan, storytelling can serve as a bridge between diverse cultures and communities. Engaging in shared reading experiences, be it through the virtual connectivity, allows individuals to connect across cultural divides, fostering understanding and empathy. This sense of community is essential for social stability, particularly in a country facing economic challenges and regional disparities.

However, the integration of AI in literacy and reading practices need a thorough analysis of critical considerations. Issues regarding privacy, content quality, and the potential replacement of human interaction in storytelling must be carefully navigated. While AI can enhance the reading experience, it is essential to remember the irreplaceable value of human connection-sharing stories in a personal, engaging manner fosters meaningful relationships among readers, educators, and communities. Celebration of World Read Aloud Day by using social media and AI driven softwares and tools represent a convergence of traditional storytelling and modern technology. Together, they offer innovative ways to enhance literacy, promote educational equity, encourage reading, and connect individuals from varied backgrounds. By leveraging AI, we can enrich the reading experience, personalize learning, and engage communities worldwide. However, it remains crucial to balance the advantages of technology with the need for genuine human interaction and connection that lies at the heart of storytelling. As we navigate this dynamic relationship, we can look forward to a more inclusive and exciting future for reading and literacy globally. World Read Aloud day serves as a reminder of the need for continued advocacy for education and literacy programs in Pakistan. Incorporating these elements into reading sessions can make literature more relatable to young audiences. In conclusion, World Read Aloud Day can be utilised as a unique opportunity for Pakistan to galvanize its citizens around the transformative power of reading. It fosters community spirit, encourages family bonding, and enhances literacy skills across generations. By celebrating this day, Pakistan can take significant strides toward addressing its literacy challenges and fostering a culture that values literature and education. As communities come together to share stories, they not only enhance individual learning but also contribute to a more informed, empathetic, and connected society. Thus, World Read Aloud Day is not just an event; it is a movement toward a brighter, more literate future for all.

Writer is a student of Froebels International School, Islamabad.

ICC Champions Trophy unveiled in Peshawar

Shahid Afridi

PESHAWAR: The ICC Champions Trophy received a warm welcome upon its arrival in Peshawar. The trophy was first taken to the University of Peshawar where Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naeem Qazi, Secretary of Public Health Dawood Khan, Director of Sports Peshawar University Behar Karam along with faculty members and local players attended the unveiling ceremony. Students eagerly took pictures with the trophy and expressed their gratitude to PCB Chairman and relevant authorities.

On this occasion the Vice Chancellor of the University of Peshawar stated that the revival of international cricket after years is a positive development. He acknowledged the efforts of all those who contributed to this revival and thanked them for their role. The students expressed their excitement about seeing the trophy live and capturing memorable moments with it.



After the University of Peshawar the trophy was taken to Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium where Deputy Director of Sports Mir Bashir Khan, Director of Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium Saleem Raza, President of Peshawar District Association Asghar Khan, AIPS Asia Secretary and senior journalist Amjad Aziz Malik, Regional Sports Officer Kashif Farhan, students, local cricket coaches and others were present.

On this occasion Saleem Raza stated that the construction work on Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium is progressing rapidly and will be completed soon. He

added that the government aims to finish the work within the next two months to provide entertainment opportunities for the local community.

It is worth mentioning that the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 Pakistan Tour began at the historic Hiran Minar Complex in Sheikhpura. Over 14 days the trophy will be taken to ten different cities across Pakistan.

The global journey of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 started in Pakistan on November 16, after which the trophy was taken to seven other participating countries from November 26 to January 26. In this

second phase the trophy will be showcased in Sheikhpura, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, Hyderabad, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Quetta.

The trophy will also be displayed at the newly upgraded Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on February 8 during the opening match of the tri-nation series between Pakistan and New Zealand. The trophy tour will conclude on February 14 in Karachi.

The opening match of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 is scheduled to take place between host Pakistan and New Zealand on February 19.

Crackdown on hoarding, artificial inflation during Ramadan ordered

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru has said that strict legal action will be taken against those involved in hoarding and artificially inflating the prices of essential food items during Ramadan. He emphasized that no leniency would be shown in this regard.

Zahir Shah Toru made these remarks while presiding over a review meeting on the strategy to maintain price stability and curb artificial inflation and hoarding during the holy month.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Food Sagib Raza Aslam and other officials from the food department.

During the meeting, Secretary Food briefed the

minister about the measures being implemented across the province. He informed that special teams have been formed to tackle artificial inflation and hoarding effectively.

"The teams will operate at the divisional level under the supervision of Deputy Directors of Food and District Food Controllers in their respective areas", told Sagib.

The secretary further stated that the teams would not only hold meetings with businesses dealing in flour, sugar, and other essential commodities but would also conduct inspections and raids to ensure price stability and curb hoarding.

Minister Toru directed the officials to take all possible steps to provide relief to the public during Ramadan.



In brief

4 killed in Kalat road mishap F.P. Report

KALAT: Four people were killed and several others injured in a devastating road accident in Surab District, Kalat Division, Balochistan, on Thursday, after three vehicles crashed into each other, causing widespread destruction. According to levies forces, the accident occurred due to speeding and reckless driving where three vehicles were traveling at a high speed when they collided, resulting in the tragic loss of four lives on the spot and injuring several, a private news channel reported. The sources added that the injured were being treated at a local hospital and their condition was stated to be stable. An official statement from the Levies forces confirmed the details of the accident and assured that a thorough investigation was underway to determine the cause of the crash.

DTO issues monthly report F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: District Traffic Officer (DTO) Toba Tek Singh, said that during 1st January to 31st January 2025, the traffic police issued 10,517 Challans and 1,14,63,800 Fines for violating traffic rules across the district. DTO further said that we have taken actions against over speed 198, over loading 1029, pressure horn 45, dangerous driving 859, traveling without driving license 383, smoke emitting vehicles, underage drivers 141, Black Glass Cars 58, motorcycle riders without helmets 898 imposed driving. Apart from this, an 24 FIR has been registered against those violating traffic rules. In the end, Ch. Kashif Munir Gill said that those who violate traffic rules do not deserve any concession.

Landlord appeals for help F.P. Report

LARKANA: The landlord of village Ghoghari of Qambar Shahdadkot district, Madad Ali Kachi, along with his brother Abdul Fattah, reached the Larkana Press Club and held a press conference. He said that I have 100 acres of agricultural land in Deh Deedar and Deh Langh of Qambar taluka, on which my farmers cultivate and travel. He alleged that a few months ago, an influential person in the area had demanded Rs 4 million from me, but when I did not pay, he along with his armed men seized my land, extorted Rs 30,000 from the farmers, tortured them to death and fled. We have registered such an incident at the NC Police Station Pakho. It is as if the influential person is threatening us to take away our land through various criminals. For this, I strongly appeal to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the President of Pakistan and the DIG Police Larkana Division to take action against the influential person and investigate the matter and bring him, along with the armed men, to justice.

PFA seals six food points F.P. Report

CHINIOT: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) continues its crackdown against the adulteration mafia, sealing six food points and imposing fines worth Rs 60,000 for serious violations. The operation, led by Deputy Director Dr. Qasim Raza on the directives of the Director General PFA, was carried out across the district. Four chicken shops and two well-known fast-food outlets were sealed due to poor hygiene, substandard food quality, and other major violations.

Farmers demand measures for boosting agriculture

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Upper Dir farmers have demanded the government to establish an agriculture research center and arrange training workshops on community level for them so that they develop their lifestyle. During a survey conducted by a local journalist Ahmad ul Haq recently, the farmer urged the agriculture department to establish coordination with the real representatives of the farmers for their uplift.

The experts told the journalist that traditional cultivation was a big obstacle to the change in lifestyle of farmers. They said the tools they used indicated that the farmers had been suffering from economic hardship due to traditional farming.

The Assistant Director Agriculture Upper Dir Pervez Khan said that depending on the climatic conditions, the soil in Upper Dir was suitable for all types of crops and fruit orchards. He said the agriculture department was trying to convince the farmers to plant cash crop orchards and vegetables according to modern scientific methods. "With the support of the World Bank, the agriculture department has planted free of cost olive, walnut and Japanese fruit orchards on an area of 380 kanals in different areas last year", he said, adding that thousand applications were received, but due to lack of funds, only 70 gardens were planted.

Pervez said that 3,000 bags of wheat and 5,000 bags of maize seeds were given to the farmers at a subsidized price, although the demand was many times higher. He said the government also has no policy to provide free fertilizer or seeds to farmers.

According to the agriculture department's data, the Upper Dir district has a total area of 129,622 hectares including 31,572 hectares cultivable out of which 22,371 hectares are irrigated by canals and 9,181 hectares are rainfed. There is wasteland on 6,177 hectares, while forests are existed on 81,323 hectares. In the Kharif season, maize is cultivated on 6,212 hectares, rice on 4,568 hectares, various vegetables on 1,823 hectares, potatoes on

765 hectares, fruit fodders on 512 hectares, chilies on 322 hectares, moong on 232 hectares, and mash on 7 hectares, while wheat is cultivated on 2,538 hectares in the Rabi season, barley is cultivated on 1500 hectares, onion on 1725 hectares, vegetables on 227 hectares, fruit on 387 hectares, potato on 1250 hectares, peas on 5 hectares and garlic on 10 hectares.

Ashfaq Muhammad, a local farmer, said that they did not know who was being given the seeds, fertilizer and saplings despite the fact that the department had registered their lands last year.

Yar Zaman Khan, an elected peasant worker complained that the agriculture department was ignoring them in the distribution of seeds, fertilizer and saplings. He said they did not know who were getting the government packages. Shahid Ali Khan, an agriculturist said that the entire Malakand division was a suitable area for fruit orchards and vegetables. He said the farmers would get an income of Millions of rupees every season if attention was paid to the agriculture sector. "The lifestyle of the farmers will change and they will become economically strong in a short time", he said, adding the farmers considered it a sin to abandon traditional cultivation. While describing the excessive use of sprays on crops as harmful to health, he expressed concern that unnecessary sprays could cause cancer as well as liver diseases.

Yahya Faqir, the country distributor of a seed company, said that hybrid seeds were the best source of high yield, quality and quantity of crops. He said that his company trained farmers on the cultivation of hybrid seeds at a community level, and convinced them to plant vegetables in their homes, saying that small home gardens would provide them with fresh vegetables for free, and would also save on household expenses. According to Yahya Faqir, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was working on special research at the Tarnab Farm Research Center to add zinc to wheat.

Polio eradication drive continues across AJK

F.P. Report

MIRPUR: The nation-wide 5-day polio eradication drive on Thursday continued the 4th consecutive day successfully across Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The campaign will continue across Azad Jammu and Kashmir till February, 7 without any break.

A total of 7.52 lakh children under five years of age would be administered anti-polio vaccine during the 5-day nation-wide campaign launched across AJK on Monday, the State health services authorities said. The campaign was launched across AJK by the State Health Services Department with the coordination of the World

Health Organization, the health authorities told media.

They said no case of polio disease had been emerged anywhere in Azad Jammu & Kashmir since last 24 years. At least 4000 mobile teams of para medical staff had been constituted to visit door to door to administer the polio vaccine drops during the campaign across AJK - where a total of 500 fixed centers at local government hospitals and subordinate health facilities had been established by the State Polio Eradication Committee of the AJK State Health Services Department with the coordination of the World Health Organization (WHO), the official sources said.

The total staff to be involved in the AJK-wide national drive included mobile teams comprising over 5000 workers for visiting door to door to immunize the children up to 5 years of age with the polio vaccine drops during the campaign, the sources underlined.

The fixed centers had been set up at the state-run hospitals, basic health units, rural health centers as well as various other spots to vaccinate the children with the anti-polio drops, the sources elaborated. A total of 169 transit points had been set up for conducting the drive under the supervision of the concerned area in charges, the sources said.

Faculty outreach program enters into thirrd week

F.P. Report

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

Education Faculty (Tier-I, Lecturers/Assistant Professors) participated. Ghulam Murtaza Guriah, Assistant Director NAHE-HEC as well as office holders of University of Bonaire were also present in the

inaugural function. At this point Vice Chancellor Dr. Saiful Islam thanked Dr. Noor Anna Malik, Managing Director, NAHE for awarding the project to University of Bonaire, National Outreach Program for Higher Education Faculty.

He said that prior to this training, NAHE also awarded the "Capacity Building Program for University Management" project which was very helpful and important in the professional development of administrative and management staff of the university. He emphasized the

importance of faculty development in enhancing the quality of higher education.

Dr. Haji Rehman, Director ORIC and Training Coordinator welcomed the guests and appreciated the encouragement and support of NAHE (HEC) management and its team. He explained that there would be 80 sessions in 20 working days, four sessions per day. Being the University Training Coordinator, he assured maximum support and dedication to the faculty to make this transformational event a grand event.

Work on Rs. 12b project underway

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Arshad Ayub Khan has said that work on projects worth more than Rs.12 billion is underway in the local government sector in Kohat and its timely completion of will be ensured. Announcing the formation of an inquiry committee on public complaints related to the ongoing projects, he said that the committee will submit its report within 15 days adding that in the light of which strict action will be taken against those found guilty of negligence, regardless of their position.

He expressed these views during a high-level meeting of his department during his one-day visit to Kohat on Thursday. The meeting besides others was attended by the Provincial Law Minister Aftab Alam Advocate, Shehryar Afridi MNA, Provincial Assembly members Shafi Jan and Daud Afridi, Secretary Local

Government, Deputy Commissioner Kohat, CEO WSSC, TMOs and other concerned officials.

The Minister said that every penny of the government treasury is the trust of the public and not anyone's personal, so its fair use will be ensured at all costs. He maintained that the PTI government has zero tolerance for corruption and there can be no question of any concession to anyone in this regard. He said that according to the vision of party leader Imran Khan, the local government system is being made more active and despite of the serious financial crisis, sufficient funds will be released to all local government institutions very soon.

Arshad Ayub said, If the Imran Khan's government had not been overthrown under a conspiracy, the local government system would not be in this condition today. He added that revitalization of the lease policy is in the final stages to mobilize the local government institutions and put them on their feet. In order to

strengthen and stabilize local government institutions and run them in the best possible way, the property rents of local governments also need to be made realistic according to the market rate so that maximum facilities can be provided to the people, he asserted.

The Minister said that the previous caretaker government exceeded its mandate and made 16,000 recruitments adding that these posts will now be filled purely on merit.

Later, the provincial minister also inspected the work being carried out by WSSC under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project on the under construction Sewerage Treatment Plant, the under construction Women Business Center and Kohat Sports Complex and directed the concerned authorities to complete all the work in time without compromising on its quality. Earlier, the minister also chaired a meeting of the WSSC Board of Directors.



GHALANAI: KP Minister for Agriculture, Sajjad Barakwal being briefed during his visit to Mohmand.

Al Khidmat distribute 17 wheelchairs F.P. Report

WANA: In collaboration with Jamaat-e-Islami Lower South Waziristan and Al-Khidmat Foundation, 17 disabled individuals were provided with free wheelchairs at the District Press Club Wana.

The welfare event was attended by Al-Khidmat Foundation President Umar Wazir, Jamaat-e-Islami Lower Waziristan Ameer Asadullah Bahir, along with Saifur Rehman, Abdul Wahab, Nadeem Khan, Salahuddin Wazir, and prominent political leader Taj Muhammad Wazir.

Speaking at the event, Al-Khidmat Foundation President Umar Wazir stated that over the past eight months, hundreds of disabled individuals in Lower South Waziristan have received free wheelchairs, and numerous poor families have been provided with bedding. He reaffirmed the commitment to continuing this humanitarian assistance in the future.

The speakers praised this welfare initiative, emphasizing that Jamaat-e-Islami and Al-Khidmat Foundation are dedicated to serving those in need, regardless of race or background, and will continue their efforts to provide every possible assistance.

Police foil drug-supply attempt F.P. Report

MULTAN: The police foiled a drug-supply attempt, arrested two drug-traffickers and recovered hashish and opium from them during a crackdown launched here on Thursday.

Addressing a press conference alongside Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Makhdoom Rasheed, Rao Tariq Pervaz and Station House Officer (SHO) Hashmat Bilal, the City Police Officer (CPO) Sadiq Ali Dogar said the arrested individuals were identified as Ibrahim, son of Musa, a resident of Kot Rab Nawaz, and Muhammad Harris, son of Muhammad Nadeem of the same locality.

They were arrested from Kot Rab Nawaz area. The police recovered over 13.5 kilograms of hashish and 600 grams of opium from them, said the CPO.

This operation was part of a broader initiative, led by the Multan police to combat drug trafficking. Officials have affirmed that such actions would continue unabated, with a resolute focus on bringing all individuals involved in the narcotics trade to justice.

Postponement of examination rejected

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Private and government school organizations in Swat have unanimously rejected the decision to postpone matriculation exams from March to April 8. They demand that the exams be held on March 5 as originally scheduled to save valuable time for students.

Representatives from various organizations, including the Member Amjad Ali Shah, Private Schools Regulatory Authority Malakand Division, PAN KPK, and President Zafar Shalmani PSMA Swat, expressed their concerns at an emergency press conference at the Swat Press Club.



The organizations urged Education Minister Faisal Khan Tarakai and Education Secretary Masood Ahmed Khan to reconsider the decision, warning that postponing the exams would have adverse effects on the new teaching session. They argued that the delayed exams would result in a two-month delay in the start of classes for 9th and 10th graders, ultimately affecting the quality of education.

Moreover, the organizations pointed out that the late examinations in the province would put students at a disadvantage when applying to educational institutions in other provinces. They emphasized that the government should review and restore its previous examination schedule to avoid academic losses for students.

KUST kicks off 13th inter-departmental games

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseer u Din Distributes Awards. The 13th Inter-Departmental Games 2024-25 at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) concluded with a vibrant closing ceremony, where Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseer u Din, as the chief guest, distributed awards to outstanding athletes for their exceptional performances.

The event was marked by an impressive display of Taekwondo tricks, which were met with great appreciation from the audience.

In the women's competitions, the Institute of Computing demonstrated outstanding performance, securing the badminton title, while the Department of Pharmacy triumphed in Tug of War and Athletics. The Best Female Athlete award was presented to Ayesha Raouf from the Institute of Computing for her remarkable achievements. In the men's category, the Institute of Computing emerged victorious in football, athletics, and volleyball, among other competitions. Other notable winners included the Department of Pharmacy, the Institute of Numerical Sciences, and

KUST Hangu Campus.

