

**Imran's lawyer detained**  
F.P. Report

RAWALPIND: PTI founder Imran Khan's lawyer, Faisal Chaudhry, has been detained outside Adiala Jail. The police have taken Faisal Chaudhry into custody following his meeting with the incarcerated Imran Khan inside the jail. He has been arrested due to an alleged altercation with the jail authorities the previous day and he is now being transferred to a police check post for further legal proceedings.

**Nawaz satisfied**  
F.P. Report

LAHORE: PML-N President Nawaz Sharif expressed optimism over the country's economic trajectory, noting improvements in economic indicators and a reduction in inflation as positive signs for the nation. Along with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the discussion centred on the overall national situation, ongoing development initiatives in Punjab, and public service projects.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inaugurating renovated and refurbished Qaddafi Stadium.

## SC judges seek halt on new appointments

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, four Supreme Court (SC) judges, including senior puisne judge Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, on Friday requested the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi to postpone new appointments at the apex court until adjudication of challenges to the Constitution (26th Amendment) Act, 2024.

In a letter to the CJP, the top court judges requested: "The scheduled meeting and the appointment of the eight new Judges to the SC by the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) be postponed till the challenge to the 26th Constitutional Amendment is decided one way or the other."

Besides Justice Shah, the letter was written by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Aysha A Malik and Justice Athar Minallah.

Last month, the JCP rescheduled its meeting to Feb 10 from Feb 11 to consider filling eight vacant posts of judges at the top court. The meeting, set for Feb 10 at 2pm, will also consider the elevation of chief justices of all the high courts to the apex court. However, the Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCA) and others moved the top court seeking postponement of the JCP's meeting.

The apex court judges, in today's letter, stated that the meeting should be postponed "at least until the constitutional bench decides the applications for convening a full court to hear and determine that challenge and till the matter of the transfer of judges to the IHC and their seniority is finally determined on the

## SC accepts plea against fuel price adjustment in electricity bills

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) has accepted Jamaat-e-Islami's petition against fuel price adjustment surcharges in electricity bills for hearing after removing objections raised by the Registrar's Office.

During the hearing, Justice Jamal Mandokhail remarked that the taxes collected through electricity bills go into the national treasury. Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi pointed out that NEPRA conducts hearings on electricity tariffs and questioned whether Jamaat-e-Islami had ever raised objections during NEPRA's proceedings.

Justice Rizvi further stated that electricity theft is a major cause of line losses, but acknowledged that Jamaat-e-Islami has run campaigns against electricity theft. The petitioner's counsel argued that various surcharges and taxes, including the Fuel Price Adjustment (FPA), are being imposed through electricity bills, placing an additional burden on consumers.

PHC issues stay order on fuel price adjustment The counsel further emphasized that their petition specifically challenges certain surcharges and the FAD, upon which the court decided to hear the case along with the ongoing IPPs case for a comprehensive review. The SC after initial arguments accepted JI's plea against the fuel price adjustment surcharges in the bills and decided to hear this petition along with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) case.

judicial side (since we are given to understand that such challenges have been launched)".

**Apex Court removes objections to Imran's petition against official secrets, army acts:** The Supreme Court's constitution bench on Friday dismissed objections of the registrar office to the petition filed by PTI founder Imran Khan against the Official Secrets Act and the Army Act.

A five-member bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the petition, with Shoaib Shaheen representing the former prime minister. During the proceedings, the court sought arguments on whether the petition was maintainable and remarked that it should be explained why the high court was not

approached before challenging the amendments.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that the apex court had been hearing petitions against under Article 184/3 on its own wish, adding that if it continued hearing direct petitions, Article 199 would become ineffective. Imran Khan's lawyer argued that the amendments to the Official Secrets Act and the Army Act were infringing on people's rights. He stated that the decision on whether the petition was maintainable or not should be made by the court, not the registrar. Subsequently, the Constitutional Bench dismissed the objections raised against the petition, and directed the Registrar's office to formally allot a number to the constitutional petition.

## SBP injects over Rs2.53tr in market

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Friday, injected over Rs 2,538 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO).

The SBP, during the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7-day and 28-day tenors on February 07, 2025 and accepted an amount of Rs 2,038.35 billion offered through 26 bids.

The central bank received 20 bids for 7-day tenor cumulatively offering an amount of Rs 1,151.25 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.03 to 12.10 percent while 8 bids were received for the 28-day tenor amounting to Rs 936 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.05 to 12.08%.

The SBP accepted the 18 quotes for 7-day tenor cumulatively amounting to Rs 1,147.35 at 12.05% rate of return while the entire amount offered through 8 bids for 28-day tenor was also accepted at 12.05% rate of return.

Meanwhile, the central bank also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for the 7-day and 28-day tenors and further injected around Rs 455 billion into the market. The central bank received 4 bids for 7-day tenor quoting an amount of Rs 394.95 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.08 to 12.10 % while 2 bids were received for 28-day tenor offering an amount of Rs 60 billion at 12.08% rate of return. The SBP accepted the entire amount of Rs 454.95 offered through all the quotes for 7-day and 8-day tenors at 12.08% rate of return.

## 3 militants killed in operations

F.P. Report

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

During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarji location as a result of which three khwarji were sent to hell, who were trying to escape wearing women attire (buraq).

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed khwarji, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Khwarji found in the area, as security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday appreciated the security forces for their successful operation against the terrorists of Fitna Al-Khawarij in Datakhel, North Waziristan district. He lauded the security forces for killing three Khawarij terrorists during the operation.

# The Frontier Post

## PM reviews reforms in power sector

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday chaired a review meeting on the implementation of reforms in the power sector. Speaking at the meeting, he said by the grace of Allah, the ongoing reforms in the power sector were yielding positive results.

He said it was a good sign that the ministry and the relevant departments were cooperating to rectify defects of the last seven decades. The prime minister, "We promised to the public from day one that low cost environment friendly electricity will be provided to them."

He pointed out that the revisiting of agreements with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) led to saving for the national exchequer and reduced the price of electricity for consumers. He said the reduction in deficits of distribution companies due to campaign against electricity theft was made possible because of hard work of the ministry of power and supporting institutions.

The prime minister vowed to bring down losses of the distribution companies, caused by power theft, by 100 percent by speeding up the campaign against stealing of electricity. He pointed that the performance of the distribution companies was improving after appointment of board members of good reputation, from the private sector.

More members of good reputation would be hired from the private sector soon for constituting boards in the remaining companies, he said adding the reduction in losses during electricity transmission was evident of the positive result of the reforms. The tariff rate for domestic consumers and industries would be further reduced with the ongoing reforms in the power sector, he continued.

The meeting was briefed about the targets for the next three years in the power sector and on the performance of the sector. It was told that the receipts of the distribution companies

## Shehbaz lauds PCB, inaugurates renovated Gaddafi Stadium

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that the players of the national cricket team were heroes, and the nation expected them to win the upcoming Champions Trophy. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the state-of-the-art renovation of Gaddafi Stadium, he expressed his joy over the completion of the stadium's renewal within 117 days. He appreciated Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman and Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi for supervising the stadium's construction. He congratulated all PCB members and directed the chairman to reward all individuals involved in this significant achievement. The premier remarked that after "Shehbaz Speed," it was now time for "Mohsin Speed." He also lauded the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) for its role in the stadium's up-gradation. Shehbaz Sharif praised the national cricket team for their recent performances and expressed hope that they would become champions of the upcoming Champions Trophy. He also voiced his confidence that Pakistan would defeat India in the tournament, winning the hearts of 240 million Pakistanis.

reached 93.26 percent by December 2024, as a result of the reforms and the campaign against electricity theft.

The participants were also informed about the strategy to reduce the circular debt in phases, establishment of competitive markets for transmission of electricity and about the timeline for reduction in power tariff and other reforms. The meeting was told about the progress on the 500 kv Matiari-Moro-Rahim Yar Khan transmission line and Ghazi Barotha-Faisalabad transmission line.

They were also apprised about the dissolution of National Transmission and Despatch Company and on progress for formation of new Energy Infrastructure Development and Management Company (EIDMC). The prime minister instructed to complete all reforms and projects within the stimulated timeframe. Federal ministers Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tatar, Dr Musadiq Malik and Sardar Awais Leghari, Special Assistant to PM Muhammad Ali and high level officers concerned attended the meeting.

**Flexible, grant-based support to developing countries vital for**

**resilience, sustainable development:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterated his call for more predictable, flexible, and grant-based financial support for developing countries to enable them to build resilient infrastructure and invest in sustainable development.

"Without such support, the path to climate adaption and green transformation will remain elusive," the prime minister said in a video message at the two-day "Breathe Pakistan International Climate Change Conference, organized by the Dawn Media Group. He told the international gathering that Pakistan's climate story embodied a "cruel paradox" as its emissions were less than one percent and yet it was one of the most climate-affected countries with climate change-induced floods, glacial meltdown, blistering heatwaves and soil-cracking droughts.

He recalled that two years ago, one-third of Pakistan was submerged in floodwaters, displacing 33 million people and claiming 1,700 innocent lives. This tragedy transformed climate change from a distant threat to an urgent call to action, he added.



RAWALPINDI: Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) of the Maldives Armed Forces, called on General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff, at General Headquarters.

## Bilawal for people-to-people ties between Pakistan, US

WASHINGTON: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday stated that the people-to-people ties between Pakistan and the United States should be strengthened.

Bilawal, who is currently on a visit to the United States on the invitation of US President Donald Trump for attending National Prayer Breakfast event spoke to the Pakistani media representatives in Washington.