The Best Male Athlete award went to Hassan Ahmed from the Institute of Business Studies, who accumulated 24 points, and the General Trophy was claimed by the Institute of Computing. VC Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin emphasized the importance of sports in fostering both physical and mental development among students. He commended the athletes for their performance and assured that KUST would continue organizing such events in the future, providing young people with opportunities to engage in positive and healthy activities.

PTI to hold power show today

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) provincial president Junaid Akbar said that he is a political worker and not a servant. I can say right is right and wrong is wrong, if Imran Khan doesn't accept what is right then I will leave the presidency. In the past mistakes were made by PTI, the consequences of which we are suffering today.

This he said during his first visit to Mardan after taking over the party's provincial presidency and addressed the workers regaining convention going to be held on February 8 Swabi at Pakhtunkhwa House Mardan and gave guidelines to the workers. Junaid Akbar has said that

thieves will not be left in the party, politics will not be allowed to become a business, sincere and genuine workers will be honored in the party, workers will be given priority over those who take positions and tickets through money.

The provincial president said that he is in favor of talking to the institutions because the distance between the institutions and the people must be removed. The strength of Pakistani institutions is the benefit of the country and the nation; however, institutions also have to correct their behavior. Institutions cannot force any decision on us, Pakistan's mandate has been stolen on February 8 the current government is the first government in history which has been given

power by force.

GHSS held prize distribution ceremony: The annual prize distribution ceremony of Government Higher Secondary School Baghdada was held with great enthusiasm. The event was graced by renowned philanthropist, social activist, and educationist Ibrahim Dawood as the chief guest.

The ceremony saw the participation of students, parents, and past and present PTC chairmen. Various shields and certificates of appreciation were distributed to students who excelled in academics, including those securing top positions in exams. Additionally, students maintaining full attendance throughout the year were recognized.

Kashmir solidarity day observed

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Kashmir Solidarity Day was also observed in the district Hafizabad to express full support of Pakistani Nation to the just struggle of people of the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir for their inalienable right of self-determination under the United Nations resolutions. Int his connection, a rally was taken out from District Complex to Jinnah Chowk led by the Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq.

ADCR Tanveer Yaseen, prominent personality Sheikh Gulzar Ahmad, Chief Executive Officer Education Muhammad Akram Ashraf, District Emergency Officer Adnan Nawaz, DSP Muhammad Asif, government officers, officials and civil society participated in the rally. The participants of the rally were raising slogans in support of the people of Indian held Kashmir and carrying banners and plea cards highlighting Indian atrocities against innocent people of occupied Kashmir.

Addressing the participants of the rally, DC Abdul Razzaq said that Pakistani Nation would continue its moral and diplomatic support of people of the Indian occupied Kashmir till implementing resolutions of United Nation to give just right of self-determination. He called upon United Nation to play its result-oriented role to stop atrocities of Indian government against innocent people of held Kashmir and to ensure implementation on its resolutions for giving just right of self-determination so that innocent people of the

occupied Kashmir could decide their own fate according to their aspirations.

Body found F.P. Report

KARAK: Rescue 1122 found the body of a young man on Fateh Sheri Chowk Alam Gul Khel Road. If anyone knows the identity of this young man or is related to his family, please inform immediately so that the news can reach his family. At present, the body is lying in the Type C Hospital under Nusrati.

Rescue 1122 officials have requested the public to help identify this young man so that the information can be conveyed to his family.



Baltic nations count final hours to ending power ties to Russia

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP): Nearly 3 1/2 decades after leaving the Soviet Union, the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania this weekend will flip a switch to end electricity-grid connections to neighboring Russia and Belarus — and turn to their European Union allies.

The severing of electricity ties to oil- and gas-rich Russia is steeped in geopolitical and symbolic significance. Work toward it sped up after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops to invade Ukraine three years ago, battering Moscow's EU relations. "This is physical disconnection from the last remaining element of our reliance on the Russian and Belarusian energy system," Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and other dignitaries are expected at a ceremony on Sunday as a specially-made 9-meter (29.5-foot) tall clock in downtown Vilnius counts down the final seconds of the Baltic states' electricity ties to Russia. The Baltic countries, which are all NATO members, have often had chilly ties with Russia since declaring independence from the USSR in 1990 — and relations soured further over Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Sixteen power lines that used to connect the three Baltic states with Russia and Belarus were dismantled over the years as a new grid linking them with the rest of the EU was created, including underwater cables in the Baltic Sea. All remaining transmission lines between them and Russia, Belarus and Russia's Kaliningrad — a Russian exclave wedged between EU members Poland and Lithuania and the sea — will be switched off one by one.

Then, for 24 hours, the Baltic Power System will operate solo in an "island operation mode." The next day, the power system is set to merge with the Continental European and Nordic grids through several links with Finland, Sweden and Poland. The Kaliningrad region, which has no land ties to mainland Russia, already relies on its own power generation, according to Litgrid, Lithuania's electricity transmission system operator.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the disconnection plan was announced in advance by the Baltic countries and the Russian energy sector had taken preparatory steps to ensure smooth operation on its side. "Those plans were announced long time ago, and they required certain actions by our and their electric companies," Peskov told reporters. "We have taken all necessary measures to ensure reliable and

uninterrupted operation of our unified energy system." The three Baltic countries, which together share a 1,633-kilometer (1,015-mile) -long border with Russia and Belarus, officially informed Moscow and Minsk of the disconnection plan in July. Their national transmission system operators credited 1.2 billion euros (\$1.25 billion) in EU and other support to help the countries synchronize with the Continental Europe Synchronous Area.

"Lithuania has done a lot in the last 30 years to disconnect, to become independent," Nauseda said. Three years ago, "we stopped buying any kind of energy resources from Russia. It was our response to the war in Ukraine." Despite the advance notice, the Baltic nations are still on watch for a possible response from their former Soviet partners.

"The risk of cyberattacks remains substantial," Litgrid said last week, adding that continued vigilance, collaboration, defensive steps and "robust" cybersecurity measures were needed to effectively mitigate potential threats. Latvian Prime Minister Evika Silina warned of possible provocations, but said Latvia was well-prepared and services including the armed forces and national guard were stepping up their vigilance and security measures. "Clearly there are risks, we understand that very well. But the risks are identified and there is a contingency plan in case these risks materialize," Silina said.

After the disconnection plans were announced, propaganda campaigns cropped up on social media and in printed leaflets in city streets that issued fake-news warnings about blackouts, severe energy shortages and sky-high energy bills for consumers. "We heard those rumors, but we are used to such things already" said Jolanta Karavaitiene, a retired teacher, in central Vilnius. "Of course we must disconnect from them. Given the geopolitical situation, I see no reason for us to be there (in the Russian grid)." Still, some in the region were taking precautionary measures, Estonia's public broadcaster ERR has reported surging sales of generators. Home appliance chain Bauhof sold dozens more generators last month compared to January a year ago, and rival Ehituse ABC had to limit their purchases the report said.

The Baltic countries' steps toward energy independence have been decades in the making. In 2003, prior to joining the EU, Lithuania decided to shut down the Soviet-built Ignalina nuclear power plant in response to concerns in Brussels over its safety. It was decommissioned in 2009.

Putin revives Soviet-era ‘Eurovision’ with new allies

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered a revival of the Soviet answer to the Eurovision Song Contest in an effort to counter what he says is the decadence of modern Western culture.

Putin signed a decree for the Intervention Song Contest to be held in Moscow this year, and told senior Kremlin and government officials to prepare for the event. China, Cuba, Brazil and other "friendly" countries are expected to take part. Russia was banned from Eurovision in 2022 after Putin sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine, though he has been trying to revive Intervention for more than a decade.

In contrast to Eurovision, which often celebrates LGBT+ themes and performers, Intervention will strike a more sober tone, according to documents seen by Reuters, stressing respect for "traditional universal, spiritual and family values". "Artists may not perform songs that

call for violence, humiliate the honour and dignity of society, and it is required that political themes in the lyrics are completely excluded," said one of the Russian planning documents.

Putin has increasingly sought to cast Russia as the defender of traditional family values and says the West has lost its moral moorings in the pursuit of what he sees as excessive individualism and a lack of respect for religious traditions. In Russia, stringent rules now ban anything deemed to promote homosexuality, while the international LGBTQ+ movement is branded an extremist organisation.

Russia took part in Eurovision 23 times from 1994 but as ties with the West steadily soured it began to consider reviving the Soviet-era Intervention, especially after Conchita Wurst, an Austrian drag queen popularly known as "the bearded lady," won the contest in 2014, the year Putin annexed Crimea from

Ukraine. Intervention originally launched under Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in the 1960s as an Eastern Bloc alternative to the capitalist Eurovision Song Contest, bringing together Moscow's allies in eastern Europe and other communist nations like Cuba.

Russian officials say a number of countries including China, Brazil, Cuba and former Soviet republics such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Belarus have expressed interest in taking part in the revived Intervention music contest. According to the documents seen by Reuters, performers will have up to four minutes to sing their song live in whatever language they like. The winner will go on tour and get prize money. "The contest will be open for participation of all countries that wish to do so," the document said, adding that participants must "respect cultural, ethical and religious traditions of other peoples of the world".

Xi and Thailand’s leader vow to crack down on scam networks

BANGKOK (AP): China's leader Xi Jinping and visiting Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra vowed to crack down on the scam networks that plague Southeast Asia as the two leaders met on Thursday in Beijing.

Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, which are south of China and share borders with Thailand, have become major centers of online scam operations where people lured by false advertising of well-paid jobs are trafficked to secretive compounds where they are forced to work by criminal groups that run online scams targeting people all over the world. That has impacted Thailand's reputation, as multiple high-profile stories of Chinese people being lured to work in Bangkok only to be trafficked into a scam compound in Myanmar have surfaced, with Chinese actor Wang Xing being the latest such victim.

Thai and Chinese offi-

cials have taken public steps to address the scam issue, including a reported visit to the border region by Liu Zhongyi, China's vice minister of public security. "China appreciates Thailand's strong measures to combat online gambling fraud. Both sides should continue to strengthen law enforcement, security, and judicial cooperation," Xi said, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Paetongtarn echoed that, saying "Thailand is willing to strengthen law enforcement cooperation with China and other neighboring countries and take resolute and effective measures to combat cross-border crimes such as online gambling and fraud." Ahead of her visit, Thailand cut off electricity to some areas in Myanmar by its border to try to disrupt the operations of the scam compounds. The effect of that is unclear as the compounds often have their own generators.

Ukraine aid workers ‘face growing drones threat’

KYIV (BBC): Volunteer workers in Ukraine have said they face a growing threat from Russian drones. Edward, who lost his leg and arm in an explosion on 30 January, said his marked vehicle was attacked in what amounted to a war crime.

The Dorset aid worker, who had been helping evacuees from the front line town of Pokrovsk, said Russian forces were using a new type of drone that could not be picked up by detecting equipment. Karol Swiacki, from Bournemouth charity Ukraine Relief, said his volunteers had recently stopped driving marked vehicles for fear of being targeted. Aid workers say about 7,000 people remain in Pokrovsk, despite constant attacks from Russian forces less than 2km (1.2 miles) away. Edward, whose surname is not being used by the BBC, said he was driving through the town in a vehicle marked with the words "evacuation" and "volunteer". He said: "I heard a drone and then 30 seconds later there was this mighty bang, [an] explosion right in front of my face.

"I could see my arm on the wheel not moving. My leg was just absolutely shredded." Edward said his team had previously been attacked by a Russian drone in December, although no-one was seriously hurt. He said: "Pokrovsk is littered with drones. Every time we go in, we see them.

"We have several detectors... and neither of those went off before the strike, which leads us to think that it could have been a fibre-optic, which is a new drone, a much, much more dangerous type of drone they've been using recently. "It's undetectable and pretty much impossible to counter." Mr Swiacki said the war in Ukraine had "changed completely" in recent months. He said: "There are thousands of drones and when you are driving, "We are driving the van without marks because Russians are striking into every vehicle especially those which are marked as the humanitarian aid.

Russians told not to panic over ‘gas cloud’ in city

MOSCOW (Reuters): The governor of Russia's Astrakhan region told residents not to panic after its main city, close to a huge gas chemical complex that was attacked by Ukrainian drones this week, was enveloped in a cloud of natural gas.

Governor Igor Babushkin said the gas that people could smell was the result of work to restart production at the plant near the southern city of Astrakhan, which has a population of about 475,000 people. "Dear citizens, this morning the city was covered by a cloud of natural gas, which has a specific smell that appears after processing," he wrote on Telegram.

"Specialists are carrying out restoration work and have started to launch production this morning. Now the start-up and adjustment process is underway, including the launch of flare-burning." He did not make clear which production was being restarted. Three industry sources told Reuters the Astrakhan Gas Processing Plant was likely to suspend motor fuel production for several months.

Babushkin said some gas flares had been extinguished when the plant was shut down after the attack, and restarting them required a release of gas that was then "ignited, like on a household gas stove". He said the weather service was predicting the gas cloud would move away from the city.

"Natural gas is not hazardous to health in open spaces - in the near future the state of the atmospheric air will normalise," he said. "I want to warn the residents of Astrakhan, in the coming days before the plant returns to its scheduled operating mode, such situations are possible. Do not panic!" Some Astrakhan residents responded with sarcastic comments on social media. "You see - natural gas isn't dangerous. Breathe in deeply," one person wrote.



BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping shaking hands with Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra.

Syria’s Alawites mourn their dead after revenge attacks

DAMASCUS (AFP): At the bottom of Nisrine Ezzedine's garden, cement blocks mark the graves of her husband, son and nephew, all killed by foreign jihadists in Syria's Alawite minority heartland.

After Islamist-led rebels ousted longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad on December 8, the new authorities sought to reassure minorities in multi-ethnic multi-confessional Syria that they will be protected. But Alawites, from a branch of Shiite Islam, have an acute fear of reprisals because of their connection to the Assad clan, which recruited from and favoured its own religious community for military and public sector positions during more than half a century of iron-fisted rule.

Ezzedine said foreign jihadists set up near the family olive groves, outside their mountain village of Ain al-Sharkia in the coastal province of Latakia, after Assad's ouster. She said her civil servant husband Ammar, son Musa and her nephew Mohammed, both 17, were attacked there last month.

"Extremists -- masked foreigners - riddled them with bullets," said Ezzedine, 48, her frail silhouette framed in a black coat. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor blamed "foreign Islamist fighters allied to Syria's new authorities" for the attack. Some members of the Ezzedine family had been in the military, but all three were civilians.

The boys "were supposed to finish school this year", she said quietly. Alawites account for about nine percent of Syria's population, or around 1.7 million people. The community has been repeatedly targeted since Assad's ouster. This month, authori-

ties said they were searching for "criminals" after an attack in an Alawite village in Hama province that the Observatory said killed 10 people, including a child and an elderly woman.

The family acknowledged that the new authorities swiftly opened an investigation after the trio's killing. "They promised to find the perpetrators, but so far we haven't seen anything," said electrical engineer Ali Ismail, a relative of Ezzedine. Ismail lived for a decade in the northern city of Aleppo, but like many Alawites has returned to his native Latakia province, fearing indiscriminate reprisals. "In every region, the community is under attack," he said.

People assume that being Alawite means "you are with the former regime, you committed crimes and fought alongside Bashar", he added. The new authorities have regularly announced security sweeps and said they are facing armed "ex-regime loyalists". The two highest-ranking former government officials arrested so far -- military official Mohammed Kanjo Hassan and Assad's cousin Atif Najib -- were apprehended in the Alawite heartland. In Jableh, black-clad security forces in balaclavas manned a checkpoint where armed men carried out an attack last month, also throwing grenades at a police dormitory, killing two people and wounding three.

Ahmed Abdel Rahman, the new security chief in Jableh, blamed the incident on "elements from the ranks of the regime or its militias". "They know that if they are brought to justice they will be judged for their crimes. They want to sow chaos," he told AFP. Interim president Ahmed

al-Sharaa said that ensuring "civil peace today is not a luxury in Syria - it is a duty for all". He warned of a "great catastrophe" if the country remains "captive to internal and sectarian disputes".

In a village in central Hama province, Ali al-Shahhoud was receiving condolences at a funeral ceremony for five people, mostly close relatives, killed in another village called Al-Anz. His eye still red and his hand bandaged, the Alawite man in his 40s said armed assailants "speaking the local dialect" had rounded up more than a dozen men. "They shot at us randomly in front of the women and children," he said, adding that Sunni Muslim neighbours took him to hospital.

The dead included his brother, 80-year-old uncle, 75-year-old father and 15-year-old son. Shahhoud's relative Rajab al-Mohammed, who also survived, denied links to Assad's military. "We have no weapons," he said. The attackers stole cattle and mobile phones to "conceal the sectarian aspect" of the murders, he charged. Former municipal official Ali al-Mohammed was at the funeral.

He said people had fled around a dozen villages in the central region, fearing random reprisals. Since December 8, the Observatory has registered more than 240 extrajudicial killings and "revenge acts" mostly targeting Alawites and former security personnel, many in Homs and Hama provinces. Homs and Hama are "multi-confessional provinces", Mohammed said as winter sun spilled into the funeral hall. "All these problems aim to put an end to coexistence -- that's the message we're getting."

Salvadorans divided on accepting US, other convicts

EL SALVADOR (AFP): Salvadorans are split over the offer from President Nayib Bukele to take in prisoners from the United States, with some fearing it could turn the country into another Guantanamo Bay while others say the proposal could reap dividends.

El Salvador's iron-fisted Bukele enjoys sky-high approval ratings for his sweeping crackdown on violent gangs, which has led to a sharp reduction in crime in what was once one of the world's most violent countries. Over 80,000 Salvadorans have been arrested since he declared a state of emergency in 2022, thousands of whom are being held at a sprawling new Terrorism Confinement Center, Latin America's biggest penitentiary, with capacity for 40,000 inmates.

Bukele stunned Salvadorans and Americans alike by offering to incarcerate US convicts and deported prisoners alike at the maximum security prison on the edge of the

jungle. Georgina Garcia, a 60-year-old stay-at-home mother, expressed alarm at the prospect.

"Bukele is trying to clean the country of evil. How then could he then bring in more criminal people? He can't!" she told AFP in a square in the capital San Salvador. Sixty-year-old former guerrilla Juan Jose Ordonez, who was running some errands nearby, also believed it would be "wrong" to accept prisoners from other countries.

"We do not need him to bring more criminals into this country...we have enough social problems," he said. Ahead of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's visit this week, Washington had touted El Salvador a possible "safe third country" for expelled migrants whose countries do not accept US deportation flights. Bukele offered to lock up convicts "of any nationality" at the facility known as CECOT, where prisoners live crammed in windowless cells, sleeping

on metal beds with no mattress, forbidden from having visitors and kept under watch 24 hours a day.

Rubio said the proposal, which was cheered by President Donald Trump even as he acknowledged questions over the legality of deporting US prisoners, covered members of El Salvador's own MS-13 gang as well as the powerful Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua. Garcia said she feared that "Colombians, Haitians, Venezuelans" and other convicts would "corrupt this society even more, just as it is starting to straighten out." But some Salvadorans said the country stood to gain from housing foreign convicts for a fee that Bukele said would be "relatively low for the US" but "significant" for his debt-ridden nation.

Newspaper vendor Juan Ascencio, 67, mused that "if there is money" in it, the scheme could be worthwhile. Others saw potential dividends for around 230,000 Salvadorans whose protection from

deportation was extended by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden in his last days in office. The Trump administration has not yet touched the status of Salvadorans while stripping 300,000 Venezuelan migrants of the same protections.

Retired army sergeant Jose Alberto Claros, 65, suggested that Bukele strike a deal with Trump to halt all deportations of Salvadorans and to "legalize our fellow citizens" in the United States. But one of El Salvador's main rights groups warned it would not stand by and watch the country become a "Guantanamo 2.0." The United States began flying detained migrants to the notorious military base in Cuba, where hundreds of terrorism suspects were held for years after the 9/11 attacks, many without formal charges. Ingrid Escobar, director of the rights group Socorro Juridico Humanitario, warned of a similar lack of due process for prisoners in El Salvador.

Schröder receives treatment after showing signs of burnout

BERLIN (AP): Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who has faced heavy criticism in recent years for his ties with Russia, is receiving treatment in a hospital after showing signs of severe burnout, German news agency dpa reported.

The 80-year-old Schröder led Germany from 1998 to 2005. He was the

leader of current Chancellor Olaf Scholz's center-left Social Democratic Party from 1999 to 2004. But his involvement with Russian state-owned energy companies and his reluctance after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine to distance himself wholeheartedly from Russian President Vladimir Putin, with whom he has long had

a friendly relationship, estranged him from the German political establishment.

Dpa cited a doctor's assessment that Schröder is "suffering from severe burnout syndrome with the typical signs of profound exhaustion and a pronounced lack of energy," coupled with "concentration and memory difficulties as

well as sleep problems." It reported that Schröder's lawyer, Hans-Peter Huber, confirmed he had gone into clinical treatment on the advice of the doctor.

The World Health Organization describes burnout as "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."

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Chinese action leaves players cautious

AS China and the US battle over tariffs, locked in a tussle that could result in a deal or a trade war between the world's two largest economies, staying away from China's stock market is becoming the default option for foreign investors. The Chinese stock market, already reeling from investor worries over where the economy is headed and disappointment at Beijing's effort to stimulate growth, returned from a week-long break with a muted reaction to the trade dispute, this was reported by Reuters.

While the 10% US tariffs imposed on Tuesday fell far short of President Donald Trump's campaign threats, and China's tit-for-tat measures were seen as modest, analysts said the subdued market fall suggested investors might be taking a more measured response to trade war fears than in Trump's first term in office, the news agency added.

Conflicting reports on Wednesday over whether and when Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping would talk and a sudden halt on the US accepting postal packages from China - which blindsided e-commerce stocks - highlighted the pitfalls investors want to avoid.

"I will take the more safe approach right now and not fight the tariffs," said Francis Tan, chief strategist for Asia at CA-Indosuez, who is advising his clients to rotate into bonds as they provide a good buffer to hedge against downside in the equities. "The level of uncertainty has increased because, while they are showing their hands, no one knows if the actual trade war game has begun or when it will come."

Global investors were already wary about China's growth prospects due to concerns over its protracted property crisis, deflationary pressures and the lack of follow-through on Beijing's promises of stimulus. In the past three months, foreign investors have pulled nearly \$12 billion from China-focused funds, according to LSEG Lipper data, all but reversing October's inflow of \$13 billion, Reuters added. The lumpy flows point to profit-taking and a lack of sticky capital that is going to keep flowing to China for the long-run.

"I think that a lot of people say that China's waiting for Trump and they're going to have all this kind of stimulus to roll out. I don't really believe that," said Sat Duhra, portfolio manager for Asian dividend income at Janus Henderson. "We don't really want to add anything to China because we seem to have got it okay at this point... adding anything else should probably present a lot more risk."

Relatively muted price moves also point to a market braced for trade conflict and unwilling to gamble on the outcome, which analysts say is going to be more complicated to sort out than Trump's deals with Mexico and Canada. Even the yuan currency, which many expect to weaken if Beijing wants to offset US tariffs, fell back only a little on Wednesday as authorities pushed its trading band a little stronger in a signal they intend to keep it stable, for now.

Mainland blue-chip stocks fell 0.6% on Monday for a 3.6% drop over the year to date, against a 3% rise for global stocks.

A bounce in Hong Kong's Hang Seng index this week, with speculative gains for tariff-targets such as Chinese electric vehicle stocks also lacked momentum or much volume.

"It's just short-term trading... people need to be short-term oriented," said Steven Leung, who handles institutional clients at stockbroker UOB Kay Hian in Hong Kong. To be sure, some investors say Chinese markets are still relatively cheap - with a forward price-to-earnings ratio around 11 for the Shanghai Composite compared with 22 for the S&P 500 - and that opportunities abound for stock picking. Few, though, want to risk getting caught up in tariffs or have much inclination to trade the headlines. "We have very little exposure to any companies caught up in the tariff spat and as such will not be adjusting our portfolio," said Rob Brewis at UK-based Aubrey Capital Management.

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It is time to move the UN and international law out of the West

THE exceptional immunity that Israel has enjoyed for decades has placed international law and its institutions at a knife's edge. Israel has killed UN workers, banned UNRWA, barred UN representatives from entry, and repeatedly insulted the UN and its officials.

Successive Israeli governments and their allies have also used all means possible to exert pressure on the International Criminal Court (ICC) not to investigate Israeli crimes - from direct threats of physical violence to sanctions and defamation. Attacks on the court have only intensified after it issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant.

US President Donald Trump - an avid Israel supporter - has already signed an executive order reintroducing sanctions on ICC staff members. This is on top of other decisions he has made - including the US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization - that constitute a direct assault on international multilateralism. On Tuesday, the US president flaunted his complete disregard for international law by declaring his intention to "take over" Gaza and "own it".

All of these developments raise questions about whether the current global system led by the UN is beyond salvation.

Despite being created to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" in 1945, the UN has largely failed to prevent and stop conflicts for decades. Its creation ushered in an

era of "peace for some" - peace for economically advanced states who engage in proxy wars in previously colonised states. So, do we give up on the idea of an international legal order altogether?

As we face the imminent danger of climate change and the rapid escalation of militarisation, it is clear that we do need a system which unites people under the ideal of justice. An international legal order that does not favour the powerful has already been proposed by various thinkers.

For example, prominent Chilean legal scholar Alejandro Alvarez proposed a "new international law" some 70 years ago. During his tenure (1946-1955) as a judge at the International Court of Justice, he argued that the European legal tradition, on which much of international law was based on, was inadequate to address legal questions in places like the Americas.

In a series of dissenting opinions in cases he deliberated on, Alvarez called for a "new international law" which accommodated the particular historical moment of the decolonisation across the world and reflected the interests and positions of decolonised states.

There was a clear attempt at that time by states of the Global South to claim international law to its benefit. Nevertheless, economically advanced states used their influence to eradicate such attempts.

We are now at a historic juncture where these efforts must be renewed if the idea of an international legal order is to survive. Action on Palestine can be the driver, as the genocide in Gaza

is emblematic of larger patterns of domination and exploitation which define the current world system.

Already there are efforts by Global South states to exclude Israel from the United Nations. A petition signed by 500 legal scholars has also called on the UN General Assembly to unseat Israel in order to preserve its legitimacy.

In response, the US Congress sent a letter to the UN Secretary Antonio Guterres threatening to withdraw US funding if such a vote were to go ahead. While the power of the US lobby at the UN is no secret, a public threat to withdraw funds from the UN if it carries out its normal functions, is a form of economic coercion that publicly undermines the authority of the institution and the premises of international law.

If the US decides to cut funding to all of the UN, then there is a clear response - move the UN outside of the US and fortress Europe to somewhere in the Global South. Relocating the UN Headquarters out of New York would drastically cut costs, promote Global South support for it, and enable its stronger participation. It would do away with the dilemma of an international legal institution headquartered in a state that has proven to be the most consistent perpetrator of the crimes that the institution was created to prevent.

On an institutional level, history clearly demonstrates the need to abolish institutional structures that enshrine imperial power, such as the UN Security Council, the International

Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Calls for the abolition of these institutions were spearheaded by leading figures of the decolonisation movement like Thomas Sankara and Amilcar Cabral. As platforms for Global South voices, the UN General Assembly and the International Court of Justice must be endowed with more power - this point was repeatedly asserted by the Algerian Judge Mohammad Bedjaoui. Further, this can be a moment of rapid international law-making which builds on the historical efforts to create a new international legal order. Pacific islands are already challenging the limitations of international law by asking the ICJ to role on state responsibility towards climate change.

Progressive International, a coalition of progressive organisations from around the world, has recently sought to revive some past efforts by launching a project to develop a framework for a new international economic order. There is power in the unity of voices, and people of the Global South are united in their experience of economic and physical domination and subjugation. For such change to happen, the political tides need to align - even if only for a brief moment.

The current moment of genocide, neocolonialism, climate crisis and sickening impunity imposes on us the duty to reimagine the status quo. Cynicism is something we cannot afford. We need to start laying down the foundation of a new international legal system that finds virtue in justice rather than power.

Towards a Trump Tower in Gaza?

Belén Fernández

WHEN Donald Trump resumed the presidency of the United States of America in January, eternal New York Times foreign affairs columnist and Orientalist extraordinaire Thomas Friedman took to the pages of the US newspaper of record with some advice: "President Trump, You Can Remake the Middle East if You Dare."

And while punitive imperial makeovers have long been US policy in said region, Trump has now taken Friedman's challenge and run with it to a whole new level, announcing on Tuesday that the US would "take over" and "own" the Gaza Strip, where Israel's genocide has officially killed nearly 62,000 Palestinians since October 2023 - although the true death toll is undoubtedly far higher. Most of the enclave has been reduced to rubble.

No matter that Trump appears to be unclear as to where on the global map the Gaza Strip even is, as evidenced by his recent ludicrously misguided claim that the US was sending tens of thousands of dollars "to Gaza to buy condoms for Hamas".

Speaking at the White House after meeting with visiting genocidaire-in-chief, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump declared: "The US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it, too. We'll own it."

According to Trump, this "long-term ownership position" over the razed

coastal enclave would basically entail forcibly displacing the bulk of the resident Palestinian population to "other countries of interest with humanitarian hearts", such that Gaza might be transformed into the "Riviera of the Middle East".

Lest anyone question the prospect of the US illegally appropriating a territory 10,000 kilometres (6,214 miles away), Trump assured his audience: "Everybody I've spoken to loves the idea of the United States owning that piece of land, developing and creating thousands of jobs with something that will be magnificent." Anyway, who said ethnic cleansing was n't magnificent?

And if there are folks who think otherwise, well, Trump has not discarded the possibility of deploying the US military to rectify the situation: "As far as Gaza is concerned, we'll do what is necessary. If it's necessary, we'll do that."

Of course, it's not particularly shocking that a billionaire former real estate tycoon - overlord of the iconic Trump Tower in New York City - might detect lucrative business opportunities in a picturesque Mediterranean seaside territory that has conveniently just been flattened by the Israeli army with dedicated assistance from Trump's predecessor Joe Biden.

Perhaps Gaza City might one day host its very own Trump Tower?

In the meantime, Trump's tyrannical

approach to the Gaza Strip is of a piece with the barbaric egotism he has extended to many other parts of the world, as well. In addition to taking it upon himself to rename the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America", Trump has also threatened to seize the Panama Canal and to annex Canada and Greenland, using military force if necessary.

This is not to say, obviously, that Biden and his fellow Democrats have not pursued their own monstrous policies - such as, you know, aiding and abetting Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip.

But Trump's proposed land grab in Gaza is an especially egregious manifestation of Orientalist psychosis, an exercise in redrawing the map of the Middle East by spontaneous fiat. The displacement of Palestinians to make room for the impending "Riviera of the Middle East" would seem to simply be a continuation of genocidal behaviour - at least as per the Genocide Convention's definition of genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group". Though emptying Gaza of its Palestinian inhabitants would constitute comprehensive destruction on pretty much all the aforementioned grounds, Trump has determined that "the potential in the Gaza Strip is unbelievable" - as long, naturally, as the Palestinians don't return: "I don't think peo-

ple should be going back to Gaza ... I heard that Gaza has been very unlucky for them. They live like hell. They live like they're living in hell."

And yet one easy way to resolve the hellish situation would have been to refrain from creating it in the first place. Even before the onset of all-out genocide in October 2023, the US spent decades facilitating Israel's regular bouts of mass slaughter, terrorism, and general oppression in Gaza. Now, Trump has reversed Biden's superficial moratorium on the delivery of certain heavy bombs to Israel, which won't do much in terms of alleviating "hell".

Leave it to US imperialism, of course, to provide a handy non-solution to a problem it helped spawn - and to Donald Trump to provide the quickest-ever remedy to an intractable crisis that has occupied the better part of a century. As an added benefit, the hubbub over Trump's proposed conquest of the Gaza Strip distracts from current serious problems in the US itself, including the country's unabashed conquest by super-sketchy billionaires. Trump has proclaimed that he would like to "just clean out" Gaza, a mission whose charmingly fascist ring is music to the ears of Netanyahu and his ilk. And as Trump undertakes to remake the world map in one fell swoop - thus "bringing great stability to that part of the Middle East, and maybe the entire Middle East" - we should have expected nothing less from the self-defined "very stable genius".

Don't be a Luddite, embrace artificial intelligence

Ross Anderson

THE 20th-century British science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke famously observed that any sufficiently advanced technology was indistinguishable from magic.

Clarke spent much of his life foretelling, with unerring accuracy, the nature of the world in which we now live. In 1945, for example, he proposed a system of satellites in geostationary orbits ringing the Earth, upon which we now rely for communication and navigation. In 1964, he suggested that the workers of the future "will not commute ... they will communicate." Sound familiar? And again in 1964, Clarke predicted that, in the world of the future, "the most intelligent inhabitants ... won't be men or monkeys, they'll be machines, the remote descendants of today's computers. Now, the present-day electronic brains are complete morons. But this will not be true in another generation. They will start to think, and eventually they will completely outthink their makers."

It is the accuracy of that last prediction - what Clarke called "machine learning," now usually referred to as artificial intelligence - that most exercises those who feel threatened by it. It would be fair to say that AI, or more accurately the exponential speed at which it is acquiring new and innovative capabilities, is not being universally welcomed.

There are two main areas of concern, the first of which may be summarized as: "AI will eventually kill us all." This may seem far-fetched, but the thought process that leads to the doomsday conclusion is not without logic. Broadly, it is that a superior intelligence must eventually reach the inevitable conclusion that humanity is an inferior species, destroying the planet on which it relies for its very existence, and should therefore be eliminated for the protection of everything else. Elon Musk worked this out a long time ago. Why do you think he wants to go to Mars?

Fortunately, humanity is not reliant on Musk for its survival: for that we must thank another great exponent of the science fiction genre, Isaac Asimov. In 1942, he formulated the Three Laws of Robotics, which broadly regulate the relationship between us and machines, and in 1986 he added another law to precede the first three. It states: "A robot may not injure humanity or, through inaction, allow humanity to come to harm."

Asimov's laws apply to fictional machines, of course, but they still influence the ethics that underpin the creation and programming of all artificial intelligence. So, on the whole, I think we are safe.

The second area of concern may be broadly summarized as: "AI is coming for all our jobs." While this one may have more traction, it is not a new fear and it predates AI by centuries.

It is not difficult to imagine the inventor of the wheel, showing off his creation but being greeted with skepticism by his Neolithic friends: "No good will come of this. Our legs will become redundant, and those of future generations will wither away and die. This contraption must be destroyed."

Before the first Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, most people in Europe and North America lived in agrarian communities and worked by hand.

The advent of the water mill and the steam engine threw many out of work, as traditional crafts such as spinning and weaving cotton became redundant. However, jobs that had not previously existed were created for boiler makers, ironsmiths and mechanics.

It happened again in the late 19th century, when steam power was

superseded by electricity and steam mechanics retrained to become electricians. And again in the 1980s, with the advent of the computer age and the end of repetitive manual tasks, but the creation of new jobs for hardware and software engineers.

Will AI have the same net beneficial effect? There is evidence that it already is. In the UK last week, health chiefs began screening 700,000 women for signs of breast cancer, using AI that can detect changes in breast tissue in a mammogram that even an expert radiologist would miss. In addition, the technology allows screening with only one human specialist instead of the usual two, releasing hundreds of radiologists for other vital work. This AI will save lives.

However, when one door opens, another closes. Also last week, the Authors Guild, the US body that represents writers, created a logo for books to show readers that a work "emanates from human intellect" and not from artificial intelligence.

You can understand their angst. Large language models, the version of AI that is the authors' target, create the databases from which they produce content by scraping online sources for every word ever published, mostly without the formality of bothering to pay the original author. Many journalists have the same complaint. Some major media outlets - including the Associated Press, Axel Springer, the Financial Times, News Corp and The Atlantic - have reached licensing agreements with AI creators. Others, notably The New York Times, have gone down the lawsuit route for breach of copyright.

Perhaps, especially for authors, this is a can of worms best left unopened. It used to be said that a monkey sitting at a keyboard typing at random for an infinite amount of time would eventually produce the complete works of Shakespeare. Mathematicians dispute this, but there is no disputing that AI has made it more likely.