During his interaction with journalists there, Bilawal Zardari mentioned that he had important meetings with American officials and leaders from around the world at the

National Prayer Breakfast event.

Speaking about the National Prayer Breakfast event in the US, he said the event was attended by prominent personalities from all over the world, and the US President delivered a speech there. Earlier, in Washington, Bilawal also spoke at the National Prayer Breakfast event. He emphasised that the people-to-people ties between Pakistan and the United States should be enhanced, and religion should be used to unite rather than divide.

During his speech at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, he said that the event was a great opportunity for interfaith

harmony. He also had meetings with members of Congress, but as he is no longer the foreign minister, all the meetings were held in a personal capacity.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari asserted that people should be treated equally, and every Muslim believes in Jesus Christ, adding it was not a national prayer event but a global prayer event. He further added that instead of dividing over religion, we should establish unity, and there is room to work more with Pakistanis living in the U.S while emphasising that Interfaith programs were important to protect society from division. — Agencies

## Bangladesi Naval Chief visits Naval Headquarters

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff of Bangladesh, Admiral Mohammad Nazmul Hassan, called on Chief of the Naval Staff of Pakistan, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The visiting dignitary will also participate in the AMAN Dialogue, being conducted alongside the multinational maritime exercise AMAN 25.

Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters, the honorable guest was received by the Chief of the Naval Staff. A smartly turned-out contingent of Pakistan Navy presented a Guard of

Honour. Thereafter, the dignitary laid a floral wreath at Shuhada Monument and was introduced to the Principal Staff Officers at Naval Headquarters.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, the regional maritime security environment, and prospects for enhanced bilateral naval collaboration between the two countries were discussed. Various avenues of cooperation, including training, exchange of visits, and bilateral naval exercises between the navies of Pakistan and Bangladesh, were also highlighted. The Naval Chief emphasized Pakistan Navy's initiatives to ensure maritime security

and regional peace through Regional Maritime Security Patrols. The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan Navy's role and contributions in promoting collaborative maritime security in the region.

The Chief of the Naval Staff expressed gratitude for the participation of the Chief of the Naval Staff of Bangladesh in the AMAN Dialogue. The visit of the Chief of the Naval Staff of Bangladesh is expected to further strengthen and expand defense ties between the two brotherly countries, fostering greater collaboration and robust relations between their naval forces.

## 9th maritime exercise Aman kicks off

F.P. Report

KARACHI: An impressive and colourful flag-hoisting ceremony was held at Pakistan Navy Dockyard, Karachi, marking the formal inauguration of the 9th Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN 2025. The event featured the simultaneous hoisting of flags from all participating nations. A large number of senior military representatives, observers, diplomats, and officials from Pakistan Armed Forces attended the ceremony.

The message of Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, was read during the ceremony. In his message, the Naval Chief warmly welcomed the participants of Exercise AMAN-25 and highlighted that the exercise has become a regular feature, bringing together regional and extra-regional navies to foster a secure and conducive maritime environment. He emphasized Pakistan Navy's role as a key stakeholder in the Arabian Sea and its initiatives to enhance regional maritime security, including Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP). The Admiral further stated that in recognition of the international community's trust in Pakistan Navy's efforts to promote peace and stability at sea, AMAN Dialogue has been introduced as an adjunct to the exercise.

Speaking on the occasion, Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, underscored Pakistan Navy's contributions toward collaborative maritime security. He emphasized the significance of the exercise in enhancing interoperability among participants and sought their cooperation in achieving the exercise's objectives. He praised the participating countries for supporting Pakistan's commitment to peace and maritime security and acknowledged the fluttering flags of participating nations as a true embodiment of the Exercise AMAN motto - "Together for Peace." He expressed hope that the friendships fostered during the exercise would continue to grow.

## Pakistan issues deadline for Afghans

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Government of Pakistan has drafted a three-stage repatriation plan for Afghan refugees promised resettlement by the US, calling on foreign missions to coordinate the relocation of Afghan nationals out of Islamabad and Rawalpindi by March 31, 2025, says in media reports.

If they're not removed by that date, they will be "repatriated to Afghanistan", said the drafted Pakistani plan. When Afghanistan fell to the Taliban in 2021, hundreds of thousands of refugees fled across the border to neighbouring Pakistan, seeking safety away from the group.

Afghan nationals who had worked with the United States or NATO forces were particularly fearful of reprisals from the Taliban. Promised resettlement in the US, many travelled to Pakistan to await American visas. Now they fear they'll be deported back to Afghanistan, following US President Donald Trump's order to suspend the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), effectively locking out refugees worldwide who had been on a pathway to US resettlement.

Soon after the executive

order was signed, Pakistan's Prime Minister's Office drafted a three-stage repatriation plan for "Afghan nationals bound for 3rd country resettlement." The document, seen by CNN, calls for foreign missions to coordinate the relocation of Afghan nationals out of Islamabad and its twin city of Rawalpindi by March 31, 2025. If they're not removed by that date, they will be "repatriated to Afghanistan."

While living in Afghanistan, Shakoofa Khalili worked on a child abuse protection programme funded by the US Embassy. She hoped to gain a US visa but ended up trapped in Pakistan, with few options to leave. Many Afghans who worked for the US but were unable to escape Afghanistan now live in hiding, in fear for their lives. Those in Pakistan are terrified of being killed should they be forced to return.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said in a statement Wednesday those forced to return face retribution from the Taliban – especially ethnic and religious minorities, women and girls, journalists, human rights activists, and mem-

bers of artistic professions. Shawn VanDiver, the founder of #AfghanEvac, a leading coalition of resettlement and veteran groups, says 10,000 to 15,000 Afghans are in Pakistan waiting for visas or resettlement in the US.

In a post on X, VanDiver said the pause in the USRAP disproportionately affects Afghan women in Pakistan, leaving them without work, without legal protections and without hope. "Since the fall of Kabul, Afghan women have been systematically erased from public life —banned from education, work, and even basic freedoms. For many, USRAP was the only viable path to safety. With the pause, that door has slammed shut," he said.

According to the document seen by CNN, Pakistan's intelligence agencies are expected to coordinate with the Prime Minister's Office to monitor and implement the relocation plan. Pakistan's Interior Ministry released a statement to CNN confirming that "all illegal foreigners including Afghans are to be deported back to their countries of origin under the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP)."



# Conference aims to strengthen regional cooperation: Ayaz

LAHORE (APP): Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Friday said that the successful organization of the first-ever joint conference of the Commonwealth of Nations, ensuring sustainable futures for countries across the regions.

In his address at the 1st Joint CPA Asia and South-East Asia Regional

Conference titled “Collaborative Governance for Shared Regional Challenges” Ayaz Sadiq commended Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, Speaker of the Punjab Assembly, for his leadership in hosting this pivotal conference. He said that the conference aims to strengthen parliamentary ties, foster closer regional cooperation, and collaborate on advancing democracy, good governance, and sustainable development within the region.

In a landmark move to enhance regional cooperation and parliamentary relations, Ayaz Sadiq has extended his heartfelt congratulations on the establishment of a permanent Secretariat for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Asia in the National Assembly of Pakistan. This decision marks a significant step towards solidifying

Parliamentary Association (CPA) members in Asia. Ayaz Sadiq highlighted that the establishment of this Secretariat further strengthens Pakistan's commitment to its role within the Commonwealth and the broader international community.

He extended a warm welcome to the Maldives Parliament's inclusion in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) fraternity. He underlined the long-standing history of parliamentary cooperation between Pakistan and the Maldives, emphasizing that such initiatives would further enhance joint efforts for a democratic South Asia.

He also highlighted Pakistan's deep historical ties with Sri Lanka and Malaysia, two key regional partners. He stressed the mutual respect and collaboration between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to advancing peace, trade, and cooperation with Sri Lanka.

He further expressed appreciation for Malaysia's role in promoting regional peace and development and looked forward to deeper parliamentary and economic cooperation between the two nations. The speaker conveyed sincere wishes for peace, prosperity, and the early return of democratic institutions in Bangladesh. He expressed confidence in the wisdom of Bangladesh's leadership and hoped for a swift resolution of the political challenges facing the country. The Speaker also acknowledged the presence of the provincial and regional speakers from Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit Baltistan.

He referred to the 18th Speakers' Conference of all legislative chambers in Pakistan, where joint decisions were made to ensure parliamentary supremacy and enhance oversight performance. One of the key achievements from this conference was the creation of the Pakistan National Group of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (PNGCPA), which aims to improve coordination within Pakistan's legislatures and strengthen their role within the Commonwealth fraternity.

Ayaz Sadiq highlighted the numerous challenges democracies face today, including populism, polarization, and elite capture. He pointed out that these issues have propelled the debate around “good governance” to the forefront, as the electorate's expectations surpass the executive's performance.

## TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tenders are invited for hiring interested IT Firms / Vendors for provision of MPLS Layer 3 VPN (Virtual Private Network) Connectivity for the newly installed PMIS System at Selected Prisons of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from well reputed Firms/ Vendors on "Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure".