For example, if you were to ask a large language model such as ChatGPT to write a 27,000-word story in the style of Ernest Hemingway about an elderly fisherman and his long struggle to catch a giant marlin, it would almost certainly come up with "The Old Man and the Sea" - especially since the original is already in the AI's database.

Authors argue that the AI work would have no merit, since it merely copies words and phrases that have already been used by another writer. But does that argument not apply to every new literary work? With the exception of Shakespeare, who coined about 1,700 written neologisms - from "accommodation" to "suspicious" - among a total of about 20,000 words in his plays and poems, almost every writer uses words and phrases that have been used by others before them: any literary or artistic merit derives from how a writer deploys those words and phrases.

But if a book needs a special logo to distinguish a human author from an AI, what is the point in making the distinction?

In England in the early 19th century, gangs of men called Luddites - after Ned Ludd, a weaver who lost his traditional manual job to mechanization - roamed towns and cities, smashing the new machines in the textile industry that they believed were depriving them of employment.

They initially enjoyed widespread support, but this melted away when it became clear that the age of steam was creating more jobs than it destroyed. Let that be a lesson for the anti-AI Luddites of the 21st century.

Trump’s power grabs will go on until someone stops him – and that’s not happening soon

A month into Donald Trump’s first term, the president’s then-political sage Steve Bannon coined a doctrine to explain the conservative wrecking ball now demolishing the US government: “the deconstruction of the administrative state.”

It took eight years, but the theory is becoming reality, and could portend a fateful reshaping of American governance under a mighty presidency that was never envisaged by the founders.

Trump and his merchant of chaos Elon Musk are pummeling federal agencies, targeting bureaucrats, clawing back spending approved by Congress, buckling the world order and busting trade pacts.

They are following a playbook developed by movement hardliners, dismayed at the missteps and lost focus of Trump’s first term, who are determined to use a potentially short window on power to forge irrevocable change.

Once again, Trump is raising questions at a velocity that leaves other branches of government, his opponents and voters struggling to grasp what’s happening and unable to resist.

Five key questions or trends are emerging that will help to define his second term.

Is growing outrage and fear justified? To what extent are the shocks rattling Washington simply the signs of a hyper-committed new administration implementing a mandate to transform how the country is run and who runs it?

Or, are Trump’s tactics becoming an all-out assault on the Constitution from a president who believes he has unlimited authority and who mocks checks and balances meant to ensure commanders in chief are not kings?

Musk, wielding vast, mostly invisible power, working deep beneath the hood of the federal government, is especially problematic. He’s not elected or confirmed by Congress and seems accountable to nobody — perhaps not even Trump.

And there are multiple and growing signs that institutions like the FBI, CIA, DOJ and federal agencies that Americans have relied upon to deliver justice and keep them safe, prosperous and healthy are now mere tools of Trump’s whims.

Who is going to stop

any of this? After last fall’s widespread defeat, Democrats are toothless. Republicans who run Congress have neutered their own branch of government to appease an all-powerful president. Court cases are coming but can’t keep up with Trump.

The scope of the Trump power play is staggering. And it’s possible much more is happening behind the scenes that the public can’t see.

Musk, the world’s richest man, is boasting that he put USAID — an agency that feeds some of the world’s poorest, most desperate people and has saved millions of lives — “in the wood chipper.” USAID employees have been ordered home from overseas. The Tesla chief and his whizz kid crash teams are roaming inside the federal nervous system with the capacity to access sensitive Treasury payment systems and are seemingly able to force out top managers and shut out employees.

The White House halted the work of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which is tasked with shielding consumers from financial abuses. Trump has made clear he wants his incoming Education Secretary Linda McMahon to orchestrate her own department’s demise. The administration has offered many federal workers a ‘buyout,’ and CNN reported the government plans to dismiss large numbers who don’t take the offer by a Thursday deadline.

As part of a supposed quest to de-weaponize the Justice Department and FBI, the bureau has handed over to Trump aides information on 5,000 employees who worked on January 6, 2021, cases. Trump told his new Attorney General Pamela Bondi he wants “impartiality” on Wednesday — in a scene in the Oval Office that left no doubt that his definition of the word required complete adherence to his point of view. Trump’s chosen FBI enforcer Kash Patel hasn’t even arrived yet, but he appears likely to be confirmed by the Senate as the retribution agenda gathers pace.

Millions of Americans voted for a candidate who argued that the federal government was not responding to their needs — after a grueling chapter of history marked by financial crises, the hollowing out of the manufacturing base, foreign wars and punishingly

Stephen Collinson

high inflation. Trump’s aides dismiss a tide of panic and condemnation about his lightning-fast start to his second term. They argue he’s doing exactly what Americans wanted.

“President Trump was elected with a mandate from the American people to make this government more efficient,” White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Wednesday. He campaigned across this country with Elon Musk, vowing that the tech billionaire was going to head up the Department of Government Efficiency, and that the two of them, with a great team around them, were going to look at the receipts of this federal government and ensure it’s accountable to taxpayers.

“That’s all that is happening here,” Leavitt said.

Trump’s brazen approach, however, seems to go much further than Leavitt’s characterization. And he doesn’t get much benefit of the doubt as a twice-impeached president who tried to wreck democracy to stay in power in 2021.

And many constitutional experts are worried that Trump, and Musk especially, are simply creating authority for themselves that does not exist.

“The danger in what Musk is doing is that he is openly defying the United States Constitution. Under that document, Congress has the power of the purse, and the executive is charged with spending money allocated by that body,” said Corey Brettschneider, author of “The Presidents and the People: Five Leaders who Threatened Democracy and the Citizens who Fought to Defend it.”

“But Musk is simply determining himself, with Trump’s encouragement, what money should be allocated or not. This is not just likely defying the court orders pausing the attempted freeze by the executive. It is an open defiance of Congress’ legitimate power.”

From his first moments back in office, Trump has challenged the limits of presidential power that prevailed for decades. With a sweep of his pen, he sought to outlaw birthright citizenship despite the plain language of the Constitution making clear it’s a quintessential American right. (A second federal judge

on Wednesday blocked his executive order, which will likely be appealed.)

But that Trump Day One order was just one example of him claiming massive authority that he probably does not possess. And it hints at the threat that his unfettered governance poses in the long term. If every president came to office and simply overwrote or ignored the tapestry of two-and-a-half centuries of laws, Americans would not — in the words of Trump on January 6, 2021 — “have a country anymore.” Presidents can work with Congress to pass new laws, or to campaign for federal lawmakers and the states to amend the Constitution on issues like birthright citizenship — but they can’t just ignore the statutes and write new laws they like.

This critical moment in history is a perfect storm uniting a president with a highly expansive view of executive power and a movement of conservative operatives, officials and scholars who have long promoted a vision of the presidency with almost no limits.

Trump often denied that he had read or knew anything about Project 2025, the blueprint for a Republican transition and presidency shepherd by the Heritage Foundation. But his belligerent use of power early in his second term closely follows many of the recommendations in the plan.

In a section of Project 2025 covering the presidency, Russ Vought, who is on the verge of being confirmed to run Trump’s budget office, argued it was time to wrest back the “enormous power” of the presidency from departments or agencies, staff or administrative bodies and non-governmental organizations close to the government.

Vought’s case rests on the premise that unelected bureaucrats inside the permanent civil service frustrate a GOP president’s agenda, as many conservatives believe happened in his first term. And it explains exactly what Trump is doing.

Vought wrote that power must rest with the president’s political team — and, by implication, advisers like Musk. “It is the president’s chosen advisers who have the best sense of the President’s aims and intentions, both with respect to the policies he intends to enact and with

respect to the interests that must be secured to govern successfully on behalf of the American people,” Vought wrote.

Some observers have framed the shock-and-awe start of Trump’s return to power as a deliberate strategy to overwhelm the circuits of his opponents and to make it impossible to comprehend the scale of his ambition.

It’s working. Especially since Democrats, in the minority in both chambers of Congress, can at best only delay the administration’s forward march. And Republicans seem ready to cave to anything Trump wants.

House GOP Speaker Mike Johnson on Wednesday rejected the idea that Musk and Trump were infringing Congress’ power to decide spending. “We see this as an active, engaged, committed executive branch authority doing what the executive branch should do,” he said. “This is not a usurpation of authority in any way. It’s not a power grab.”

But Trump’s intentions run deeper than bewildering Congress and the media. They are also outracing the courts. Tom Dupree, a former deputy assistant attorney general, paraphrased the strategy this way to CNN’s Jake Tapper: “We are going to do whatever we want and we will see if the courts stop us.”

It is already inevitable the administration will face multiple lawsuits all the way up to the Supreme Court over its stunningly broad interpretation of executive authority. Even if Trump succeeds in winning only a fraction of the cases before the conservative majority he built, he will bolster the office of the presidency. And in the interim, he will have transformed the government.

“Is this a kind of coup?” asked Brettschneider. “We are seeing in real-time how the fundamental constitutional requirements can be evaded given the vast power of the executive. That might not be a violent collapse of the system but it does resemble the demise of the rule of law we see in authoritarian countries.”

Bannon, who charts the mayhem during hours of daily podcasts, has a new buzz phrase to describe it: “Days of Thunder.”

— CNN

The world’s energy choices are directly impacting our health

Peter Harrison

The UAE has recently pushed employers to allow, and even encourage, their employees to work from home for at least part of the week — a move that will inevitably reduce the number of vehicles on the roads and, in turn, the amount of pollution in the air.

There are many things that need improving, but Saudi Arabia has pledged that, by 2030, 30 percent of all vehicles on Riyadh’s roads will be electric.

In the UAE, there are plans to create a national network of charging facilities and, in Dubai, free parking for EVs, as well as free Salik (road toll) tags and other incentives.

The Gulf region is clearly aware that it has some way to go to reduce the pollution in its air, but with such policies governments can surely make a significant difference to the health

of their nations.

That is not to say EVs are completely pollution-free: the creation of various components pose risks to the environment. But they are significantly less harmful overall, according to the Transport and Environment website, which states: “In the worst-case scenario, an electric car with a battery produced in China and driven in Poland still emits 37 percent less carbon dioxide than petrol. And in the best-case scenario, an electric car with a battery produced in Sweden and driven in Sweden can emit 83 percent less than petrol.”

It is quite clear that, if the world’s industries continue to burn fossil fuels, then the health of the world will not improve and, in the case of those who have never smoked, potentially get worse.

And do not be fooled into thinking that you are less at risk of developing cancer if you live in a wealthy country. According to the World Cancer Research Fund, richer developed nations have higher rates of cancer per head of population than

poorer countries. And it should be noted that richer countries are also the biggest polluters.

Admittedly, the survival rate is greater in richer, more developed countries, but would it not be better if the world did something to reduce the risks altogether?

It seems clear that getting people out of their fossil fuel-thirsty vehicles would go a long way to reducing the number of people impacted by lung cancer and other health complaints.

Surely it is time to put the survival of the planet and its occupants ahead of profits. If that means rethinking the way we run our economies, then so be it — a healthy person is less costly to society than someone in need of cancer treatment. The World Bank estimates that the cost of health damage caused by air pollution to be \$8.1 trillion a year.

During Donald Trump’s inauguration last month, he said that he would once again sign an executive order taking the US out of the Paris Agreement on climate change, which seeks to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases globally. He pledged to ramp up the US’ use of fossil fuels — with the jubilant rabble-rouser, “drill, baby, drill.” So, while many countries turn toward greener energy sources such as wind, tidal and solar, the US will rely on the fuels that do the most harm. In another executive order, Trump said he was eliminating what he claimed was the US’ “electric vehicle mandate” — for the record, there has never been a federal mandate to prevent Americans buying petrol-powered cars, despite his claim to the contrary. Ironically, the last time the US pulled out of the Paris Agreement, it weakened America’s stance on all things climate-related and empowered China, which pushed ahead with its efforts and met its 2030 renewables targets six years early.

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If left solely to those in positions of power, we will see some change for the better in some parts of the world. But we as consumers can also make a difference through the choices we make. We can buy more fuel-efficient vehicles, turn electrical devices off when we are not using them and use lightbulbs that consume less power (for example, LEDs use up to 90 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs).

Even small things contribute to reducing the amount of power we use and, in turn, the amount of pollution produced.

You might not think it is worth the effort, since the changes will barely be noticeable in the immediate future. But if not for us, then why not for our children or our children’s children?

And consider this: during the COVID-19 pandemic, when much of the world was in lockdown, the air was cleaner — the world was literally breathing more easily as the level of pollutants that directly impact our health dropped significantly.

DeSantis appears to be winning the war on social media

WITH an open presidential primary coming in 2028, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is launching an offensive to win back supporters of the Republican leader whom he dared to challenge in the last election. And he’s doing so by latching onto President Donald Trump’s most prominent issue — immigration. The problem for DeSantis is his own state’s Republicans think they know Trump better. DeSantis last week ordered lawmakers into a special legislative session to pass a raft of border-related proposals he floated, including criminal charges for officers if they didn’t enforce immigration measures and restrictions on people who send money to families outside the US.

Within minutes of the session convening, legislators tossed out the governor’s proposals and called their own special session. They ignored many of his requests and presented their own bill that cedes much of DeSantis’ power on immigration enforcement to the state’s agriculture commissioner. Lawmakers titled it the Tackling and Reforming Unlawful Migration Policy, or TRUMP, Act. The battle has exposed the term-limited governor’s struggles to regain the power he lost in his first White House run as he prepares for a potential second try.

Having led Florida’s

transformation from a perennial swing state to one that votes solidly Republican, DeSantis is betting on his feel for his state’s voters, who delivered a second term by a huge 19-point margin. But he has struggled to capture the unstoppable aura he had before he went against Trump — and his relative lack of relationships with lawmakers hasn’t helped.

“This is a relationship business,” Republican political consultant Jamie Miller said. “And he is not good at the relationship side.”

DeSantis’ office did not respond to a request for comment. Back in 2023, when DeSantis braved the frigid Iowa winter to run for president — and brought some loyal legislators to campaign for him — he sold himself to voters as a brash, bold executive, a more effective version of Trump. And he could point to the results, thanks to the Florida legislature.

For six years, DeSantis kept lawmakers in line with his veto pen. But as DeSantis’ chances faded on his way to a blowout loss in the Iowa caucuses, the presidential sheen wore off. In a sign DeSantis was not proving a threat to Trump, the Republican Party of Florida voted in September 2023 not to require participants in the state’s 2024 presidential primary to pledge to support the eventual nominee, which ensured Trump would not have to pledge support to DeSantis when

the two were locked in a bitter campaign.

DeSantis would never gain the national traction his campaign had set out to demonstrate, and would be out of the race within a

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week of the leadoff Iowa caucuses. Despite a year of Trump’s taunts, they reached a public rapprochement last May, when DeSantis agreed to convene his top donors to raise money for Trump. “Ron, I love that you’re back,” Trump said during a conference call to the donors as they gathered at a Fort Lauderdale hotel, raising \$3 million in a day for Trump’s campaign.

By December, DeSantis had worked his way into the discussion for Trump’s defence secretary when

Pete Hegseth encountered public resistance. Hegseth was ultimately confirmed. DeSantis has never been comfortable with the

other properties. And now the governor’s attitude is costing him, some capitol watchers say.

Last month, when

DeSantis announced he was calling lawmakers into special session, House Speaker Daniel Perez told The Associated Press the legislature was “blindsided.” “I called him immediately,” Perez said. “He didn’t answer. He didn’t call me back.” State Sen. Randy Fine is a former ally of the governor who later endorsed Trump in the 2024 primary.

DeSantis announced he was calling lawmakers into special session, House Speaker Daniel Perez told The Associated Press the legislature was “blindsided.” “I called him immediately,” Perez said. “He didn’t answer. He didn’t call me back.” State Sen. Randy Fine is a former ally of the governor who later endorsed Trump in the 2024 primary. The president returned the favour after his victory by endorsing Fine in a Republican primary for

Gomez Licon

the US House seat previously held by Mike Waltz, who was picked to be national security adviser. Last week, Fine won the contest with more than 80% of the vote and is on

track to win the seat in April, despite not living in the district he hopes to represent.

Fine compared his reward to the treatment of lawmakers who were loyal to DeSantis — and are now being attacked as “Republicans in name only.”

“I was loyal. I’m going to Congress. They were loyal. They get called RINOs who want amnesty,” Fine said. “There are female members of the Legislature who went to Iowa a year

ago and walked through the snow to help him and got frostbite. And now a year later they’re RINOs who want amnesty? I think it’s hard to describe the sense of betrayal.”

Both sides of the argument over Florida’s immigration battle say they are best capturing Trump’s desires.

The governor said the legislature’s measure is a “betrayal” of conservative voters and naming it after the president is a “misnomer.”

“President Trump has been very strong coming out of the gate on immigration enforcement. He wants to solve this problem once and for all. The bill they did is more window dressing,” DeSantis said in a video he posted on X.

Transferring his power to the agriculture commissioner, he said, would be like putting the “fox in charge of the hen house,” implying farmers want to continue to hire immigrants who are in the country illegally.

But legislators say they have Trump’s blessing. The bill sponsor, the Florida House speaker and the state senator expected to be sent to Congress visited the White House on Monday to celebrate NHL’s defending Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers. “The whole goal of this bill is to help President Trump do his job,” said Republican state Sen. Joe Gruters, a bill sponsor and Trump ally. He said Stephen Miller, a senior adviser to the presi-

dent and immigration hard-liner, gave lawmakers “technical guidance” and they made changes to the bill “to make sure we’re doing everything that the president’s team wants.”

DeSantis has picked up some support along the way. U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds, a key Trump ally who might run to replace the term-limited DeSantis next year, said his own relationship with the governor “got frayed” when Donalds backed Trump two years ago. But last week, Donalds said in a podcast the governor was “correct” that he needed to have enforcement powers over immigration.

Kevin Roberts, the president of the Heritage Foundation, chimed in on social media to highlight DeSantis’ proposals. The think tank Roberts leads drafted Project 2025, the blueprint for a hard-right turn in American government and society that has inspired a number of Trump actions.