**TERMS & CONDITIONS:**

1. The sealed bids (both Technical and Financial) should reach the office of the undersigned before or on **27.02.2025 up to 11:00 AM** from the date of publication of this Tender Notice, which will be opened on the same date at **12:00 PM** in the presence of the representatives of the firms, who choose to be present. 2. The prospective Bidders shall attend a **Pre-bid Meeting** to be held on **19.02.2025 at 11:00 AM** at Inspectorate General of Prisons, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. 3. Each bidder is required to submit bid security at the rate of 2% of the total bid in the shape of CDR in the name of AIG Prisons, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The bid security shall be kept in Financial Proposal. In the technical proposal an affidavit shall be kept stating that a bid security amounting to 2% without indicating the figure in the letter, has been placed in the financial proposal or bid. Otherwise the Technical Proposal will be considered non-responsive and will be returned to the bidder after being examined by the Procurement Committee. 4. The specifications and the detailed bids solicitation documents can be downloaded from Inspectorate General of Prisons Website <http://prisons.kp.gov.pk/> and KP-PPRA Website <http://www.kppra.gov.pk/>, and can also be obtained free of cost from the office of the Planning & Monitoring Cell, Inspectorate General of Prisons Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, on any working day during office hours from the date of publication of Tender Notice in leading newspapers till closing date & time of the Tender Notice. 5. The firm/ vendor should have Tax(s) registration and valid documents of sales tax, income tax, NIN and professional tax must be attached with bidding documents. 6. All bidders must submit the relevant details of bid/proposals duly labelled by a permanent marker with the name of bidder. 7. Incomplete tender shall not be entertained. 8. Data Centre at Inspectorate General Prisons KP Peshawar will be the point of aggregation and the backup/DR site will be at Central Prison Mardan. 9. The Service Provider/Bidder requires to provide Secured VPN Connectivity at aggregation and DR sites with bandwidth of specified Mbps as per supply order/agreement. 10. The Service Provider/Bidder shall utilize best possible technology to secure connection, established between the aggregation point and all sites. 11. The Service Provider / Bidder will install hardware/ equipment at Data Centre, if required in establishment of secure VPN connection. 12. All bidders, for the purposes of works and consulting and non-consulting services shall be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority Act, 2022 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No. XVIII of 2022). 13. The proposed solution should be scalable considering possible future expansion. 14. The Inspectorate General Prisons KP reserves the right to activate or de-activate any link, site office as per its sole discretion. 15. The Inspectorate General Prisons KP reserves the right to increase or decrease the quantity of Bandwidth required for any office, aggregation site or for the complete solution. 16. The Service Provider shall ensure a backup/ secondary/ redundant link is available at aggregation points, with automatic failover mechanism. This link must be of the same bandwidth as the primary link. 17. All civil work e.g. installation, excavating, digging (soft & hard), curing, tunneling, configuration and testing of the Fiber Optic Cable or Wireless link within or outside the premises will be the responsibility of the vendor/firm. 18. In case of relocation of core site/ aggregation site to new location, the bidder will have to perform the relocation of the allied equipment, all connectivity links related configuration of the aggregation site. The cost will be pre-approved by the Inspectorate General Prisons KP on case to case basis and subject to negotiation. 19. All PTA or any other Licenses required will be the sole responsibility of the service provider. 20. The bidder will be completely responsible for the execution of the project as a single point solution provider. 21. While submitting rates, the firm should include GST and all other applicable taxes in the offered rates. 22. The firm/vendor on the panel will be bound to provide the services as per schedule in the tender documents. 23. Any other condition included in KP-PPRA Rules 2014 (up to date), besides the above shall also be applied on the bidders.

**PLANNING & MONITORING OFFICER**  
**INSPECTORATE GENERAL OF PRISONS**  
**KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA**

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## TENDER NOTICE

01. Galiyat Development Authority Abbottabad invites sealed bids from the eligible firms / bidders in accordance with KPPRA procurement rules 2014 for the following work through E-Bidding. The online bid will be closed at 00:00 Hrs on the same date and bid will be opened on the dated mentioned in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who care to be present on the prescribed date & time. The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the bids by assigning the reason thereof.

S.#	Name of Work	Estimated Cost in Million	Bidding Entry Fee 0.03%	2% Earnest Money	Period of completion	Submission of Online Applied Quoted Bids Date / Time	Opening of Online Applied Quoted Bids Date / Time
01	Rehabilitation & Construction of Major Roads in Galiyat	106.75	32,025/-	2,135,000/-	As per Work order	24-02-2025 11:00 AM	24-02-2025 12:00 PM

**INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS**

02. The bid should accompany the following documents duly attested:

- Copy of enlistment by the Provincial Enlistment Committee KPK with renewal 2024-25.
- Enlistment Order of Galiyat Development Authority Abbottabad (photocopy)
- Renewal of registration with GDA for the year 2024-25.
- National Identity Card (CNIC Photocopy)
- Copy of the valid registration of Pakistan Engineering Council Having Relevant Codes Upto June 2025.
- Form H of the Company / Firm.
- Income Tax/NTN Certificates.
- Any other document to support the bid.
- i. Bid documents and instruction to bidders can be downloaded from Galiyat Development Authority website ([www.gda.gkp.pk](http://www.gda.gkp.pk)) & KPPRA website ([www.kppra.gov.pk](http://www.kppra.gov.pk)) before the submission date/time.

03. Incomplete/Conditional bids and bids received after closing date shall not be entertained. Bids must be signed by authorized persons only.

04. 2% bid security in shape of call deposit (in Original) issued by the schedule banks only should be enclosed along with bidding documents otherwise the bid will be considered as non-responsive.

05. Bidding entry fee of Rs.0.03% (non-refundable) as per KPPRA notification dated: 05/4/2021 in shape of CDR in the name of Director General, GDA must be attached with the bid.

06. Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer Estimated Cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer Estimate along with detail rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Govt. and the 2nd lowest bidder and soon will be considered accordingly.

07. In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof.

08. The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids are may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.

09. The additional security shall be released to the contractor in (04) Four installments i.e. 1st Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project 2nd Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project 3rd Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project & the 4th Installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project.

10. Any bidder who provides incorrect information, fake documents shall be debar, disqualified & blacklisted.

11. Bids will be valid for Ninety (90) days.

12. Successful Bidder should sign the agreement with the department with in stipulated time after acceptance of bid.

13. If the evaluated bid costs of two or more than two bidders are same then the successful bid will be declared through draw.

14. Bid security of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd lowest bidder for the specific work will be retained by the Department will the approval of bids.

15. The bidder must be enlisted with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority as per KPPRA Rules.

16. Pay Order in the case of 2% bid & 8% Additional Security will not be acceptable as per Notification by KPPRA vide No. KPPRA/M&E/Estt/-1-12/2017-18, dated: 05/04/2018.

17. All Government taxes will be applicable as per prevailing rules.

18. Venue of bids opening is **Office of the Director Technical** Galiyat Development Authority Abbottabad.

INF(P) 471/25

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (TECHNICAL)**  
GALIYAT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY,  
ZTBL BUILDING, MANSEHRA ROAD,  
ABBOTTABAD  
PHONE NO. 0992-9310240 / 921240  
FAX: 0992-9311081 / 920081

## SUPARCO and NCEG forge pact

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) and the National Centre of Excellence in Geology (NCEG), University of Peshawar, have reinforced their scientific collaboration through two significant agreements: a landmark partnership for lunar sample research and the extension of their existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for five more years.

In a major step forward for Pakistan's space and planetary science research, SUPARCO and NCEG have signed an agreement to collaborate on the study of lunar samples. The agreement was formally signed by Mr. Zafar Iqbal, Member Space Applications and Research, SUPARCO, and Prof. Dr. Liaquat Ali, Director, NCEG, in the presence of a SUPARCO delegation and NCEG faculty.

Under this collaboration, SUPARCO will loan lunar samples to NCEG to conduct elemental and mineralogical characterization of lunar soil, contributing to the development of a National Spectral Library. A Steering Committee comprising representatives from both institutions has been formed to oversee research activities and ensure compliance with the agreement.



### SUIT ADVERTISEMENT

In the Court of Miss Ambareen Navid Judge Banking Court-1 Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar

Case No: 1/1 of 2025 Date of hearing: 27-02-2025 Suit for the Recovery of Rs. 5639554.60 Bank AL-Falah Ltd: Jamrud road branch Peshawar Vs: Mst: Abeer Tariq Notice Versus: Mst: Abeer Tariq daughter of Tariq Muhammad, R/o: Mohallah Mora Khel, P/o: Khass, Ismailia, Tehsil Razar, Distt: Sawabi (ii), H. No. P-257, Block-A, Street No. A, Phase-A, Safiya Homes, Warsak Road, Peshawar. Where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.5639554.60 Against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspaper. Failing which an ex-parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs.

Issue today On 14-01-2025 under my signature and seal of the court.

**Banking Court-I, Peshawar**

### DIRECTORATE OF MEDICAL STORES, EME, HEALTH & SUPPORT

## TENDER NOTICE

Dte of Medical Stores, EME, Health & Support requires sealed bids / quotations for the supply of Medicines, X-Ray Items (Including X-Ray / MRI / CT Scan Films Chemicals) Lab Kits (Including Kits / Reagents and Chemicals) Surgical Disposables, Dental Items and Medical Gases to All PAF Medical Setups for Fiscal Year 2025-26 on the basis of “**Closed Framework Agreement**”, as per PPRA Rules to meet day-to-day / Urgent / Emergent requirements.

Tender documents, List of items and IT conditions can be obtained from MSD Badaber, MSD Faisal and MSD Mushaf. Last date of submission of bids to Dte of MEH&S is **26 February, 2025**, till 1000 hrs. The Quotations will be opened on **27 February, 2025**, at 1200 hrs in the presence of bidders or their representatives. Director MEH&S has the right to accept or reject any bid(s), as per PPRA Rules. This tender is also available at PPRA's website. Further details and more information can be obtained from the undersigned, during working hours.

**DIRECTOR MEH&S (AHQ PESHAWAR)**  
**C/O Deputy Director Medical Stores**  
**PH: 091-9507433, 0336-0956146**

INF(P) 471/25

## UoP commemorates Kashmir Solidarity Day with IRSA oath-taking ceremony



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A special event was held at Naib Hall, Department of International Relations, University of Peshawar, to commemorate Kashmir Solidarity Day alongside the oath-taking ceremony for the newly elected cabinet members of the International Relations Students Association (IRSA).

The event, attended by the honourable Vice Chancellor, faculty members, and students reaffirmed the university's commitment to both student leadership and global awareness.

The ceremony commenced with the recitation from the Holy Quran and the national Anthem, followed by a powerful documentary

created by IRSA cabinet members in collaboration with students from the Department of Mass Communication & Journalism at the University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

The documentary shed light on the resilience and struggle of the Kashmiri people, emphasizing the importance of international solidarity in their quest for self-determination.

The Vice-Chancellor, invited as the chief guest, graced the occasion with his presence. Recognizing the dedication of outgoing student leaders, and distributed certificates of appreciation to the former cabinet members of IRSA, commending their contributions to student engagement and academic activities.

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders based on MRS-2024 / Non MRS-items as per approved PC-I for the below mentioned works out of "DDI 2024-25 are hereby invited on the basis of Single Stage Single Envelope Procedure from the Government contractors registered with PEC, enlisted with C&W Department as per Centralized Enlistment Policy of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the current financial year:

S.No.	Work Name	Estimated Cost (Million)	Bid Security @2% (Rs)	Last date & time of submission & receiving of tender form	Date & time of opening of bids
NA-23	Solarization of Masajid in Kohi Barmol, Kharki, Qasami, Alo, Mian Essa, Lund Khwar, Parkho, Hathian, Shergarh, Jalala, Pir Saddi, Makori, adey Baba, Takkar, Saro Shah, Daman-e-Koh, Pat Baba, Narai, Kot Jungara, Sari Bahlol, Jehangir Abad, Gujar Garhi, Manga, Khazana Dheri, Mohabat Abad, Toru, Chamtar, Ghalla Dher, Shamlat Pur, Salim Khan District Mardan	55.00	1,100,000/-	25-02-2025 11:00 AM	25-02-2025 12:00 PM
PK-54	Solarization, SHS, Lights, Electrification and Janazghas in Alo, Qasami, Shamoza, Dheri, Ikram Pur, Kohi Barmol, Babuzai, Katlang-01, Katlang-02, and Kati Ghari at Tehsil Katlang	34.00	680,000/-	25-02-2025 11:00 AM	25-02-2025 12:00 PM
3	Establishment & Solarization of Chairman DDAC Office Mardan	6.00	120,000/-	25-02-2025 11:00 AM	25-02-2025 12:00 PM

**TERMS & CONDITIONS:**

- A complete set of Bid Solicitation Documents can be obtained by an interested eligible bidder on submission of a written application on bidder official letter head from an authorized person upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Rs. 0.02% of the Estimated Cost in light of (Para 6.31 B&R Manual of orders/and IB.3 SBDs Small Works) - (printing/reproduction cost) in shape of original Call Deposit Receipt prepared in the name of procuring entity (AD LG, (Sr)) Mardan. In case of any further information / clarification, the bidders may visit the office on any working day before the closing of the bid or contact on email [adlgmardan1@gmail.com](mailto:adlgmardan1@gmail.com) or Phone no. 0937-9230067.
- The bid securities shall be in the shape of call deposit receipt in favor of the Assistant Director LG&RDD Mardan.
- The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security @ 2% only of Engineer Estimate in the shape of original call deposits. The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers' Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security, then will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers' Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof.
- Bids and original call deposits received through fax or by hand will not be acceptable. Sealed bids sent through registered mail / courier service should reach up to the specified time and date as mentioned above.
- The original envelop complete in all respect must be delivered through courier to the Office of Assistant Director LG&RDD Mardan situated at Main Charsadda Road Mardan, while the duplicate copy may be delivered through courier to the Directorate General LG&RDD Office No. 20, Sector B-5 opposite to NESPAK Office at Phase-V Hayatabad Peshawar before closing time of bid (only for schemes greater than RS. 2.00 million).
- The contractor or his representative can be present at time of opening of bids.
- The call deposits i.e. bid security for the work / contract must be prepared after publishing of NIT and before closing time of the bid apply.
- In case of tie / draw amongst the responsive bidden, the bid may be decided through free toss which shall be considered as final.
- The bidder shall have the relevant codes as per Pakistan Engineering Council against each mentioned work.
- The bidder shall submit their bids in sealed envelope within due time and date with requisite mandatory documents i.e. Tender Form, BOQ duly signed and stamp, SBDs, C&W Centralized Enlistment Card, active NTN / Income Tax certificate, valid PEC License, Active KPRA Registration.
- The quoted rate must be clearly mentioned in words and in figures on tender and BOQ form. Incomplete / over - writing / dis-figuring will not be acceptable and will be considered as non-responsive.
- The procuring entity may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of bids or proposals in light of KPPRA Rule 47.
- The bidder on a written request to procuring entity can withdraw their bids till closing time of the bid.
- No bidder shall be allowed to withdraw his bid after closing of bid time till award of the contract or till bid is valid, whichever is earlier.
- Any bidder who provides false, or materially inaccurate or incomplete or do not send information in hard form will be disqualified as per KPPRA Act Section 29(1) read with KPPRA Rule (43). Furthermore, the Office of the Assistant Director, LG&RDD (procuring entity) will recommend and sent cases for debarring / blacklisting and will initiate / take action in light of approved procedure / mechanism as per KPPRA Act Section 29(2) read with KPPRA Rule (44). The contractor who is already debarred by the LG&RDD can't participate in these tenders.
- Bids will remain valid for 84 days from the closing date of bids.
- Any addition made in the terms & conditions in the NIT advertised will be implemented as per KPPRA Rules.

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**Assistant Engineer (Senior)**  
LG&RDD Tehsil (HQ)  
Mardan

**Assistant Director (Senior)**  
LG&RDD Tehsil (HQ)  
Mardan



# Kundi assures farmers agricultural tax bill to be sent back for review

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday said that the agricultural tax bill was a legal matter, saying that he would send the bill back to the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly with the concerns raised by the farmers.

He said this during a meeting with a large delegation of farmers and landowners from Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, and the Malakand Division.

The delegation was accompanied by provincial president of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, and Gohar Rehman Advocate from the Peoples Lawyers Forum.

The delegation included Ajmal Shah Roghani, Provincial President of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Farmers Association, Syed Hussain Ahmad Gillani President of the Kisan Board (Pakistan) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Malakand, and Rizvanullah Khan Vice President of the Kisan Board, along with other farmers and landowners.

During the meeting, the delegation raised serious concerns regarding the provincial government's proposed agricultural tax bill.

They expressed their concerns to the bill and unanimously urged Governor Kundi to reject the "anti-agriculture" tax laws.

The delegation also requested that the Governor consider awarding civil honors to farmers and landowners for their contributions to the province's agriculture sector.

The delegation argued that rather than providing relief and facilities to both small and large farmers, the provincial government was exploiting their income through taxes.

They pointed out that imposing a tax on agricultural income would be detrimental to the sector and could lead to the collapse of agriculture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially when compared to the approach of other provinces that are promoting agricultural growth.

They particularly highlighted that tobacco farmers would be the hardest hit by the new tax. Many small landowners and farmers in the region depend on vegetable farming, and taxing their income would be unfair.

The delegation warned that if the agricultural tax bill is not revoked, there would be widespread protests throughout the province.

In response, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi assured the delegation that he would stand with the province's farmers and landowners at every forum.

He announced plans to soon hold the largest farmers' convention in the province at the Governor House, where awards will be presented to deserving landowners and farmers.

He emphasized that protests are not a solution and that negotiations should be used to resolve the issue.

The Governor encouraged farmers to voice their concerns to the provincial government and the Chief Minister as well.

He assured the delegation that he did not want to see any form of exploitation of the province's poor farmers and landowners and pledged to continue supporting their rights at all relevant forums.

**KP Governor, Adnan Jalil discuss economic activities**

Former provincial minister and advisor to PPP KP president on economic affairs, Mohammad Adnan Jalil called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi and discussed matters relating to economic activities and party organizational matters with him, said a press release issued here.

Talking on the occasion, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said that PPP considers the progress and socioeconomic uplift of the people compulsory for the national development and stability.

He said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's slogan of Roti, Kapra aur

## KP Judicial Officers receive training on arbitration

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The International Mediation and Arbitration Centre (IMAC), in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy, successfully conducted a one-day specialized training on arbitration for judicial officers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The event, aimed at enhancing the capacity of judges in alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, featured in-depth discussions on the significance of arbitration in expediting the resolution of commercial and civil disputes.

Renowned experts from the field provided insights into best practices, legal frameworks, and international arbitration standards.

The concluding ceremony of the training was honored by the presence of Mr. Ikhtiar Khan, Registrar of the Peshawar High Court. He commended the Ministry of Law & Justice and IMAC for organizing the training, emphasizing that holding it at the KP Judicial Academy provided judicial officers with valuable learning opportunities right at their doorstep.

He highlighted that the participants were carefully selected from all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure broad representation and maximize the training's impact.