“Now is not the time for watered-down proposals,” Roberts posted on X, giving DeSantis a “bravo.” Neither the president nor the White House has publicly expressed an opinion. The White House did not respond to a request for comment for this story. For now, DeSantis appears to be winning the war on social media and conservative airwaves, said Miller, the political consultant. “But we all know that that microphone can be taken away with one tweet,” he said.



Joint advisory committee to be reactivated

— to address taxpayers’ problems

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In order to address taxpayers’ grievances and problems, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar, Federal Board of Revenue decided to reactivate the joint advisory committee.

The decision came during a joint meeting of SCCI Standing Committees on Income Tax and IRS held at the chamber house.

According to details, the joint advisory committee will form a mechanism to address the taxpayers’ grievances and problems and provide facilitation at every level.

The chamber president Fazal Moqem Khan especially participated in the meeting.

SCCI standing Committee on Income Tax chairman and former president Haji Muhammad Asif and Chairman Standing Committee on IRS and former president Zahidullah Shinwari, former presidents Fuad Ishaq, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former SVP Imran Khan Mohmand, former VP

Haris Mufti, members of the executive committee Mujeeb Rehman, Aftab Iqbal, Junaid Altaf, Sajjad Zaheer, Ashfaq Ahmad, Sabir Ahmad Bangash, Sultan Muhammad and Chartered Accountant Muhammad Ahmad Shahid, and Atif Rasheed Khawaja, Mazarul Haq, Fazal Wahid, Ishtiaq Paracha, Faiz Rasool, Qurtul Ain, Khalil Gul Pakhtunyar, Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan, and members of business community were present on the occasion.

The meeting was also attended by Commissioner Inland Revenue, RTO Peshawar Dr Syed Farooq Jamil, Commissioner Corporate, RTO Peshawar Muhammad Jamal Khan, Additional Commissioner RTO Peshawar Ayesha Dilshad and Deputy Commissioner RTO Peshawar Yasir Nabi.

Fazal Moqem in his opening remarks stressed the need of strengthening liaison and coordination between SCCI and RTO Peshawar and holding frequent meetings between them to address genuine grievances and problems of

taxpayers.

The SCCI chief welcomed the decision to reactivate the Advisory Committee and expressed hope that such initiatives would play a vital role in resolving issues, which are being faced by the taxpayers.

Taxpayers are playing an important role in the economic development of the country, which should be facilitated under a one window operation, Moqem asserted.

Earlier, the committees’ chairmen Haji Muhammad Asif and Zahidullah Shinwari enlightened the meeting about taxpayers’ grievances and problems and gave suggestions to revive the joint advisory committee between SCCI and RTO Peshawar. They called for friendly relations between taxpayers and tax collectors.

Heads of the committees also briefed the meeting regarding taxpayers’ grievances, mostly relating to tax collecting officers’ unfriendly attitude with taxpayers, harsh/illegal assessment, issuance of unwarranted notices, freezing of bank accounts, discrepancies/flaws and complications in tax laws, and delay in issuance of refund payments and others problems.

Zahidullah Shinwari called for abolishment of section 114, 236-4, SRO-350, Section 8-B, SRO-55 and removal of irritants/discrepancies and flaws to taxpayers at policy level.

Later, the senior RTO officer responding to various queries of the participants said taxpayers are an important and honourable segment, without their support, the economy cannot have flourished.

Dr Farooq Jamil said FBR has always attempted to form policies in consultation with chambers and relevant stakeholders.

He, however, said minor delays and drawbacks in individual cases would be addressed with joint efforts and initiatives.

Senior officer agreed with the proposal of restoration of the joint advisory committee and gave full assurance to whatever issues that had been highlighted during the meeting would be addressed on priority basis.



PESHAWAR: SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan presenting a shield to Commissioner Inland Revenue RTO Peshawar Dr. Syed Farooq Jamil at Chamber’s House.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Seven ships, Maersk Cairo, Leo, CMA CGM Dolphin, Maria, Nakhla Silver, Al-Areesh and DL-Pansy scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice, Palm oil, LNG and Coal, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Power Gas Port Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively during last 24 hours.

Meanwhile another ship ‘ONE Reassurance’ carrying Container is also arrived at outer anchorage on Thursday.

Thirteen ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Maersk Cairo, CMA CGM Dolphin, Leo and CL Digin He left the port on Thursday, while two more ships, NCC Sama and Alaa are expected to sail.

Cargo volume of 161,432 tonnes, comprising 121,431 tonnes imports cargo and 40,001 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,814 Containers (1,448 TEUs Imports & 1,366 TEUs Exports) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Thirteen ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, EVA Diamond, Kyra Zafria, Eva Reasuarnee, Nagoya X-Press and GFS Ruby & two more ships, SSL Brahmaputra and Bolan carrying Chemicals, Coal, Container and Mogas are expected to take berths at EVTL, PIBT, QICT and FOTCO are respectively.

TAI targets \$450m in exports

ANTALYA, Türkiye (APP): After racking up \$400 million in exports last year, the engines subsidiary of Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) is aiming this year for \$450 million, the subsidiary’s CEO Mahmut Faruk Aksit told Anadolu.

At the Global Strategies in Defense and Aerospace Industry Conference held in the Turkish Riviera city of Antalya, Aksit said Tusa Engine Industries’ (TEI) most significant progress last year was the development of the domestic turbopfan TEI-TF6000, which took Türkiye to a higher league in the aviation sector.

He stressed that TEI began the mass production of UAV (drone) engines and they are now focused on mass producing helicopter engines, “the one aircraft engine technology that was left.”

“We’re continuing our flight preparation and maturing tests of the TF6000 and 10000 series now,” he said.

Aksit said TEI has become one of the world’s largest aircraft engine parts suppliers, maintaining fighter jet engines in Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore, with expansions to ship engine maintenance around the world.

“We’ve been providing support and maintenance to ships in Türkiye but got our first license for doing service abroad, winning the contract to maintain the US Navy’s LM2500 engines,” he said. This marks an important milestone for the company and the Turkish economy, as TEI contributes with not only its product exports but also its services exports, he said.

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 1,634 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Thursday, losing, 1,634.22 points, a negative change of 1.46 percent, closing at 110,301.16 points as compared to 111,935.38 points on the last trading day.

A total of 598,930,638 shares were traded during the day as compared to 436,325,053 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs25,629 billion against Rs23,225 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 435 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 101 of them recorded gains and 286 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 48 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Silk Bank Limited with 119,523,297 shares at Rs1.19 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 80,384,932 shares at Rs1.52 per share and Bank Makramah with 64,937,708 shares at Rs4.15 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs51.11 per share closing at Rs7,440.36

whereas runner-up was Haleon Pakistan Limited with Rs30.39 rise in its share price to close at Rs874.78.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs83.70 per share price, closing at Rs22,315.50, whereas the runner-up was Sazgar Engineering Works Limited with Rs46.60 decline in its per share price to Rs1,094.36.

Rupee sheds 19 paise against dollar
Pakistani rupee on Thursday depreciated by 19 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.14 against the previous day’s closing of Rs278.95.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs279.60 and Rs281.10, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.73 to close at Rs289.75 against the last day’s closing of Rs288.02, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen went up by 03 paise and closed at Rs1.82, whereas an

increase of Rs1.86 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs348.17 as compared to the last day’s closing of Rs346.31.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 06 and 05 paise to close at Rs76.00 and Rs74.42 respectively.

Gold prices decrease by Rs900 per tola to Rs298,700

The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs900 and was sold at Rs298,700 on Thursday against its sale at Rs299,600 on previous trading day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs772 to Rs256,087 from Rs256,859 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat came down to Rs234,754 from Rs235,454.

The prices of per tola silver decreased by Rs23 to Rs3,327 whereas that of ten gram dipped by Rs20 to Rs2,852.

The price of gold in the international market also decreased by \$9 to \$2,859 from \$2,868, the Association reported.

TDAP organize seminar on guava at Larkana

LARKANA (APP): The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Sukkur Office organized a seminar on guava at Larkana on Thursday. The objective of the event was to assess the viability of export potential of guava from Larkana division and its region.

This event served as common platform for the representatives of Sindh Agriculture Department, Guava Research Institute, Sindh Abadgaar Board, Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, District Administration, and Larkana Chamber of Commerce Industry Larkana who discussed and debated on various issues and challenges that discourage the productivity and profitability of

the product.

The other key resource speakers who virtually participated were Zulfiqar Momin of M/s Galaxy Fresh Produces Karachi, Abdul Rahim Khan ex-senior scientist Ayub Agricultural Resource Center Faisalabad and Abdul Karim Memon Director General Sindh-Baluchistan TDAP Karachi. Deputy Director TDAP Sukkur apprised audience about the mandate and working of TDAP. Ministry of Commerce and Pakistan Trade Missions Abroad.

The growers of guava identified problems like ineffectiveness of pesticides and other inputs which only increase the cost of production but do not increase the yield of the

crop quantity and quality wise.

The vice-president Sindh Abadgaar Board expressed his concerns about lack of modern Research & Development to improve and innovate the varieties which are in demand of international markets as fresh fruit or in processed products.

The president Sindh Chamber of Agriculture Larkana added that lack of SMEs of Guava pulp and guava squash/juice have also put inverse impact on the product.

The senior vice president Larkana Chamber of Commerce and Industry expressed that the Maximum Residue Level (MRL) of pesticides and shorter shelf life of the

product discourage the export of guava.

Zulfiqar Momin the prominent expert and exporter of Fruits presented his insights and suggested that like other prominent exporting countries, the growers of guava of Pakistan can use plastic bags on guava fruit to address the problem of MRL of pesticides. For the longer shelf life of the product, he suggested import of modern variety seedlings whose shelf life is about 20-25 days.

He assured the growers that when he returns to Pakistan he would hold a comprehensive session with the stakeholders at Larkana. The large number of persons who attended informative session.

Honda-Nissan merger talks ‘basically over’: Source

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Nissan’s board is in the process of abandoning merger talks with Honda and could be open to other partners, a source close to the matter told AFP on

Thursday and local media reported. The discussions unravelled after Honda proposed to make its struggling rival a subsidiary instead of the plan announced in December to integrate under a new holding company.

“The latest conditions put on the table by Honda are unacceptable for Nissan... It was almost an affront,” the source said, confirming information reported in Japanese media.

“It needs to be formalised, but basically, it’s over.” The source said Nissan was “open” to forming other strategic partnerships within the automobile or technology sectors.

But the company “needs to be extremely creative, and reflect carefully on the synergies involved”, they

said. Bloomberg also reported on Thursday that Nissan was looking for a new ally from the US-based tech sector, citing unnamed sources.

Nissan and Honda’s intention to join forces -- creating the world’s third-largest automaker --- had been seen as a bid to catch up with Tesla and Chinese electric vehicle firms.

Honda’s CEO insisted in December that it was not a bailout for Nissan, which last year announced thousands of job cuts after reporting a 93 percent plunge in first-half net profit.

Nissan said Wednesday it would “establish a direction and make an announcement around mid-February” after reports said the company was walking

away from the Honda talks.

Reports in December said Taiwanese electronics behemoth Foxconn had unsuccessfully approached Nissan to buy a majority stake. It then reportedly asked Renault to sell its 35 percent stake in Nissan -- a pursuit that was put on hold before the merger talks were announced.

The source said Thursday that Nissan’s board of directors had agreed to abandon the talks on Tuesday. Japanese news agency Kyodo meanwhile reported that Nissan’s CEO Makoto Uchida met with Honda’s chief Toshihiro Mibe in Tokyo on Thursday and conveyed his intention to terminate the merger talks, citing a source close to the matter.

Shipping giant Maersk’s profit soars on higher prices

C O P E N H A G E N (AFP/APP): Danish shipping giant Maersk reported a big jump in its annual net profit on Thursday, propelled by freight prices that shot up after Yemeni rebel attacks disrupted Red Sea traffic.

The group posted strong earnings despite having to take longer routes around southern Africa to avoid the key Red Sea shipping lane due to attacks launched by Yemen’s Huthi rebels on commercial ships.

It posted a net profit of \$6.1 billion for 2024, up 60 percent from the previous year.

The company said in its annual report that 2024 was the “third-best year in Maersk’s history”.

Maersk had “anticipated a challenging year” in 2024, chairman Robert Maersk Uggla and chief executive Vincent Clerc said in a joint statement.

The Huthi attacks caused “unacceptable safety risks for crew and cargo along a critical trade route. Initially uncertain in duration, the crisis persisted throughout the year, underlining the vulnerabilities of global supply chains”, they said.

“Increased freight rates driven by the situation in the Red Sea, combined with our ability to capitalise on higher-than-expected demand, strong operational execution and cost discipline, led us to repeatedly raise expectations throughout the year,” the statement said. The group ultimately delivered “results significantly above initial guidance”.

Maersk expects to resume Red Sea traffic between the middle and the end of this year.

Its 2024 profit before depreciation, amortisation and impairment losses reached \$12.1 billion.

Revenue rose eight percent to \$55.5 billion -- higher than the \$54.8 billion forecast by analysts surveyed by Bloomberg.

The global container market “went through a robust recovery” last year, estimated at seven percent, Maersk said.

“Export growth out of China was the ultimate growth driver in 2024,” it said.

The Chinese share of global exports is estimated to have increased to 36 percent last year, compared to 32 percent before the Covid pandemic in 2019, while those of Europe and North America have declined, the company said.

“The reason for this development is overcapacity in the Chinese manufacturing sector,” Maersk said.

Maersk said it expects an underlying profit of between \$6 billion and \$9 billion for 2025.

Nisar urges to reduce cost of ‘Doing Business’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has underscored the urgent need for adopting business-friendly policies to tackle the rising cost of production.

He stressed that the government must focus on implementing economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment to create a more conducive atmosphere for businesses, attract foreign investment, and ensure long-term financial stability, said a press release issued here.

In a meeting with visiting business leaders on Thursday, Qureshi emphasized that rather than relying on extensive borrowing, the government should prioritize enhancing the

ease of doing business. This approach, he noted, is critical to putting the country’s economy on a sustainable growth trajectory.

He criticized the increase in oil prices and electricity tariffs, describing them as a “fuel bomb” for businesses. He argued that these hikes, made to comply with the IMF’s conditions for the revival of the stalled loan program, would not only increase the cost of doing business but also escalate inflation to decades-high levels.

He warned that this approach could cripple the industrial and trade sectors, discouraging both local and foreign investment.

The ICCI President also pointed out the damaging effects of high taxes and rising energy costs on busi-

nesses, which have led to a surge in power theft and inefficiencies in the energy sector.

He questioned why these issues were being passed onto consumers in the form of higher tariffs, further burdening the already struggling business community.

Concluding his remarks, the ICCI President urged the government to implement measures that would reduce the cost of doing business, including easing the tax burden on the power sector.

He also called for stronger efforts to promote exports through incentives for trade and industry and by exploring new international markets to help Pakistan achieve sustainable economic growth.

Global stocks rise on easing trade fears

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets rose Thursday on easing trade tensions and thanks to some strong company earnings, analysts said. London reached a fresh record high in morning deals, with the Bank of England expected to cut its key interest rate later in the session.

The capital’s FTSE 100 was boosted also by pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, the index’s most valuable company, whose share price jumped nearly five percent on a positive outlook following jump in annual net profit.

Japanese car maker Nissan closed up more than seven percent in Tokyo after reports said it was looking for a new partner amid talk that its flagged tie-up with Honda would not go ahead.

Honda fell four percent. “For all the doom and gloom, talk of trade wars

and tariffs, and broad geopolitical risk, investors keep putting money to work at companies with good valuations,” noted Neil Wilson, analyst at Tip Ranks trading group.

Global equities slumped early in the week after US President Donald Trump announced hefty tariffs on China, Canada and Mexico.

Sentiment has improved, however, after Trump reached deals with the US neighbours to delay implementation of the measures.

The US Postal Service had meanwhile reversed a decision to halt parcels from China and Hong Kong.

There were solid gains across European stock markets Thursday after rallies in Asia and on Wednesday in the United States.

Shares in French bank Societe Generale soared

more than 10 percent in Paris after posting better-than-expected results.

Frankfurt stocks were boosted by official data showing German industrial orders rebounded more than expected in December.

Wall Street ended higher on Wednesday, despite disappointing earnings this week from Google-parent Alphabet that weighed on the tech sector.

Alphabet tanked more than seven percent in New York, while Amazon was off more than two percent.

Change of Name

I have changes the name of my firm from M/S Azad General Order and Supplied to M/S Marwat Brothers. From: Muhammad Anwar Khan, Office No. 30, Bilour Plaza, Peshawar. 0300-9025038

Yuan strengthens to 7.1691

BEIJING (APP): The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 2 pips to 7.1691 against the US dollar Thursday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

In China’s spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.



NA body forms sub-committee to examine PFF matters

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) has formed a sub-committee under the conensorship of Member National Assembly (MNA) Anjum Aqeel to examine the matters concerning the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF).

The Committee which met on Thursday here at the Ministry of IPC under the chairmanship of MNA Muhammad Sana Ullah Khan Masti Khel was briefed by Haroon Malik, Chairman of the Normalization Committee PFF, on the election process within the PFF from the district level onwards.

He informed the Committee that all elections have been completed and that the 22 elected congress members will oversee the next phase.

He also highlighted that, for the first time, the Pakistan Football Federation participated in the 2023 Olympic qualifiers and advanced to the second round. He assured the Committee that he is

not a candidate for any PFF election or position.

The Committee appreciated the efforts of the PFF in promoting football at the Olympic level. Sardar Naveed Haider, former PFF Provincial President, also briefed the Committee and expressed his reservations regarding the Federation's affairs.

To further examine the matters concerning the PFF, the Committee formed a sub-committee under the conensorship of MNA Anjum Aqeel while other members include MNA's Dr. Mahreen Razzaq Bhutto and Jamshed Ahmed Dasti.

The Director General (DG) and Deputy DG of the Pakistan Sports Board, along with independent footballer Sohaib, will assist the sub-committee. This sub-committee will engage with PFF congress members and review the appointment of three women members to the PFF Congress.

The meeting also included briefings on the Kalur Kot Bridge on the Indus River and Public Sector Development Program

(PSDP) projects.

The General Manager (Design) of the National Highway Authority (NHA) briefed the Committee on the construction of linking and approach roads. Representatives from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Punjab, the Federal Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Communications attended the meeting.