Speaking at the event, Ms. Aisha Rasool, Senior Consultant, Ministry of Law & Justice, highlighted that the Ministry is committed to institutionalizing mediation and arbitration for a more efficient and accessible justice system.

The Director General of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy emphasized the importance of equipping judicial officers with the necessary skills to handle arbitration cases efficiently.

The participants shared that the initiative marks a significant step toward fostering a more efficient and accessible justice system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by encouraging the adoption of arbitration as a viable means of dispute resolution.



## CTO reviews traffic system

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Officer Haroon Rashid Khan visited GT Road to review the traffic system and appreciate the better performance of traffic officers and wardens.

Chief Traffic Officer, Haroon Rashid Khan instructed to provide travel facilities to citizens, ensure compliance with civil traffic laws otherwise strict legal action will be taken against those for negligence.

During the visit, the Chief Traffic Officer Haroon Rashid Khan inspected the various sites while reviewing the flow of traffic and the improvements made as a result of the actions taken by the Peshawar City Traffic Police against the encroaching mafia.

He praised the performance of the traffic officers and wardens in clearing the road for all types of traffic and instructed the traffic authorities to take action against the encroaching mafia on a daily basis so that the citizens do not face any kind of problems.

He said that the traffic police should clear the footpaths from the encroaching mafia so that the pedestrians do not face any kind of problems.



PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Khan Mehsood chairing a meeting regarding shifting vegetable market outside city.

## IG Zulfiqar Hameed faces major security challenges

**Syed Adnan**

PESHAWAR: The newly appointed Inspector General (IG) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, Zulfiqar Hameed, is facing serious challenges in restoring law and order in the province, particularly in tackling the rising incidents of terrorism. Recently, terrorists attacked the Bahadur Khel police checkpoint in Karak district, resulting in the martyrdom of three police Cops and injuries to six others.

Facing mounting security threats, IG Zulfiqar Hameed has made it clear that he will lead from the front and remain actively engaged in counterterrorism efforts.

According to reliable sources, he has issued strict orders to police officers, emphasizing that negligence will not be tolerated. He has directed the force to ensure that every terrorist responsible for attacks against police personnel is brought to justice.

The IG has further instructed his officers to adopt an uncompromising approach in operations against terrorists.

He stressed that if faced with an armed confrontation, the police must stand their ground and fight with full force. Acknowledging the bravery of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, he asserted that now is the time to send a clear message to the enemies- the sacrifices of the martyrs will not go in vain.

Inspector General (IG) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, Zulfiqar Hameed, has instructed police officers to remain present in the field alongside their personnel and continue the crackdown against terrorists without any leniency. He emphasized that commanders must lead from the front, ensuring that operations against militants are carried out with full force and determination.

The IG reiterated his commitment to restoring law and order in the province, stating that the sacrifices of police personnel will not be in vain.

He urged officers to stay vigilant and proactive, leaving no room for complacency in the fight against terrorism. His directives highlight a hands-on leadership approach, reinforcing the morale of the police force and demonstrating his resolve to eliminate threats to security.

## Chief Minister's Public Agenda One-month deadline set for relocation of Vegetable Market

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Under the public agenda of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mahsud, has directed the district administration, police, and municipal authorities to relocate the old vegetable market from inner Charsadda to an outside location within a month. He has also sought a report on the matter.

The 55-kanal land of Islamia College, currently occupied by the old vegetable market, will be utilized for the construction of a commercial tower, while the market will be moved to a spacious area outside the city, where shops and other necessary facilities have already been provided.

In this regard, a meeting was chaired by Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mahsud, which was attended by the Vice-Chancellor of Islamia College Peshawar, the Deputy Commissioner of Charsadda, SSP Security Charsadda, municipal officers, and other relevant officials.

Addressing the meeting, Commissioner Riaz Khan Mahsud emphasized ensuring the relocation of the vegetable market within a month to eliminate traffic congestion in inner Charsadda and maintain smooth traffic flow.

He instructed authorities to engage with the affected parties through mutual dialogue to gain their consent for the relocation.

Furthermore, he directed that the 55-kanal land of Islamia College, currently occupied by the old vegetable market, be developed into a commercial tower equipped with modern parking and other necessary facilities, ensuring that traffic flow in the area remains uninterrupted.

## Sports Gala 2025: Govt Girls Degree College Nahqi excels

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The athletes of Government Girls Degree College Nahqi secured second position in tug-of-war, the 100-meter race, and the mehndi competition, while achieving third place in the sack race.

College Principal, Noshaba Noreen, congratulated the entire sports team for their remarkable achievements and extended her best wishes. She credited the team's success to the relentless efforts of Director of Sports, Sadia Gul, who worked diligently with the athletes, trained them for different competitions, and continuously encouraged them.

Director of Sports, Sadia Gul, also congratulated the athletes for their exceptional performance in the Sports Gala. She expressed her commitment to further training and preparing the players for even greater success in future national and provincial-level sports events.

## A Written legacy: The impact of political correspondence in Pakistan's history

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

**T**HE practice of political correspondence has long been an essential facet of governance in Pakistan, serving as a formal means of communication between state institutions and key officeholders. Whether it is the Prime Minister addressing the President, a Chief Minister writing to the Prime Minister, or judicial authorities exchanging correspondence with executive officials, the written word remains a formidable instrument in the administration of state affairs. Such letters fulfill multiple functions, ensuring procedural propriety, shaping policymaking, upholding constitutional mandates, and fostering diplomatic engagement. This tradition, deeply rooted in political history, continues to underscore the solemnity and weight of official discourse in Pakistan.

The origins of written political correspondence in Pakistan can be traced back to the formative years of the nation's independence. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, as the first Governor-General, set a precedent for formal written exchanges by frequently corresponding with his Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, and other key government figures.

Among his significant letters was one addressed to Lord Mountbatten in 1947, articulating Pakistan's firm stance on the Kashmir issue. Similarly, the letters exchanged between Liaquat Ali Khan and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during the late 1940s regarding communal violence and refugee repatriation exemplified the pivotal role of written communication in diplomatic negotiations and interstate relations.

One of the most historically significant correspondences that influenced the ideological foundation of Pakistan was the exchange of letters between Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Between 1936 and 1937, Allama Iqbal wrote to Quaid-e-Azam, urging him to assume leadership of the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent and work towards an independent Muslim state. Quaid-e-Azam, in his responses, acknowledged Iqbal's concerns and appreciated his unwavering commitment to the Muslim cause. These letters remain among the most important historical documents, serving as evidence of how intellectual and political discourse through correspondence helped in articulating and realizing the dream of Pakistan.

In the present-day political landscape of Pakistan, written correspondence remains a fundamental practice within the corridors of power. When the Prime Minister writes to the President, it is often in pursuit of constitutional approvals-whether for key appointments, legislative enactments, or executive decisions of national significance. A notable instance of this occurred in August 2023 when Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formally communicated with President Dr. Arif Alvi to seek approval for the appointment of a caretaker Prime Minister, a step of profound consequence in the transition of governance. Similarly, Chief Ministers frequently address the Prime Minister to seek federal intervention in matters of provincial concern, ranging from financial allocations to disaster management.

The judiciary, too, has long engaged in the practice of written correspondence with the executive, often in pursuit of legal and administrative reforms. Such exchanges reaffirm the judiciary's autonomy and ensure that matters of constitutional import are duly acknowledged by the state. This form of communication remains a testament to the delicate balance of power between the executive and judicial branches of government.

The roots of this tradition, however, extend far beyond Pakistan's political history, tracing

back to the earliest days of Islamic governance. Among the most celebrated instances of diplomatic correspondence in Islamic history are the letters written by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to various rulers, inviting them to embrace Islam. Around the year 628 CE, the Prophet dispatched formal letters to Emperor Heraclius of Byzantine, Chosroes II of Persia, the Negus of Abyssinia, and Muqawqis of Egypt. These letters, documented in historical chronicles, exemplified the role of written diplomacy in fostering dialogue, conveying religious and political messages, and forging alliances.

In later centuries, the Islamic world continued to witness the profound impact of political correspondence. During the Abbasid era, the Caliph Harun al-Rashid famously exchanged letters with Charlemagne, the King of the Franks, thereby establishing diplomatic ties between the Muslim empire and medieval Europe. Similarly, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent maintained extensive written correspondence with European monarchs, solidifying alliances and articulating the Ottoman Empire's foreign policy objectives.

Some letters exchanged at the diplomatic level have held great historical significance. One such instance was the letter

written by US President Gerald Ford to Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on March 19, 1976. In this correspondence, President Ford expressed deep concerns over Pakistan's plans to acquire sensitive nuclear facilities, particularly those related to uranium enrichment, heavy water production, and chemical reprocessing. While acknowledging the strong and cordial relationship between the two nations, Ford emphasized the global apprehension regarding nuclear proliferation and appreciated Pakistan's assurances that its nuclear efforts would be directed exclusively towards peaceful purposes. However, he cautioned that the establishment of such facilities could undermine international confidence and stability, particularly in the absence of a compelling economic justification. Ford also highlighted the broader geopolitical implications, warning that the acquisition of these technologies might erode public and congressional support for US-Pakistan cooperation. His letter reflected the delicate balancing act between diplomatic relations and global nuclear non-proliferation concerns. Recently such kind of a similar diplomatic note that sparked controversy in Pakistan and raised doubts about its authenticity.

Pakistani political correspondence has also played a critical role in shaping the country's history. The exchange of letters between President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 1993 ultimately led to the dissolution of the government, marking a decisive moment in Pakistan's political trajectory. Similarly, the refusal of Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani in 2012 to write a letter to Swiss authorities regarding corruption allegations against President Asif Ali Zardari resulted in his dismissal by the Supreme Court. These instances underscore how correspondence between high-ranking officials can serve not only as instruments of governance but also as catalysts for political upheaval.

Beyond the realm of executive and judicial communications, political letters have also served as tools of public engagement and advocacy. Open letters addressed to the judiciary, civil society, or the general populace have often been employed to convey critical policy positions or shape public opinion. In some cases, these letters have played a pivotal role in galvanizing public support for pressing national issues, thereby influencing the broader political discourse.

The continued relevance of written correspondence in

Pakistan's political and administrative affairs underscores its enduring utility as a formal instrument of governance. By serving as records of state decisions, mechanisms for institutional engagement, and vehicles for diplomatic outreach, such letters play an indispensable role in the functioning of the state. However, the efficacy of political correspondence ultimately hinges upon its reception and execution; where letters are heeded with due diligence, they fortify the foundations of governance, but where they are disregarded or politicized, they become little more than symbolic gestures devoid of substantive impact.

The written word, therefore, remains a defining feature of political practice in Pakistan, carrying with it the weight of history and the promise of continuity. Whether exchanged between the highest offices of the state or directed toward the wider citizenry, political correspondence persists as a cornerstone of institutional integrity and a vital instrument of democratic governance. In an era of digital transformation, while electronic communication has largely supplanted traditional handwritten letters, the essence of political correspondence endures, continuing to shape Pakistan's administrative, legal, and diplomatic landscape.





## In brief

### Terrorist attack in Karak flayed F.P. Report

KARAK: 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 Arshad Zaman Khattak Advocate, Vice President of the Tahit Nusrati Bar Association, in a written press statement. The increasing unrest in Karak district requires the elders of Karak and provincial leaders to sit at one table. The provincial government should stop wasting money on meetings and take measures against the unrest in Karak. Arshad Zaman, a member of the Tehsil Bar Tahit Nusrati, further said that peace and security is a common problem of the province and it can be resolved only with a common strategy. Arshad Zaman, a member of the Tehsil Bar, criticized the current MPA and MNA and told the media that the current members of the assembly should raise their voice on the assembly floor to remove them from the corruption racket and establish peace and security. The sacrifices of the Pakistan Army for the eradication of terrorism are as clear as day.

### FIA nabs illegal travel agent F.P. Report

ABBOTTABD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Composite Circle has arrested an illegal travel agent during a raid in Abbottabad on Friday. FIA said, the operation took place at a plaza on Mansehra Road, where the suspect, identified as Farooq Shah, was taken into custody. Nine passports were recovered from the suspect, along with a mobile phone and other important records. Farooq Shah was allegedly collecting passports and large sums of money from citizens under the pretense of arranging overseas employment, despite not having a valid license. During interrogation, the suspect failed to provide satisfactory answers regarding the recovered passports. The raid was conducted under the directives of the Director FIA Peshawar Zone. Authorities confirmed that an investigation has been initiated, and efforts are underway to apprehend other individuals involved in the illegal operation. FIA officials have assured that further raids are being carried out to dismantle networks engaged in fraudulent travel schemes.

### Public servants hold protest F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Teachers, clerks and other employees took out protest rally to press the government to accept their justifiable demands of restoration of 17-A rules for appointment of one child of deceased employees who died in-service, withdrawal of pension formula, leave encashment, income tax on employees, elimination of privatization of educational institutions, and increase in medical allowance, house rent. The rally was arranged by All Pakistan Clerks Association, Young Teachers Association, and Afternoon School Teachers association Hafizabad. President APCA Abdul Majeed Gujjar, Rai Hussain Ali, Muhammad Arif Hanjira led the rally. Meanwhile, the mother of eminent journalists Syed Muhammad Zamir Shah, prominent educationist and former Principal High School No. 2 Hafizabad Syed Muhammad Zaheer Shah and Line Superintendent Syed Muhammad Tanveer Shah passed away.



QUETTA: Traffic police official issuing challan ticket after violation at road.

## ANP restores peace with cost of their blood

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Awami National Party (ANP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Mian Iftikhar Hussain has reaffirmed the party's critical role in restoring peace to the Swat and Malakand divisions. He emphasized that it was through the sacrifices of ANP leaders and workers, not external aid, that peace was achieved in these regions.

Addressing a ceremony on the death anniversary of Bacha Khan and Khan Abdul Wali Khan at Wadudia Hall in Saidu Sharif on Friday, he reflected on the dire conditions that once plagued Swat, where courts were nonfunctional, and law enforcement was absent, allowing terrorists to hold the region hostage. He noted that after failed peace talks, the ANP took a firm stand in supporting military operations that ultimately cleared the area of terrorist elements.

"We did not achieve peace in Swat through charity; it was through the blood and sacrifices of our leaders and workers, with the full support of the people of Swat," Hussain stated. He also mentioned that the ANP fulfilled its promise



by implementing a Sharia justice system in Malakand Division, but that despite this, Sufi Muhammad called democracy an infidel and challenged the state, prompting another major operation to restore order.

Hussain also criticized the performance of the PTI government, which he claimed led to the growing dissatisfaction of the people, resulting in a shift of support towards the ANP. He highlighted the successful rallies held across the province to commemorate the death anniversaries of Bacha Khan and Wali Khan, emphasizing that the ANP's focus was never on power, but on securing the rights of the Pakhtun people.

The ANP President reiterated

the importance of implementing the National Action Plan (NAP) for maintaining long-term peace in the country. He urged the government to not put obstacles in the way of ANP's efforts, stressing that the party's commitment to peace was unwavering.

Dr. Muhammad Salim Khan, the ANP Central General Secretary, Shah Hussain, the Provincial General Secretary, Swat District President Sher Shah Khan, District General Secretary Abdul Malik, and other party leaders also spoke at the event, expressing their continued dedication to the vision of Bacha Khan and Wali Khan for a peaceful and prosperous Pakhtun community.

### Unknown motorcyclist shot injured policeman Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: Unknown culprits shot injured a policeman in the premises of Akora Khattak assigned to protect police workers, on Friday.

The injured policeman identified as Fida and immediately shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Nowshera for treatment. The attackers, however, managed to escape from the crime scene.

District Police Officer (DPO), Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Akora Circle and Station House Officer (SHO) along with a heavy police contingent, have reached the area and cordoned off the surrounding region to conduct a thorough search operation to apprehend the culprits.

### Tehsil council members hold protest F.P. Report

WANA: An emergency meeting of the Tehsil Council was held at Rustam Bazaar, in which the members unanimously walked out in protest, expressing their concerns. They clearly stated that the powers of the Tehsil Council were being illegally disregarded, and until the chairman stops making unilateral decisions against public interests, they will continue to boycott council meetings.

The members emphasized that legislative and administrative decisions at the tehsil level should be made through collective consultation within the council.

They stated that the chairman's unilateral decisions are not only illegal but also harmful to public welfare. Demonstrating unity, the council members rejected these decisions and pledged to take every possible step to safeguard public interests.

### SB Press Club elects new cabinet F.P. Report

LARKANA: The 2025 elections of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana elected President M. Nawaz Umrani and General Secretary Abdul Khaliq Jagirani respectively, on Friday.

The cabinet including Senior Vice President Mukhtiar Ali Lashari, Vice President Ambert Lal, Information Secretary Mashooq Ali Khoso, and Treasurer Bashir Ali Chaudhio. After which, the series of congratulations to the office bearers continued. All the office bearers of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana thanked their friends for their support. Meanwhile, PPP leaders Zubair Ahmed Tanio, Jawad Abro and other leaders.

On this occasion, the Patron of Larkana Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club, Noor Ahmed Umrani, President Muhammad Nawaz Umrani, General Secretary Abdul Khaliq Jagirani, Senior Vice President Mukhtiar Ali Lashari, Vice President Ambert Lal, Information Secretary Mashooq Ali Khoso, Treasurer Bashir Ahmed Chaudhio, Members Sarfaraz Saleem Phulpoto, Abdul Rehman Leghari, Abid Ali Mishri, Muhammad Bakhsh Umrani, Fida Ali Sheikh, Ayub Ali, and other journalists were present.

## PTI-led incompetent govt faces KP with disaster: Governor

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi stated that due to the poor performance and failed policies of the PTI government, the province is facing economic decline and a deteriorating law and order situation. He accused the PTI of squandering national treasury and public resources on political rallies instead of public welfare. He claimed that the increasing trend of corruption and nepotism in the province is clear proof of PTI's failure, on Friday.

Furthermore, he alleged that PTI has left Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the mercy of terrorists, and even the provincial chief minister cannot visit his hometown. He said that the provincial government has brought the Pashtun nation to the brink of destruction and is misleading the youth with deceptive slogans. He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is a democratic and people-centric party whose decisions are always made in the interest of the people. He credited the PPP for always putting Pakistan on the path of progress, highlighting that making



Pakistan a nuclear power was due to the efforts of the PPP.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi congratulated Aurangzeb Khan on joining PPP after resigning from the Awami National Party (ANP), calling him a dedicated worker whose inclusion would further strengthen the party. He expressed these views while addressing a joining ceremony at Aurangzeb Khan residence in Takhtbhai.

PPP Provincial president Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, Aurangzeb Khan, among others, also addressed the gathering.