However, the Committee expressed displeasure over the absence of the Secretary of Communication and Works (C&W) Punjab. After detailed discussions, the Committee directed the Additional Secretary IPC to hold a meeting with all stakeholders.

The Additional Secretary informed the Committee that a fresh topographic survey will be conducted, and the approval of a PC-1 will be required.

However, budgetary allocations have already been reserved under the PSDP and Asian Development Bank (ADB) projects for the fiscal year 2025-26 at both federal and provincial levels.

The Committee directed

the Chief Secretaries and Secretaries of C&W Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to submit an update on the bridge construction within one month.

It emphasized that the Kalur Kot Bridge is a critical infrastructure project benefiting the entire country. Given the substantial financial investment, any delays in completion would result in significant losses. The Committee stressed the importance of improved connectivity for the people of KP, Punjab, and Baluchistan.

The meeting was attended by MNAs Anjum Aqeel Khan, Sheikh Aftab Ahmed, Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan Nasar, Ms. Shaista Khan, Haji Rasool Bux Chandio, Syeda Shehla Raza, Dr. Mahreen Razzaq Bhutto, Muhammad Iqbal Khan, Khawaja Izhar-Ul-Hassan, Muhammad Miqdad Ali Khan, Jamshed Ahmed, and Syed Sami Ullah. The Additional Secretary IPC, representatives from NHA, KP & Punjab and other officers and official also attended the meeting.



GALLE, SRI LANKA: Lahiru Kumara of Sri Lanka bats during day one of the Second Test match in the series between Sri Lanka and Australia at Galle International Stadium on Thursday.

Noman nominated among players for ICC Player of the Month

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Noman Ali is being named among players, by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in contention for the ICC Men's and Women's Player of the Month awards for January, highlighting the top performers from a busy month of international cricket.

Three talented spinners comprise the shortlist of candidates for the ICC Men's Player of the Month, after all enjoyed a prolific start to 2025 in both long and short formats.

Noman Ali seeks to win his second ICC Men's Player of the Month award after wicket-taking feats and a historic hatrick in Pakistan's World Test Championship series against the West Indies. First-time nominee Jomel Warrican topped the bowling charts in that series and led the tourists to their first Test win in the Pakistan for 34 years. Varun Chakravarthy completes the trio, after a string of stellar displays in India's T20I triumph over England.

The ICC Women's Player of the Month nominees feature two senior stars of the short formats, alongside a promising young star fresh from U19 Women's T20 World Cup success.

Beth Mooney was one of the primary architects of Australia's dominant Ashes triumph over England in January, most notably in the T20I encounters, while the West Indies' spinner Karishma Ramharack was among the wickets as her side claimed victory over Bangladesh in a competitive ODI series. The final nominee is India's U19 all-round sensation Gongadi Trisha, following her Player of the Tournament efforts in a scintillating World Cup campaign.

ICC Men's Player of the Month Nominees for January- Noman Ali (Pak): Having won his maiden ICC Men's Player of the Month award back in October 2024, Noman continues his impressive run in Pakistan's Test bowling attack with another fruitful series against a spirited West Indies side in Multan. 16 Wickets fell to the left-arm across two matches, culminating in a ten-wicket performance in the second Test that included figures of six for 41 in the first innings and a brilliant hat-trick – the first by a Pakistan spinner in Test cricket.

Varun Chakravarthy (Ind): Chakravarthy was a threatening presence in India's decisive T20I series against England in January. His four matches during the

calendar month heralded 12 wickets at a startling average of 9.41, highlighted by a superb five for 24 in Rajkot – his best return in a home T20I – and has since seen him propel up the ICC Men's T20I Bowler rankings to joint second position.

Jomel Warrican (WI): Nominated for the very first time, the 32-year old celebrated a triumphant return to Test action in January with 19 wickets across both Tests in Pakistan. Awarded the Player of the Series for his efforts, Warrican took ten wickets in the first Test including a career-best seven for 32 in the second innings, before inspiring a landmark victory in the second encounter. Chipping in with valuable runs in the lower order, the left-arm spinner claimed five for 27 in the second innings to secure the 120-run win.

ICC Women's Player of the Month Nominees for January- Beth Mooney (Aus): A subdued start to the series by her standards came to an end with a battling half-century in the third ODI in Hobart, and from there her series came to life. Saving her best performances for the 20-over contests, the opener notched 213 runs at a blistering strike rate of 146.89, with scores of 75 and 44 preceding a stunning 94 not

out in Adelaide in just 63 balls.

Karishma Ramharack (WI): Ramharack celebrates her maiden nomination for the Player of the Month award, and features among the trio of contenders thanks to impressive performances in the West Indies' ODI series against Bangladesh. With the hosts having won the opening match, the off-spinner recorded her first four-wicket haul in the format with four for 33, albeit in a losing cause in Basseterre. Her good form continued in the decider, where she went one better and recorded career-best figures of four for 12 to seal a comfortable eight-wicket victory and the Player of the Series prize.

Gongadi Trisha (Ind): The 19-year-old was the toast of Malaysia at the recently concluded U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025, starring in India's surge to the silverware with a record-breaking campaign.

With 265 runs and 4 wickets coming in January's contests, she hit the headlines with an inspired performance against Scotland; striking the first century in U19 Women's T20 World Cup history with 110 not out off 59 balls before taking three wickets for six runs.

Completion of Gaddafi Stadium in 117 days, a remarkable milestone



ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is set to welcome cricket fans with a spectacular opening ceremony on February 7, ahead of the Pakistan versus New Zealand match on February 8.

The tri-nation ODI series will be followed by the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, which begins on February 19, said a press release.

Fans can look forward to a series of colourful events, including live singing, stunning fireworks and a unique light show.

Renowned singers Ali Zafar, Arif Lohar and Aima Baig will grace the stage with electrifying performances, followed by a dazzling drum and firework display. The opening ceremony, to be attended by Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, will be free for the public, creating an unforgettable atmosphere.

Under the leadership of PCB Chair Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB has transformed the stadium into a modern cricketing venue in a record 117 days. The stadium now features brighter

LED lights, two new larger score screens and comfortable imported seating in all enclosures, ensuring an unparalleled viewing experience for fans.

Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has personally overseen the reconstruction process, making frequent day and night visits to monitor progress. His dedication has resulted in world-class facilities, including newly built hospitality boxes and upgraded amenities for both players and spectators.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi said, "Our venues

are now on par with international standards and we are proud to offer cricket fans the best possible experience. The transformation of this stadium in such a short time is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team.

"First of all, I thank the workers who made the impossible task possible. The combined efforts of Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), NES-PAK, the contractors and PCB teams have turned this dream into reality. Despite criticism, our team remained committed and Allah Ta'ala made our path easy."

The stadium's enhancements ensure that fans will enjoy a world-class cricketing experience, with improved seating arrangements, exceptional viewing angles and a festive atmosphere. The PCB remains steadfast in its mission to provide top-tier cricketing events and showcase Pakistan as a premier host for international matches.

With preparations complete, the PCB is ready to deliver a grand spectacle with the tri-nation ODI series, setting the stage for an exciting ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

LONDON (BBC): Newcastle United moved a giant step closer to ending a 56-year wait to win a major trophy as they secured a place in the Carabo Cup final with victory over Arsenal after an emotional night on Tyneside.

Eddie Howe's side, who held a 2-0 advantage from the semi-final first leg, completed the second part of the assignment, and will now face Liverpool or Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley as they stand one victory away from ending a sequence without major success stretching back to the 1969 triumph in the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup.

Newcastle made a flying start, with Alexander Isak having a goal ruled out for offside before Jacob Murphy turned home a rebound in the 19th minute after the Sweden striker's shot hit the post.

The goal came seconds after Martin Odegaard missed what turned out to be Arsenal's best chance of turning this semi-final around, glancing the post with only keeper Martin Dubravka to beat.

In a tumultuous atmosphere, with the Toon Army urging their side on at deafening volume, Newcastle delivered the decisive blow after 52 minutes following a nightmare moment for Arsenal keeper David Raya.

Raya inexplicably tried to find Declan Rice, who was shadowed by Fabian Schar. He stole possession away from Rice, leaving Anthony Gordon with a simple finish to send Newcastle back to Wembley.

And the Geordie hordes will be hoping to make up for losing against Manchester United in the

EFL Cup final two years ago, as well as claiming a first domestic honour since the 1955 FA Cup.

Newcastle went into this second leg surrounded by nerves, despite holding that healthy 2-0 advantage in front of their own fanatical fanbase.

The unease was created by two home defeats against Bournemouth and Fulham, while Arsenal looked to be hitting their stride with a 5-1 thrashing of Premier League champions Manchester City at Emirates Stadium on Sunday.

They were also without the influential Joelinton, ruled out by the knee injury he suffered in the weekend loss against Fulham. In the end, his power and threat was not missed.

Newcastle needed a fast start, ideally accompanied by a goal, to sweep away

the anxiety lingering in this thunderous environment. The dream opening duly arrived.

And it was the talisman Isak who was the inspiration, running Arsenal ragged, as he did at Emirates Stadium, in those early stages, having a crisp finish disallowed for a marginal offside then being heavily involved in Murphy's opener.

The only question was whether Newcastle could keep up the breathtaking pace and intensity, but when the tempo did die down they were able to exert a measure of control that ensured they always remained in charge of the destiny of this semi-final.

Gordon's goal was the clincher, the catalyst for a long period of celebration as Newcastle moved towards a successful finale.

Kusal Mendis fights for Sri Lanka as Starc and Lyon stand out

GALLE (ESPNcricinfo): Australia's trio of specialist bowlers toiled manfully during a see-saw day one against a fighting Sri Lanka on a dry Galle surface that did not live up to the hype, but occasionally spun sharply and is expected to deteriorate significantly.

By the end of 90 overs, the second Test was intriguingly poised after several shifts of momentum. Sri Lanka's top-order built a strong platform to reach 93 for 1 before they lost 4 for 34 in a horror period after lunch. But Kusal Mendis and Ramesh Mendis combined for a seventh-wicket partnership of 65 to lift Sri Lanka to what might just be a competitive first innings total.

Kusal and Dinesh Chandimal made well-compiled half-centuries as Sri Lanka batted through the day's play to reach stumps at 229 for 9.

After Sri Lanka suffered their worst defeat in Test cricket on a slow surface, there had been much speculation that this new surface would produce significant bite and turn. There was sharp turn at times, especially in the second session, but it was the consistency and variations of Australia's bowlers that led to several cheap dismissals.

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon was outstanding in his spell after lunch, mixing up his speeds and lengths to bamboozle Sri Lanka as he

moved to 549 Test wickets. Left-arm quick Mitchell Starc continued to add to his formidable record in Sri Lanka, conjuring reverse swing during a sensational spell late in the second session before striking twice with the second new ball.

Australia were effectively playing with just three specialist bowlers, with Lyon and left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann providing the heavy lifting as they bowled 30 overs each.

Stand-in captain Steven Smith worked his resources to good effect with Travis Head bowling eight overs and proving that he might just have a golden arm after taking the wicket of Kamindu Mendis.

Allrounder Beau Webster bowled three overs of seam having not been required to bowl in the first Test, while left-arm spinning allrounder Cooper Connolly also bowled three overs on his debut after replacing off-spinner Todd Murphy in Australia's only change.

Sri Lanka made three changes with Pathum Nissanka replacing Oshada Fernando at the top of the order, while offspinners Ramesh Mendis and quick Lahiru Kumara were included at the expense of Jeffrey Vandersay and Asitha Fernando.

After receiving a long guard of honour on his way to the crease, including from the Australians, retiring Dimuth Karunaratne was

tasked with trying to help restore Sri Lanka's battered confidence in his 100th and last Test match. He also had to confront tormentor Starc having fallen to him nine times previously, including in the first innings of the series-opener. But having overcome a groin injury to take his place, Nissanka mostly faced Starc and had mixed results against speeds touching 145kph.

Fresh from his nine-wicket haul in his Test return, Kuhnemann was also handed the new ball and had a loud shout for lbw on Nissanka turned down with the decision upheld on umpire's call after Australia reviewed.

Sri Lanka's openers steadily built despite some nervous moments as Smith reverted to Lyon in the eighth over. Aiming at the footworks from Starc, Lyon produced significant turn and bounce on his second delivery that flew down the legside for four byes.

But Lyon wasn't made to wait long for a wicket after hitting the top of leg stump when Nissanka moved too far across his stumps looking to paddle sweep. Australia were buoyed, but inroads proved difficult against the type of disciplined batting from Sri Lanka that was lacking in the first Test.

Connolly was brought in just before lunch having never taken a wicket from the 96 balls he had bowled

in his four previous first-class matches. Connolly did develop a knack of taking key wickets in the recent BBL season, but he could not strike as Sri Lanka made it to lunch well placed.

Chandimal resumed after the interval with a boundary off Lyon before the game turned on its head.

Lyon varied his speeds and slid a faster delivery from around the wicket past Karunaratne's defence to rattle the stumps.

He was in lovely rhythm and went about working over Angelo Mathews knowing he had his number after dismissing him twice in the first Test.

Mathews crawled to 1 off 25 before succumbing to a slower, wider Lyon delivery and feathering an edge into the gloves of Alex Carey, who has performed well behind the stumps in this series.

Lyon seemingly had his 550th wicket when Kamindu was adjudged caught behind on 3 only for the decision to be successfully reviewed with no nick detected. Kamindu could not capitalise and fell relatively tamely to Head's handy offspin after a thick edge off an attempted cut shot flew to Smith at slip.

Head unfurled his now customary celebration, suggesting that his spinning fingers are on fire, as Kamindu's struggles continued after entering the series with an average over 70.



BRADENTON, FLORIDA: Savannah Grewal of Canada lines up a putt on the 18th green during the first round of the Founders Cup presented by U.S. Virgin Islands 2025 at Bradenton Country Club on Thursday in Bradenton, Florida.



In brief

Five netted for illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police during actions against illegal arms owners on Thursday arrested five accused with weapons and ammunition. According to a police spokesman, the Ganjamdi Police held accused Saleem with a 9 mm pistol and Ahmed with a 30 bore pistol. Similarly, the Pirwadhai Police recovered a 30 bore pistol from accused Tauqir, while the Gujar Khan Police nabbed accused Irfan and Naveed Iqbal on the recovery of a 30 bore pistol from both of them. Meanwhile, the Pirwadhai Police arrested three accused Aminuddin, Nadir and Abdul Ghaffar for illegally decanting of liquified petroleum gas and recovered cylinders and other gas refilling equipment from them.

Police arrest 293 beggars

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi launched a crackdown against professional beggars and arrested 293 beggars during last week. According to a police spokesman, special squads were formed to take action against professional beggars. Police stations, anti-baggage squads and traffic police are conducting operations to net professional beggars from city roads and intersections. The professional beggars cause traffic congestion on busy roads and inconvenience to the citizens, he said adding, most of the professional beggars are also involved in different crimes. 239 FIRs have also been registered against the arrested beggars, he informed. The spokesman said that police launched the crackdown against professional beggars across the city according to the vision of the Chief Minister Punjab.

Police arrest 8 drug dealers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police have arrested eight drug suppliers including most wanted drug dealer and recovered 19 kg charras from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani, Rawalpindi Police had launched a crackdown against drug dealers. Pirwadhai Police recovered 12.3 kg hashish from the possession of a most wanted drug dealer named Shabbir alias Kaka, rounded up in an operation. Taxila Police recovered over 1.6 kg hashish from an accused Manzoor. Airport Police conducted a raid and recovered over 1040 grams hashish from a drug dealer Majid while an accused Nasir was rounded up with 540 grams hashish and Mehboob for having 520 grams hashish. Waris Khan Police recovered 750 grams hashish from a drug supplier namely Hamza. Rattaamral Police also recovered 700 grams hashish from accused Aamir and 600 grams hashish from an accused Zaheer. Effective operations against drug dealers will continue to eradicate the scourge of drugs, the spokesman added.

Fraudster arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Police on Thursday arrested a fraudster who deprived the citizens of their money by offering them returns on the invested amount. An amount of Rs 4,750, mobile phones and slips (parchis) of different numbers were also recovered from their possession.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday outlined Pakistan's priorities and measures to address climate change-related threats effectively.

Speaking at a symposium he said, the challenges included air pollution, water scarcity and pollution, deforestation and land degradation, climate change vulnerability, biodiversity loss, waste management crisis, and food security.

"Despite these challenges, Pakistan has been a regional leader in advocating for climate adaptation and water conservation, and we have taken proac-

tive steps to address these threats," he noted.

The minister was speaking as chairperson of the session "The Pakistan Symposium on Governance and Climate Change" at an international conference titled "Breathe Pakistan," held in collaboration with Dawn Media, the Ministry of Climate Change, and the Government of Punjab, and the United Nations.

Sharing the current state of climate and environment in Pakistan, he said major cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad frequently rank among the world's most polluted urban centers. The minister said Lahore's Air Quality Index (AQI) has exceeded 400

during peak smog seasons—far beyond the WHO's safe limit of 50, whereas vehicular emissions, industrial discharge, and low-quality fuels were major contributors. "With 135,000 deaths annually linked to air pollution, this is a silent crisis that demands urgent policy action."

Commenting on water scarcity and pollution, he said that according to estimates, Pakistan's water availability has dropped significantly from 5,600 cubic meters per capita in the 1950s to less than 1,000 cubic meters today, placing it at the brink of absolute water scarcity by 2025. "Around 80% of

Pakistan's water sources are unsafe for consumption, contributing to 100,000 child deaths annually from waterborne diseases. This has direct implications for food security, health, and economic stability," he added.

With forest cover at only 5.4%, far below the recommended 25%, he said Pakistan was losing 27,000 hectares of forest annually due to illegal logging and urban expansion. "This accelerates soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and carbon emissions, undermining our ability to combat climate change."

On climate change vulnerability, Ahsan Iqbal said that across the region,

Pakistan has also faced heightened climate-induced emergencies, with floods, heatwaves, and droughts impacting more than 40 million people in recent years. "Pakistan ranks 8th on the Global Climate Risk Index by Germanwatch. Our melting glaciers, which supply 60% of our water, are disappearing at an alarming rate."

He said the 2022 floods submerged one-third of the country, displacing millions and causing \$30 billion in damages, adding,

"Agriculture, contributing 19% to GDP and employing 38% of the workforce, faces severe threats from unpredictable weather, soil degradation, and reduced water

availability." Despite contributing less than 1% to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan, he said was among the top ten most climate-vulnerable countries.