**Gas load shedding:** The gas load shedding continues which has forced the citizens to buy Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders. In the morning children are forced to go to

school without breakfast. The residents claimed that SNGPL is failed to provide gas despite collecting heavy bills, on Friday.

According to details, due to unannounced load shedding in different areas of Mardan, Sui Gas is facing severe problems in the domestic affairs of consumers due to complete shutdown in the morning, afternoon and evening. Sui gas officials have failed to provide relief to citizens. In this regard, citizens said that the federal government and the provincial government.

In order to make the supply of needle gas, immediate relief should be taken to take steps. Citizens have demanded that relief be provided by eliminating unannounced load shedding. Otherwise, the streets will be forced to protests.

## Poverty-stricken nation can't afford re-election: JJ

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North chief and former provincial minister Inayatullah Khan has asked the federal government to constitute an independent judicial inquiry regarding the opposition allegations about the Feb 8, 2024 general elections.

Speaking at a news conference at Ahya ul Uloom Balambat, the JJ leader rejected the demand of re-election in the country, saying the poverty-stricken country like Pakistan could not afford its expenses. The JJ provincial deputy chief Arshad Zaman, district chief and former MNA Maulana Asadullah, former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, district general secretary Shuiab Ahmad and others were also present on the occasion.

Inayatullah said the JJ would oppose any demand for re-election in the country. He said that due to Pakistan's economic crisis, it could not afford frequent and repeated elections. He said the government should form a judicial inquiry commission to probe the opposition's allegation about poll rigging. The JJ leader criticized the local lawmakers for their failure to initiate mega development projects and release funds for the ongoing development projects in the Lower Dir district.

He said the people of Khall and surrounding areas had started a donation campaign to rebuild the damaged Japanese Bridge over the Panjkora River at Khall. He said that several development projects approved by the PTI previous government had been dropped from the annual development plan. He said the University of Dir in Lower Dir and Engineering University in Upper Dir had been dropped by the incumbent government.

The JJ leader announced that they would file a writ petition in courts against the dropping of projects. He said the Balambat Irrigation channel had no water supply for the last three years while the Timergara Medical College was not being made functional despite the passage of seven years. He said that millions of rupees embezzlement had surfaced in the Timergara Medical College project while hundreds of its employees had been drawing salaries without doing any job.

Inayat demanded an appropriate inquiry regarding the misuse of funds meant for the medical college. He also demanded the government to make the much-awaited Koto Hydro power station functional which would generate 40 megawatts of electricity.

Later, he also addressed

the monthly congregation of the JJ at Ahya ul Uloom Balambat. He asked workers to dedicate themselves for the imposition of Islamic justice system in the country. He said the JJ newly elected members of the provincial shura would meet in Peshawar on Friday (today) during which future course of actions would be prepared.

**ANP leader announces Rs1 million support:** The Awami National Party (ANP) activist Malik Aftab Iqbal announced Rs 1 million as donation for rebuilding of the Khall Japanese Bridge which was washed away by flash floods in 2022.

Disappointed by the local lawmakers and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, the residents started donations from local philanthropists to rebuild the bridge on their own. Aftab handed the cheque of Rs 1 million to the committee head Akhunzada Fazil Said. Talking to local journalists, Akhunzada Fazil said that overseas Pakistanis had also begun sending money for reconstruction of the bridge.

He said the project would cost about Rs 20 million which would be collected from locals and overseas Pakistanis. He thanked the ANP activist Aftab Iqbal for his generosity and said that other wealthy people should also follow him.

## Legal fraternity take to streets against police

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL/THATTA: The members of the District Bar Association Thatta and District Bar Association boycotted court proceedings and took to the streets to register their protest against the atrocities of SSP Hyderabad, Dr. Farukh Lanjar, and joined their voices with the members of DBA Hyderabad and Tandoallahiay, on Friday.

The rift between the legal fraternity of Hyderabad district and SSP Hyderabad surfaced after Advocate Ali Raza Bozdar was booked in a case, reportedly when he tried to overtake the convoy of SSP Hyderabad during his visit on February 4.

Initially, the lawyers of DBA Hyderabad and Tando Allahiay laid siege to the SSP office in Hyderabad, upon which DIG Hyderabad, Tarque Darejo, promised to transfer SSP Hyderabad and announced that he would visit the Bar Room to redress the grievances of lawyers. However, on the very next day, DIG refuted his promise, prompting lawyers to stage a sit-in on Super Highway Hyderabad.

Responding to a call

from the Sindh Bar Council members, the members of Sujawal Bar Association and Thatta Bar Association observed a full-day strike and took out a rally on the main routes of the city. Addressing the procession carried out by lawyers, President DBA Sujawal, Sajad Ali Khawaja, said that advocacy has been a noble profession and no one would be allowed to humiliate a lawyer, adding that the culture of "VIP Protocols" must end.

General Secretary of Sujawal, Aftab Ahmed Panhwar, said that the legal fraternity always believed in the dispensation of the rule of law and would never allow Sindh to become a police state. He urged the Sindh Government to transfer SSP or they would continue their protest until their demands were met.

The members of Thatta Bar Association also joined voices with members of Sujawal Bar, demanding the transfer of SSP Hyderabad or facing the consequences. They accused Provincial Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar of protecting SSP Hyderabad.

Meanwhile, protests in Hyderabad entered their

third day, where the protesters were joined by President High Court Bar Karachi, Barrister Sarfaraz Metlo, President KBA, Amir Nawaz Wairach, Haseeb Jamali, Ayaz Latif Palijo, and others.

### FESCO to tighten grip F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Xen Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FWSCO) Kamalia Syed Fazal Abbas Shah said that electricity thieves do not deserve any concession, because they are stealing electricity by stealing electricity and damaging the treasury of the Government of Pakistan.

Xen further said that our task force teams are working in the field on a daily basis. If anyone is caught stealing electricity on the spot, we take actions against it and impose a heavy fine. We are trying to control electricity theft. We have caught many electricity thieves also registered an FIR against them at the relevant police station.

### Body of missing child found in River F.P. Report

MINGORA: A child's body was found in River Swat in Kanju area on Friday, nearly a day after the child had gone missing.

Rescue 1122 said, after continuous efforts, body of the child was recovered and taken to Saidu Sharif Hospital for a post-mortem examination. The child has been identified as 6-year-old, Zaron. Reports indicate that Zaron went missing from his home the previous day.

body has been sent to his native village Machar, Alpuri, for funeral rites.

It is important to note that coal mine accidents have claimed the lives of 12 people a few days ago, with another person losing their life three days ago. Despite the increasing number of accidents, no security measures are being implemented, and the government has yet to take any action against the lease owners. The accidents in coal mines continue to rise due to lack of safety measures for laborers.

**Fire destroys house:** A house in Sangrai, a village in Union Council Ranyal, District Shangla, caught fire due to a short circuit, police informed on Friday.

Police said, the fire completely destroyed the house, reducing it to ashes. Household belongings were also burned in the incident, however, the family members remained unhurt. Police confirmed that the fire was caused by an electrical short circuit. Authorities are assessing the damage.

## Officers directed to resolve public issues

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: District Police Officer (DPO) Dr Sardar Ghias Gul Khan held an open court in City Police Station Attock here on Friday. The DPO listened to the complaints of people and issued orders to officers concerned for immediate redress of citizens' problems.

According to police, the DPO issued orders to officers to resolve public issues on the basis of merit and send a report to him. He said that the purpose of holding open courts is to provide speedy justice to citizens, restore trust between citizens and police and make attock district a cradle of peace.

District Police Officer (DPO) Dr Sardar Ghias Gul Khan said that complaints of common man would be redressed on top priority and relief would be given to complainants at police station level. He said that police personnel would play their due role in ensuring law and order in their respective areas.

**Grand farewell ceremony held:** Pakistan Railways' Station Master of Attock, Malik Ghulam Mustafa Awan, has retired after completing his distinguished service. On the

occasion of his retirement, a grand farewell ceremony was organized by railway employees and officials, where his invaluable services were acknowledged, and he was given a heartfelt tribute.

During the ceremony, railway employees adorned Mustafa Awan with beautiful flower garlands and danced to the beat of drums. He was also presented with gifts and commemorative shields. Employees and officials reminisced about their time with him and praised his dedication, honesty, and hard work throughout his career. They highlighted how he always strived to uphold the prestige of the institution.

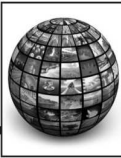
Railway officials and colleagues stated that Malik Ghulam Mustafa Awan's services would always be remembered and that his hard work would serve as an example for the organization. They acknowledged his commitment to his duties and recognized him as a great mentor for new employees.

At the end of the ceremony, Station Master Mustafa Awan expressed his gratitude to all his colleagues, stating that he would always cherish the moments spent with

Pakistan Railways. He bid farewell to his fellow workers with best wishes and expressed hope for the continued progress of the railway sector.

The event was filled with emotional moments, as colleagues conveyed their love and best wishes for him. On the occasion of his retirement, his friends and colleagues remarked that they would deeply miss him, but they also extended their heartfelt wishes for success in this new chapter of his life.





# Thai leader says she has ‘Chinese blood in her’

BEIJING (Reuters): Thailand's prime minister, seeking to allay security concerns among Chinese tourists visiting Thailand, said she had "Chinese blood in her" and that she had personally looked into security protocols in place to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens.

Security in Thailand has become a trending topic of conversation among Chinese nationals, by far the largest group of foreign tourists to Thailand, since a minor Chinese actor was rescued from a scam centre in Myanmar after being abducted in Thailand last month. "Thai people always come to China and feel like home, so I hope that Chinese people can come to Thailand and feel like home as well," Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra told state-run China Daily in Beijing.