He said Pakistan was actively engaged in global climate efforts, particularly through the Paris Agreement and subsequent COP meetings, including COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan. As a responsible global partner, Ahsan said Pakistan has strengthened national climate adaptation plans, advocated for a fair Loss & Damage Fund to support vulnerable nations, and developed ecosystem-based adaptation strategies.

He said the Ministry of Planning was embedding

climate resilience into Pakistan's national development agenda through the 5Es Framework, adding that its third 'E' "Environment and Climate Change; Water & Food Security" focused on enhancing climate resilience, self-reliant adaptation measures, and sustainable practices to combat natural disasters, including the impacts of droughts, cyclones, glacial lake outburst floods, smog, and other natural disasters.

"Our leadership is committed to ensuring that Pakistan is not just a victim of climate change, but a proactive architect of climate solutions," he remarked.

Romina seeks Germany support to advance climate action plans

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khursid Alam has sought technical support of Germany in developing Pakistan's climate action plans and accelerating the transition to clean energy sources.

Talking to a 3-member delegation from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), led by Ms. Christiane Amari, Ms. Romina underscored the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation on climate change and sustainable development.

The discussions centered on ongoing and future initiatives aimed at environmental protection, climate adaptation, and mitigation efforts, with a special focus on finding innovative solutions to combat the adverse impacts of climate change in Pakistan. The country has been severely affected by floods, droughts, and other climate-related challenges in recent years.

PM's aide highlighted the significance of international collaboration in

addressing climate change, particularly for countries like Pakistan, which face unique vulnerabilities due to their geographical and socio-economic factors. She reaffirmed the Pakistani government's commitment to tackling these challenges through the implementation of the National Climate Change Policy and the Pakistan Climate Change Act. Pakistan is also focused on meeting its climate goals outlined in the Paris Agreement.

Ms. Amari assured supporting Pakistan in its climate objectives, commending the country's proactive approach to environmental protection. She emphasized the crucial role of cooperation between the two nations to address the growing climate crisis and advocated for the exchange of knowledge, technology, and financial resources.

"Integrating climate change adaptation into national development policies is paramount," Ms. Amari said. "We must ensure that the transition to a green economy is inclu-

sive and resilient."

Romina Khursid also emphasized the need for increased financing and capacity-building support for local communities, who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The discussion also touched on potential new partnerships in areas such as water management, clean energy, carbon reduction, protection of melting glaciers, and global climate risk financing.

Both parties expressed optimism about the collaborative efforts to meet global climate targets, while simultaneously improving the livelihoods of those most affected by climate change. They committed to continuing to explore additional avenues of support to enhance Pakistan's climate resilience and sustainability.

The Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Climate Change, Ahmed Atteeq Anwar also joined the meeting and highlighted the importance of educating and engaging the younger generation in climate awareness. He suggested that schools integrate cli-

mate change topics into their curricula and encouraged activities such as tree planting and community cleanups to foster environmental responsibility.

"Media and social platforms have a crucial role to play in spreading awareness and inspiring youth to take climate action," Anwar added. "Empowering children with knowledge ensures a more sustainable future."

Aisha Humera Moriani, Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change, discussed the investment potential within Pakistan's energy sector, particularly in green skills. She highlighted the significant role German private companies could play in advancing climate adaptation, food security, and nature-based solutions in industries such as cement and construction.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing their commitment to continuing the dialogue and collaboration to enhance Pakistan's climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and sustainable development efforts.

Dr. Mukhtar visits PMDC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Prime Minister's Coordinator for Health, Dr. Mukhtar Bharath on Thursday visited Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) and received briefing on the functioning of the body.

According to spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, President PMDC briefed Dr. Mukhtar Bharath about the affairs of the institution.

Dr. Mukhtar Bharath also visited IT office of PMDC to examine PMDC's IT and digitalization system where he expressed confidence on the ongoing initiatives.

He said that PMDC should alert the concerned institutes to ensure verification process within three days.

He issued instructions to dispose of pending applications as soon as possible.

He said that PMDC inspection system will be digitized on emergency basis.

Dr. Mukhtar Bharath directed to ensure redressal of complaints regarding registration and licensing of doctors on priority basis.

He said that the government is determined to make the quality of medical education in Pakistan as per international standards.

Dr. Mukhtar Bharath said that the government will continue to work on new reforms in health sector.

He added the government is determined to promote merit and transparency in PMDC. "We will ensure effective measures for the improvement of medical education."

ICT Police seize 70,000 kites, charge-sheet SHO in crackdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police had launched a rigorous crackdown on kite flying, seizing over 70,000 kites and more than 10,000 kite strings in the past week. Authorities had also charge-sheeted the Station House Officer (SHO) of the Secretariat Police Station over inappropriate language use, with a departmental inquiry underway. A public relations officer told APP that strict legal actions were being taken against those involved in kite flying, a hazardous activity that had claimed innocent lives in the past. He said metal-coated strings pose a serious threat to human life, and the police were committed to eradicating this dangerous trend from the capital.



ISLAMABAD: Global Director for Climate Change at World Bank Ms. Valerie Hickey meeting with Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam.

Polio immunization drive continued

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Emergency Operation Center (EOC) has said that the national anti-polio campaign continued on Thursday for the fourth day across the country.

According to EOC officials, Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Ayesha Raza Farooq visited the Polio Control Room established at National EOC.

She was given a detailed briefing regarding the ongoing national polio campaign in the polio control room, National EOC.

During the first three days, more than 37 million children have been administered polio vaccine.

During the campaign, 86% of children in Punjab, 71% in Sindh, 79% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 78% in Balochistan have been vaccinated.

Around 66% of children in Islamabad, 93% in Azad Kashmir and 85% in Gilgit-Baltistan have been vaccinated against polio. National EOC officials said that nationwide polio campaign will continue uninterrupted till February 9.

Meanwhile, Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq visited various high risk Union Councils of Peshawar, Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

She reviewed the national polio immunization campaign and met the polio teams in the field.

Ayesha Raza Farooq appealed parents and community to open their doors to polio workers and be part of the national campaign.

She said that it is our national responsibility to ensure vaccination of all children under the age of five.

Family of ailing boy remind promise to CM for treatment

ISLAMABAD (APP): The uncle of an 11-year-old boy named Hassan, who is suffering from a lung disease, on Thursday appealed to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, to fulfil his promise and bear the expenses of the boy's treatment.

The uncle, Ali Rehman, made this appeal during a press conference at the National Press Club, according to a press release.

He said that about seven

months ago, CM had come to know about the illness of Hassan through social media and had promised to bear the expenses of his treatment.

The treatment was very expensive, costing around \$65,000 and the boy's family could not afford it, he added.

It was needed to get treatment in Bangalore, India, and the validity of the visa left two more months; he said.

However, despite repeated contacts at the CM house, no satisfactory response has been received, and the visa was about to expire, Rehman said.

Another boy from Batgram, Maaz Jani, who was also suffering from the same disease, has passed away, he emphasised.

Ali Rehman has appealed to the CM and the philanthropists in the country to come forward to save Hassan's life.

Second hand market brings affordable joy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second-hand clothing market had become a go-to destination for middle-income households seeking quality products at affordable prices. As it had emerged as a beacon of hope for the poor, offering affordable essentials and a chance to rebuild their lives. Amidst the stark economic contrasts of Islamabad, the second-hand clothing market stands as a beacon of affordability for those struggling to make ends meet.

A customer Fatima Khan recently shared her heartwarming experience said "I came here every month to buy clothes and household items for my family, because this second-hand market was a blessing for people like us who cannot afford new things." She remarked that for the poor, this market was more than just a place to buy second-hand goods, it is a symbol of resilience and

resourcefulness.

She mentioned that she was able to purchase high-quality clothing and household items at a fraction of the cost of new products.

Another customer a father of three Muhammad Ali, said that "I lost my job a few months ago, and I was struggling to make ends meet." "But then I discovered second-hand clothing market. Now, I can buy affordable clothes and toys for my children, and even some essential household items." He said second-hand clothing market has become a lifeline for many low-income families in Pakistan, providing them with access to essential items that they might not be able to afford otherwise.

The market was also a hub for entrepreneurs and small business owners, who come to purchase goods in bulk and resell them in their own communities, he stated.

ITP launch crackdown against illegal parking

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Thursday launched a major operation at Faizabad against illegal parking and unregulated taxi stands, removing unlawfully parked vehicles to ensure smooth traffic flow.

A public relations officer told APP that the Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Syed Zeeshan Haider personally supervised the operation, emphasizing that no unauthorized taxi stand would be allowed in the area.

CTO Zeeshan said a designated location would be allocated for taxi stands to facilitate drivers while maintaining order on the roads. "Bike-riding service providers will also not be allowed to park without an official stand," the CTO added.

CTO further stated that the legitimate concerns of taxi drivers would be addressed, ensuring a balanced approach between regulation and their livelihood.

Taliban flog 12 people

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban carried out public floggings of 12 people, including one woman, in the provinces of Kapisa and Uruzgan, accusing them of crimes such as theft and fleeing home without permission, according to the Taliban's Supreme Court. In separate statements, the Taliban-controlled judiciary said each person received 30 lashes and was sentenced to prison terms ranging from seven months to two years.

New health center opened

HELMAND (BNA): Mawlav Noor Jalal Jalali, Acting Minister of Public Health, inaugurated a new health center in Sangin district of Helmand. The project, valued at approximately 26 million Afghanis, aims to improve access to quality health services for local residents. During his visit, Jalali expressed his satisfaction with the completion of the health center, emphasizing its importance in meeting the healthcare needs of the community.

Development projects: UNAMA urges transparency

KABUL (TOLONews): A representative from the Governance Section of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) emphasizes transparency and public participation to eliminate corruption and ensure the proper implementation of development projects.

Hassan Al-Haj, speaking at a two-day seminar aimed at strengthening the development committee in Parwan, emphasized that institutions and organizations must be accountable to the people.

"We are inclusive, transparent, and accountable. I heard the governor says the word Fasad (corruption), and I think transparency

and accountability are key to eliminating such Fasad," said Hassan Al-Haj.

Meanwhile, local officials in Parwan have called on aid organizations to provide urgent assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and flood victims in the province.

Mohammad Idris Anwari, the Governor of Parwan, stated: "We must create opportunities for employment and development and address people's problems in a fundamental way. This is our responsibility."

The Parwan Department of Economy has highlighted the urgent need for winter aid for displaced individuals, returning Afghan migrants, and flood victims

in the province, urging organizations and institutions to assist in this matter.

Mujibullah Rahimi, the Head of the Parwan Department of Economy, said: "We expect national and international institutions to fully support vulnerable communities. The people of Parwan have consistently suffered serious damage from floods and are in urgent need of assistance."

Previously, aid organizations had expressed concerns over the proper delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in genuine need and the correct implementation of development projects in certain parts of the country.

Gold mine collapse in Badakhshan kills 1 worker

KABUL (Amu TV): A gold mine collapse in the north-eastern province of Badakhshan left one worker dead, local Taliban officials said.

The incident occurred in the village of Gulistan in the Yaftal Payan district, according to the Taliban's police command in Badakhshan.

Taliban officials said three workers were trapped under the rubble. One died, while two others were rescued with the help of local residents.

The collapse is the latest in a series of accidents linked to unregulated and unsafe mining practices in the region. Similar incidents in Badakhshan have previously claimed the lives of workers, raising concerns about the dangers of unlicensed mining operations.

In 2024, several mine collapses across the country resulted in multiple fatalities.

In September, a landslide at a gold mine in Badakhshan killed at least three miners. The following month, another gold mine collapse in the same province claimed three more lives. In December, a coal mine disaster in Samangan trapped 35 workers, though the full casualty count remained unclear. With limited oversight and poor safety standards, mining accidents continue to pose a significant risk to workers in Afghanistan's resource-rich but fragile economy.

Dozens of historical relics shifted to museum

KABUL (BNA): The National Museum has received a remarkable collection of 97 historical artifacts, unearthed during recent archaeological excavations at ancient sites in Mes Aynak, Logar, and the Shewaki Stupa in Bagrami district, Kabul.

Zabihullah Sadat, head of archaeology at the Ministry of Information and Culture, reported that these relics were meticulously cleaned, restored, and registered before their transfer to the museum.

The newly acquired items include a diverse array of artifacts such as pottery oil burners, terracottas, beads, spindles, and embroidery, as well as various vessels made from stone, pottery, plaster, metal, and bone.

These artifacts trace their origins to the Kushan, Kushan-Sassanid, and Sassanid-Kushan periods, dating back to between the 2nd and 7th centuries AD.

This addition to the museum not only enriches Afghanistan's cultural heritage but also highlights the ongoing efforts to preserve and showcase the country's historical treasures.

Hackers target Taliban databases

KABUL (Amu TV): A group of unidentified hackers has breached the Taliban's databases, leaking documents from 21 ministries and government agencies, some of which appear to be classified, according to reports circulating online.

The leaked files reportedly include documents from the Taliban-controlled ministries of finance, justice, foreign affairs, information and culture, telecommunications, and mining, as well as the Supreme Court and the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

The hackers have published hundreds of these documents on a website called "Talibleaks." However, the identities of the individuals behind the cyberattack, as well as details about the website, remain unknown. No group has claimed responsibility for the breach. Taliban have not commented on the incident, and as of now, the website remains accessible.

Abdul Ghaffar Haqnama, the head of the Sar-e-Pul Directorate of Information and Culture, said: "The ministry has sent us an official document for the restoration of three historical monuments, including the Jowzjani shrine, the Imam Jafar shrine, and the Khesht Bridge. These three sites have been prioritized and are awaiting budget approval."

According to local officials in Sar-e-Pul, more than 200 historical monuments have been registered in the province, but only 44 of them have been officially recorded by the Ministry of Information and Culture.

buildings are a nation's identity, and comprehensive efforts must be made to restore and preserve them. One such historical monument, the shrine of Khwaja Ali Jowzjani in the old bazaar, is on the verge of collapse."

Mohammad Hossein Baloch, another cultural activist in Sar-e-Pul, said: "Our demand from the Islamic Emirate is that historical monuments must be preserved, and no efforts should be made to destroy them."

However, the Sar-e-Pul Directorate of Information and Culture assures that historical monuments in the province will be restored.

Mawlawi Kabir urges halt to forced deportation of Afghan migrants

KABUL (TOLONew): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the acting minister of refugees and repatriation, has once again called on neighboring countries to immediately halt the forced deportation and mistreatment of Afghan refugees.

In separate meetings with the Japanese ambassador and the deputy special representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan, the acting minister also urged humanitarian organizations to provide assistance to Afghan refugees.

Abdul Matloob Haqqani, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, spoke about these meetings, stating: "Foreign countries should stop the forced deportation of Afghan refugees and allow them to voluntarily return to their homeland based on international laws."

During the meeting, the Japanese ambassador expressed that Tokyo wants Afghanistan to achieve stability and emphasized the importance of cooperation with the Islamic Emirate in this regard.

Separately, Takayushi Kormaya the Japanese Am-



bassador to Kabul, met with the acting minister of economy and assured the continuation of Japan's development and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in 2025.

Meanwhile, several Afghan refugees in neighboring countries have complained about the challenges they face.

Jamal Muslim, an Afghan refugee in Turkey, told TOLONews: "Refugees are being forced to leave their

homes and relocate to other areas. Afghan refugees in Turkey are struggling with economic, linguistic, and employment difficulties."

The mistreatment and detention of Afghan refugees by neighboring countries, is not a new issue; similar incidents have repeatedly occurred in the past.

However, what steps should the Islamic Emirate take in response to the actions of neighboring

countries? Jummah Khan Poya, a migration rights expert, told TOLONews: "The current authorities in Afghanistan must take immediate action and engage in discussions with officials from international organizations and neighboring governments."

Previously, officials of the Islamic Emirate had also urged neighboring countries not to forcibly deport Afghan refugees.

Afghan fund accrued profits of \$440 million, says Mehrabi

KABUL (TOLONews): Shah Mohammad Mehrabi, a board member of the Fund for the Afghan People (the Afghan Fund), told TOLONews that since the fund's establishment, its profit has reached \$440 million. According to Mehrabi, the fund was created to stabilize the exchange rate, control price levels, and maintain financial stability within the country.

Mehrabi said: "Currently, the fund has \$3.94 billion in assets, with accrued profits of \$440 million. These actions demonstrate prudent financial management. Ultimately, the Afghan Fund has established an organized governance framework designed

to stabilize Afghanistan's financial system."

The Afghan Fund was established in September 2022 in Switzerland by the United States to safeguard \$3.5 billion of the country's assets.

Some economic experts said that the fund's assets have not yet been practically utilized for the country's economic growth. They stress that in the current situation, where the afghani currency lacks significant stability against other foreign currencies, the fund should be used to maintain financial stability.

"The Afghanistan Fund serves as a financial backstop for the afghani currency, which can enhance its

credibility in global markets and also contribute to strengthening international trade," Abdul Nasir Reshtia, an economic expert, told TOLONews.

"In these tough economic conditions, we should be able to use these funds. The more dollars flow into the country or generate profits, the better it is for us," said Mohammad Nabi Afghan, another economic expert.

Although the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has indicated in a report that the US government may consider reviewing the potential return of the remaining \$4 billion, the Afghan Ministry of Economy has once again

called for the full release of the country's frozen assets. The ministry emphasized that these assets should be returned to Afghanistan's central bank.

Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy, said: "These assets should be handed over to the central bank as soon as possible to serve as monetary backing and be utilized in Afghanistan's major economic policies and the basic needs of the Afghan people."

This comes as, following the collapse of the republican government in August 2021, more than \$9 billion of Afghanistan's assets were frozen by American and European banks.

US aid cuts may trigger maternal health crisis in Afghanistan: UN

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has warned that the suspension of aid could result in 1,200 additional maternal deaths and 109,000 unintended pregnancies in Afghanistan between 2025 and 2028.

Pio Smith, UNFPA's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, expressed concern over the US aid cuts, stating that this decision will have catastrophic consequences in Afghanistan.

"On 24 January, the US Administration paused nearly all US foreign aid programme pending a 90 days review, in response, UNFPA has suspended services funded by US grants that provide a life-

line for women and girls in crises, including in south Asia. If I just take the example of Afghanistan, between 2025 and 2028 we estimate that the absence of US support will result in 1,200 additional maternal deaths and 109,000 additional unintended pregnancies," Smith said.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that the 90-day suspension of aid is intended for a thorough review of the programs. He assured that effective and reasonable aid would continue. Rubio pointed out that some organizations, particularly the US Agency for International Development (USAID), had refused to provide information.

"In some cases, with USAID, 10, 12, 13 percent, maybe less of the money was actually reaching the recipient and the rest was going into the overhead and the bureaucracy. This isn't my money. This is taxpayer money. So, we're not going to eliminate foreign aid. We're going to have foreign aid that makes sense. We're going to have foreign aid that works. We're going to have foreign aid that furthers the national interest. We're going to have foreign aid that benefits our trusted partners and our allies," Rubio added.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has also reported that 89% of Afghan families require

humanitarian support.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan emphasized that humanitarian aid should remain separate from political issues.

Abdul Latif Nazari, the ministry's technical deputy, told TOLONews: "We believe that humanitarian aid must remain humanitarian, and it should be kept separate from political matters."

The USAID website announced that, except for essential staff, its employees worldwide would be placed on administrative leave starting Friday. The New York Times reported that USAID has approximately 10,000 employees globally.

Leaked Taliban documents reveal 1,400 jailed women, 16,000 men

KABUL (Amu TV): A group of unidentified hackers has carried out a rare cyberattack on Taliban databases, leaking documents from 21 ministries and government agencies. The leaked records, published online, suggest that the Taliban has imprisoned approximately 1,400 women and more than 16,000 men.

According to the documents, Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada has also banned overseas academic travel without his direct approval and has placed travel restrictions on more than 8,000 former government employees, barring them from leaving the country.

The documents, released

by the website Talib Leaks, indicate that as of January 2024, around 80 foreign nationals, including six women, are being held in Taliban-run prisons.

Key Findings from the Leaked Documents:

Approximately 1,400 women and 16,000 men are imprisoned under Taliban rule.

At least 80 foreign nationals, including six women, are in Taliban custody, the documents show. According to the documents, more than 8,000 former Afghan government employees have been banned from leaving the country.

Overseas academic travel is prohibited without approval from the Taliban's

supreme leader, the documents show.

The Taliban Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has conducted extensive research on hijab enforcement and religious policing in 12 provinces, according to the documents.

The leaked documents further suggest that Taliban authorities have scrutinized foreign organizations operating in Bamiyan Province, accusing them of promoting Western cultural values.

Taliban have not commented on the cyberattack or the leaked records. However, analysts say the disclosures provide an unprecedented look at their

governance.

"The Taliban's repression is well known, but these leaked documents expose their rule in a way we haven't seen before," said analyst Samad Samadi in an interview.

The leaks come amid growing internal divisions within the Taliban. According to sources, Akhundzada recently deployed his loyalists to Kabul's airport and ordered that no Taliban officials may travel without his direct authorization. Some reports also suggest that Kabul has adopted a heightened military posture in response to the ongoing power struggles within the regime.

Uzbekistan to begin construction of ATR

KABUL (BNA): Uzbekistan's Transport Minister, Ilham Muhammadov, announced that construction of the long-awaited Afghan-Trans Railway (ATR) will commence in 2025.

This ambitious 573-kilometer project aims to connect Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan, enhancing trade and transportation routes between Central Asia, South Asia, and beyond.

The Afghan-Trans railway will include an expan-

sion of an 80-kilometer section designed to facilitate access to Pakistani and Iranian ports through Afghanistan.

The Islamic Emirate expressed its commitment to the project in August 2021, with an exploration team conducting route assessments and feasibility studies throughout 2022.

According to Uzbekistan's main transport and infrastructure design institute, the estimated construction cost of

the railway is approximately \$4.6 billion.

Once completed, the railway is projected to have the capacity to transport up to 20 million tons of commercial goods annually.

This crucial transport corridor is expected to strengthen connections between Europe, Russia, Central Asia, and South Asia, making it easier and more cost-effective for Afghanistan to access regional and global markets.

Khwaja Ali Jowzjani Shrine nearing collapse



SAR-E-PUL (TOLONews): A number of cultural figures in Sar-e-Pul say that the shrine of Khwaja Ali Jowzjani, a prominent mystic located in the old bazaar of this province, is on the brink of destruction.

According to them, if attention is not given to the cultural heritage of this province, these historical sites will be completely lost.

Cultural activists are calling on the Islamic Emirate and UNESCO to restore Sar-e-Pul's historical monuments.

Sayed Hesamuddin Bashardost, a cultural activist in Sar-e-Pul, stated: "Historical monuments and

KP govt spent Rs675b for increase in forest areas: CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has stated that the province is spending substantial resources on the conservation and expansion of forests for the sake of the country and nation; since 2017, a total of Rs. 675 billion has been spent, resulting in a significant increase in forest areas within the province. "The forest cover in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has reached 26.7% of the total land area, which surpasses international standards," he added.

Addressing the International Climate Change Conference "Breathe Pakistan" in Islamabad on Thursday, the Chief Minister highlighted that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa accounts for 37% of the total forest cover in Pakistan, covering 37,000 square kilometers. The province holds 40-45% of the country's total forests, which absorb approximately 50% of the nation's carbon emissions. He further stated that, according to global research, an annual budget of Rs. 322 billion is required to protect forests of this scale.

"Our leader, Imran Khan, has not only raised awareness about climate change at the national level but has also made a significant impact internationally. We are committed to his vision and are making dedicated efforts to expand and protect forests on a large scale," said the Chief Minister. He said that beneath the province's forested land, there are vast reserves of minerals and agricultural potential, emphasizing that if utilized commercially, these resources could generate Rs. 215 billion in annual revenue. However,

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is sacrificing these resources for the greater good of the country, he remarked.

Similarly, he pointed out that the province's carbon credit value stands at approximately Rs. 100 billion annually. He advocated for allocating a share of the NFC (National Finance Commission) award based on forest cover and carbon credits, similar to India and China. In India, 10% of the NFC share is allocated for forested areas. He also highlighted that more than 175,000 green jobs have been created in the province.

Touching upon other environment-friendly initiatives, the Chief Minister mentioned the BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) project, calling it an eco-friendly initiative by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. "To date, around 75 million people have traveled on the BRT, which has significantly contributed to reducing environmental pollution" he said and added that over the past four years, BRT operations have resulted in the elimination of 124,000 tons of carbon emissions.

Ali Amin Gandapur went on saying that the provincial government has designated its annual budget as a "Green Budget." This includes an allocation of Rs. 20 billion to provide free solar systems to deserving households, along with an additional Rs. 20 billion for subsidized solar systems. He said that in the current year, 661 government schools, 183 colleges, and 628 mosques in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been converted to solar energy, adding that the government aimed at to transition all educational institutions, healthcare centers, and other public buildings to solar power during its tenure.

The Chief Minister also highlight-

ed initiatives aimed at bringing barren lands under cultivation and improving water resource management. He said that the CRBC (Chashma Right Bank Canal) project will bring 300,000 acres of barren land under cultivation, while the Mohmand Dam Canal, a Rs. 5 billion project, will cultivate over 200,000 acres of land. Additionally, four small dam projects have been completed, which will irrigate 50,000 acres of farmland, he said.

He further mentioned that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has undertaken an olive plantation initiative by grafting 170,000 wild olive trees, with a target of grafting one million trees in the coming years to boost edible oil production. Highlighting the province's welfare projects, the Chief Minister stated that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the first province in Pakistan to provide free healthcare to 100% of its population. Under the Sehat Card program, 13 million families are receiving free medical treatment, with 25% of the program's budget allocated to treating heart diseases. Additionally, a state-of-the-art Peshawar Institute of Cardiology with 250 beds has been established.

He also expressed gratitude to international organizations for their support in various welfare projects and emphasized the need for continued cooperation in implementing green initiatives like the Billion Tree Plus project. The Chief Minister concluded by stating that climate change is not just a challenge for Pakistan but for the entire world, and collective efforts are needed to address it. "InshaAllah, together we will successfully transform Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into a truly Green Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," he affirmed.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets with JUI-F Chief, Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

DG IAEA to visit Pakistan next week

ISLAMABAD (APP): At the invitation of the government, Director General of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi, will undertake an official visit to Pakistan next week.

During his visit, DG IAEA will call on the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister. He will also participate in seminars at Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) and the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). He would also visit INMOL Hospital in Lahore and Chashma Nuclear Power Generating Station (CNPGS).

Pakistan and IAEA have long standing cooperation that dates back to 1957. Pakistan is currently member of the Board of Governors of the IAEA. The DG routinely visits IAEA member states to outreach on peaceful uses of nuclear technology. As part of this outreach, his visit reaffirms Pakistan's deepening partnership with the IAEA on the peaceful uses of nuclear technology aimed at fostering socio-economic development of the country.

Maldives Commander meets Naval Chief

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf and Chief of Defence Force Maldives, Major General Ibrahim Hilmy on Thursday discussed matters of mutual interest, including bilateral collaboration and regional security.

The visiting dignitary will also participate in AMAN Dialogue, being conducted alongside the multinational maritime exercise AMAN-25, said a news release of Director General Public Relations (NAVY).

During the meeting at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad Major General Ibrahim Hilmy appreciated and acknowledged Pakistan Navy's efforts and commitment to promote collaborative maritime security in the region. Both leaders pledged to further strengthen and expand the scope of existing bilateral defence relationship.

The Chief of the Naval Staff expressed his gratitude for participation of the Chief of Defence Force Maldives in AMAN Dialogue. He emphasized that the Dialogue will serve as a valuable platform for fostering comprehensive discussions on maritime security challenges and opportunities. The visit of the Chief of Defence Force Maldives is expected to further enhance bilateral collaboration between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Pakistan and Maldives, while underscoring the need to strengthen defence ties, have reaffirmed the commitment to broaden and expand existing collaboration, including military engagements and joint initiatives.

The resolve was expressed as Chief of Defence Staff of Maldives, Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, who is on an official visit to Pakistan, called on Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) General Sahir Shamshad Mirza in Rawalpindi on Thursday.

Govt enacts PECA law in good faith: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture Attaullah Tarar said the government had enacted the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) law in good faith, primarily to regulate digital media.

Addressing the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, the minister warned that unchecked digital media could lead to serious societal issues, including incitement to violence. Atta Tarar made these remarks in response to the NA panel's call for broad consultations with all stakeholders, including press clubs, to address concerns related to media regulation.

The meeting was presided over by MNA Pullain Baloch who announced that a follow-up meeting would be held next week, involving the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, the Chairman of the National Assembly Committee on Information and Broadcasting, and media stakeholders to devise a comprehensive solution to the issue. The NA body also reviewed the matters related to the Public Sector Development Programme of the Ministry for the ongoing year.

While briefing the committee on the matter, the minister said that the Ministry had worked out comprehensive plan to equip the Radio Pakistan and the Pakistan Television with the modern technology. He added that the additional budget was needed to expand the network of official media to the rural areas.

Tarar said the additional budget would also be utilised to upgrade the existing electronic tools. He also announced the establishment of a think tank comprising 14 experts recruited from the market. The total budget allocated for this initiative was Rs 204 million, he added.

The minister highlighted that significant progress has been made in resolving internal issues within the national TV. "We have ensured timely payment of salaries to employees, unlike some private media

organizations that fail to pay their staff on time," he stated.

The minister also revealed plans to establish a major PTV Center in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, offering internships to students in the region. He expressed concerns over foreign-backed campaigns aimed at inciting rebellion among the youth in these areas. "Through media, we will address these issues and guide the youth towards a positive direction," he asserted.

The minister further elaborated on the improvements in the PTV Sports Channel, stating that corrupt elements have been removed, and a strong team has been assembled, yielding positive results. He also mentioned ongoing efforts to enhance the performance of PTV and Radio Pakistan, with a focus on expanding coverage in Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK.

Addressing the issue of financial losses incurred during the tenure of former Minister for Information Fawad Chaudhry, the minister revealed that a court case was underway regarding a controversial contract. He expressed optimism that canceling the controversial contract would double the PTV's revenue.

The minister also pointed out that the provincial governments were not adequately supporting the national broadcaster. "While we provide extensive coverage to the provinces, it is their responsibility to allocate advertisements for PTV and Radio Pakistan," he said. The meeting also reviewed the issues of rents of properties of Radio Pakistan and PTV. Federal Secretary Information Ambreen Jan told the meeting that the rents of properties of government institutions are determined by the Ministry of Housing. The committee sought details of properties rented by both institutions in the next meeting.

The meeting concluded with a consensus on the need for a balanced approach to media regulation, ensuring both freedom of expression and accountability. The committee members expressed their commitment to working collaboratively to address the challenges faced by the media industry in Pakistan.

Bangladesh protesters torch home of Sheikh Mujib

DHAKA (Reuters): Thousands of protesters set fire to the home of Bangladesh's founding leader, as his daughter, ousted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina delivered a fiery social media speech calling on her supporters to stand against the interim government.

Witnesses said several thousand protesters, some armed with sticks, hammers, and other tools, gathered around the historic house and independence monument, while others brought a crane and excavator to demolish the building. The rally was organised alongside a broader call, dubbed "Bulldozer Procession", to disrupt Hasina's scheduled 9pm online address on Wednesday.

Protesters, many aligned with the "Students Against Discrimination" group, had expressed their fury over Hasina's speech, which they viewed as a challenge to the newly formed interim government. Tensions have been escalating in Bangladesh since August 2024, when mass protests forced Hasina to flee to neighbouring India.

The interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, has struggled to maintain control as protests and unrest have continued. Demonstrators have attacked symbols of Hasina's government, including the house of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which was first set ablaze in August. A symbol of the country's establishment, the house is where Bangabandhu (friend of Bengal), as he is popularly known, declared Bangladesh's independence in 1971.

JI to observe black day today

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami will observe black day on February 08, the party's chief Hafiz Naem ur Rehman said in a statement on Thursday.

"The JI will stage strong protest outside the election commission's office in Karachi," Hafiz Naem said. JI Ameer also suggested that the matters will be streamlined if the judicial commission being constituted, and it takes decision on the basis of the Form 45.

He said the government was not intending to tackle the issue in this manner. "The opposition was also not prepared to launch a movement on the basis of Form 45. JI Ameer said that the suggestion to hold fresh elections would be boosting the government and approving the rigging in the polls. Hafiz Naem ur Rehman, remains vocal about alleged rigging and irregularities in 2024 elections held in Pakistan on February 08 last year.

Aid in Civil Aid Regulation case Lawyer writes to KP govt for withdrawal of appeal

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A prominent Peshawar based lawyer Shabir Hussain Gigyani has sent a letter to the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding Chairman Imran Khan, central and provincial leaders of PTI, asking them to withdraw an appeal filed in the Supreme Court against the Peshawar High Court's decision to declare the establishment of internment centers and the Aid in Civil Power Regulation as unconstitutional.

In the letter, Shabir Hussain Gigyani advocate has stated that the Peshawar High Court (PHC) had declared the internment centers and the Aid in Civil Power Regulation as unconstitutional and illegal. Therefore, the appeal filed by the provincial government in the Supreme Court should be withdrawn.

The letter stated that the Aid in Civil Power Regulation was a black law enacted by the People's Party government in 2011, which gave expanded powers of security forces to detain individuals without any crime, reason, or complaint. This law was repealed in 2018 after the merger of FATA and PATA, but in 2019, the PTI government passed a bill to revive this law, and the governor promulgated an ordinance to enforce it throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The lawyer has stated that he had filed a writ petition in the Peshawar High Court against the establishment of internment centers and the enforcement of the Aid in Civil Power Regulation. The court, headed by the late Chief Justice Waqar Ahmad Seth, had declared these centers and the regulation as unconstitutional in 2019.

The court had also ordered that the internment centers be handed over to the Inspector General of Prisons, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, the PTI government had filed an appeal against this decision in the Supreme Court.

Shabir Ahmad Gigyani has stated that due to the appeal filed in the Supreme Court, thousands of people are still detained in internment centers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Therefore, the PTI government should withdraw the appeal through the Advocate General and allow the detainees to be released.

The letter has also stated that the internment centers are a violation of basic human rights, and the PTI itself has become a victim of this law after the events of May 9. Therefore, the provincial government should withdraw the appeal filed in the Supreme Court.



JEDDAH: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, meeting with Deputy Governor of General Authority of Foreign Trade, Abdul Aziz Alsakran.

Media briefed on multinational exercise 'Aman'

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The media brief for multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN-25 was held in Karachi. Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, briefed the media on the details of Exercise AMAN and the maiden AMAN Dialogue, scheduled to be conducted from 7-11 February in Karachi.

While addressing the media personnel, the Commander Pakistan Fleet highlighted that with the evolving global landscape shifting from geo-politics to geo-economics, the security of global sea-borne trade and energy routes has gained unprecedented importance. The Indian Ocean Region faces a range of challenges, from traditional security threats to non-traditional risks. These multifaceted issues have broadened the scope of maritime security, compelling nations to re-evalu-

ate their strategies and policies.

He stated that Pakistan recognizes that no single country can address the complex challenges at sea alone. In this context, Pakistan Navy took the initiative to launch biennial Multinational Exercise AMAN in 2007 under the slogan "Together for Peace."

The primary objective of this exercise is to bring maritime nations together to adopt safe and sustainable procedures, share experiences, and collectively address maritime threats. Over the years, Exercise AMAN has evolved in terms of its objectives and scope. The first AMAN Exercise, which primarily focused on counterterrorism and anti-piracy operations, was attended by 28 countries. Over time, the scope and participation of the exercise expanded, ultimately paving the way for doctrinal synergy to count-

er emerging maritime challenges.

The ninth edition of the exercise is scheduled from 7-11 February, with participation from over 60 countries, including ships, aircraft, special operations forces, EOD marine teams, and observers. The exercise is divided into two phases: Harbour and Sea. The Harbour Phase (7-9 February) will include various activities such as seminars, operational discussions, professional demonstrations, international gatherings, and sports fixtures. The Sea Phase (10-11 February) will feature tactical maneuvers and maritime security exercises, including anti-piracy and counterterrorism operations, search and rescue drills, and live firing exercises. The highlight of the Sea Phase will be the International Fleet Review, which will be witnessed by both foreign and national dignitaries.