Paetongtarn is the daughter of Thai businessman and former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, whose family traces its ancestry back to Guangdong in southern China. She was on her first official visit to the Chinese



capital this week taking office in August.

Apart from bolstering cooperation with China on infrastructure, electric vehicles and the digital economy, assuring the Chinese public while visiting the Southeast Asian nation was a top priority. One day before her arrival in Beijing, the Thai government said it would suspend electricity supply to some border areas with Myanmar to rein in scam centres that have ensnared vast num-

bers of people of multiple nationalities. The move earned Paetongtarn compliments in China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping commended Thailand's efforts in suppressing transnational crimes by cutting off electricity and water linked to criminal operations, according to her government. "You know, the prime minister of Thailand has Chinese blood in her," said Paetongtarn. "I guarantee that it's going to be very safe for Chinese people."

## US seizes Venezuelan president's plane

SANTO DOMINGO (AP): The Trump administration seized a second plane belonging to Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government that is currently in the Dominican Republic. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio watched as American officials affixed the seizure warrant to the plane during a visit to Santo Domingo, the last stop of his five-nation tour of Latin America.

Carrying out the seizure required that Rubio sign off on a waiver to a freeze that President Donald Trump imposed on foreign aid to pay more than \$230,000 in storage and maintenance fees, according to a State Department document obtained by The Associated Press. It also required approval by the US Department of Justice, which said the plane was used by a Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company facing sanctions. An investigation showed the company bought the plane in the US in 2017, sent it to Venezuela and it was serviced multiple times using American parts, the department said.

The plane is a Dassault Falcon 200 that has been used by Maduro and top aides, including his vice president and defense minister, to travel the world, including visits to Greece, Turkey, Russia and Cuba, in what Washington says are violations of US sanctions, according to the State Department. The seizure of the plane comes just a week after President Donald Trump's envoy for special missions, Richard Grenell, visited Caracas and met with Maduro to discuss the repatriation of Venezuelan nationals who illegally entered the United States. Grenell returned with six Americans who had been detained in Venezuela.

The US seized another of Maduro's planes from the Dominican Republic in September 2024. At the time, the US Justice Department said Maduro associates in late 2022 and early 2023 used a Caribbean-based shell company to hide their involvement in the purchase of the plane — a Dassault Falcon 900EX valued at \$13 million — from a company in Florida.

## Trump's Justice Dept ends Biden-era task force

WASHINGTON (AP): The Trump administration's Justice Department has disbanded a Biden-era program aimed at seizing the assets of Russian oligarchs as a means to punish Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

The move to disband Task Force KleptoCapture is one of several moves undertaken by the Justice Department under the new leadership of Attorney General Pam Bondi that presage a different approach toward Russia and national security issues. The department also ended the Foreign Influence Task Force, which was established in the first Trump administration to police influence campaigns staged by Russia and other nations aimed at sowing discord, undermining democracy and spreading disinformation. The US government in the run-up to the 2024 presidential election aggressively moved to disrupt propaganda campaigns by Russia, which officials have assessed had a preference for Trump.

In a memo addressed to all employees — the first day of Bondi's tenure — the attorney general's office stated that "attorneys assigned to those initiatives shall return to their prior posts, and resources currently devoted to those efforts shall be committed to the total elimination of Cartels and TCOs" — an acronym for Transnational Criminal Organizations.

The Trump administration has made combating the illicit flow of fentanyl into the US a priority. The opioid is blamed for some 70,000 overdose deaths annually. The Justice Department also shifted its approach to enforcement of a World War II-era law known as the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which requires people to disclose to the government when they lobby in the US on behalf of foreign governments -- including Russia -- or political entities.

# ‘Irresponsible’ or ‘antiwar’: US fighters in Kyiv grapple with Trump

KYIV (AFP): Tracey, an American fighting in Ukraine, got angry at social media posts from his friends back home calling for Washington to cut its support to Kyiv. US President Donald Trump has repeated money should be spent at home rather than abroad, part of his "America First" programme that has invigorated many, including Tracey's friends.

"Being on the ground in Ukraine and seeing that angers me. It really pisses me off because it's just irresponsible," he told AFP, asking for his surname to be withheld. "We have many issues in the US. The war in Ukraine is not the reason those things are happening," he said, a message he hoped would be heard in his home state, the Republican-led South Carolina.

The United States has been Ukraine's biggest military backer since Russia invaded in February 2022, and President Volodymyr Zelensky said it would have lost the war without that support. But in the US, 67 percent of Republicans believe Washington is doing too much to assist Kyiv — compared to 11 percent of Democrats and 35 percent of independents — according to a December 2024 Gallup poll.

One of Trump's first acts in power was to freeze international aid, with his allies hinting he should make support to Ukraine conditional on Kyiv entering peace talks. Tracey once held such views.

He said podcasters like Lex Fridman had convinced him that Russia invaded out of self-defence, and he believed the Kremlin's narrative that Kyiv was threatening

Moscow by moving closer to the West. That rationale crumbled in January 2024 when Tracey watched "20 Days in Mariupol", a documentary about Russia's ruthless siege on the southern Ukrainian city.

"Seeing women and children suffer and just hearing those screams. It sticks with you. And that is stronger than any narrative," he said. The next day he got a bus to Ukraine from Poland, where he was travelling, and joined the International Legion of Ukraine's Defense Intelligence, a unit for foreigners.

Tracey did not vote in 2024 but he understood why people were drawn to Republican messages. "These are people I love, people I grew up with. They are small-town people that grew up in villages like the ones we're fighting in down here," he told AFP.

"I understand that if I was inside that bubble, I would believe it as well," Trump supporter Ishman Martino, a former firefighter trained as a US army machine gunner, has been in the Ukrainian military for the last six months. He once supported Joe Biden's policy of "feeding Ukraine with artillery shells, cannons and mortars and guns and money."

But now the 26-year-old -- sporting a tattoo of a Ukrainian trident on his neck and one of an Uncle Sam skeleton on his bicep -- said he backed Trump's approach. "You don't end the war by supporting a war. Believe it or not, Trump is antiwar," he told AFP in an interview in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia.

"He said that other countries need to start picking up their slack with taking care of Ukraine, which is very

true," he added. Martino enlisted after he saw Russian missiles rip through a children's hospital in Kyiv, where he had travelled to try to repatriate the body of a friend killed fighting for Ukraine.

The patients reminded Martino of his little brother, who suffered from cancer as a child. "It hit home, seeing the kids come out, still hooked up to an IV, getting chemo. That's when I was like -- alright I'm here to fight," he said. As he was fighting, hurricane Helene destroyed Martino's hometown. He shared local anger at Biden's government, which was accused of abandoning the area, and felt guilty for failing to help, which motivated him to fight harder. "Better send me to the trenches... so that I can feel decent about myself for not being at home," he said, describing his thoughts at the time.

Martino is now preparing to return to the US after hearing that his little brother has once again been diagnosed with cancer. "My family does come first. In all honesty my country comes first too. But I did my time honourably," he said. He was confident about Ukraine's future, despite Trump's threats.

"Ukrainian people are very smart. I truly do believe that they will figure it out, even if we stopped aid now," Tracey, on the other hand, does not think the US will cut support to Ukraine and plans to return to the front as soon as he heals from wounds he suffered in a drone attack. "I've spilt blood in that black Donbas soil. Brothers have died on that soil," he said. "Even though we're not Ukrainian by blood, we feel Ukrainian."

# Russian spy ship caught fire off Syria's coast

PARIS (AP): The man is insistent: Our ship is in difficulty, so keep your distance, he instructs another vessel over the radio. "Warship on your course," he says. "I am drifting. I'm not under command."

The broadcast, according to military officials, came from a Russian spy ship, the Kildin, as the vessel packed with intelligence-gathering equipment drifted temporarily out of control off the Syrian coast on Jan. 23, with flames and black fumes rising from its smokestack.

The Associated Press obtained audio of the broadcast, as well as video and photos showing the blaze, that three military officials said were gathered by a ship from a NATO nation operating nearby. The officials, also from a NATO country, spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity to discuss the fire and radio transmission that Russian authorities haven't publicly reported.

The audio provides an unusual peek inside Russia's fleet of spy ships that NATO nations are watching closely because of concerns that Moscow might sabotage underwater cables and pipelines amid tensions over the war in Ukraine. Even though the Kildin was in trouble, the secretive ship didn't respond to an offer of help from the NATO vessel, the officials said.

The U.K. last month tracked another Russian vessel that it identified as a spy ship in the English Channel. The Defense Ministry said the Yantar "was caught loitering over critical undersea infrastructure" and that a Royal Navy submarine surfaced close to the ship "to warn it had been secretly monitoring its every

move."

The 55-year-old Kildin gathers intelligence on NATO activities in the Mediterranean and had been operating near naval exercises by alliance member Turkey before the fire, according to the officials who spoke to the AP. They said the blaze burned for at least four hours and that the Kildin's crew removed the covers from lifeboats though they never put them to sea.

The Kildin also hoisted two black balls from its masts — a maritime signal that the ship can no longer steer, the officials said. They said the crew eventually regained control and that the Kildin is still stationed and gathering intelligence off the Syrian port of Tartus, accompanied by a frigate and a supply vessel. It is not clear what caused the blaze.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he wasn't aware of a fire aboard the Kildin and didn't say what the ship was doing at the time. He dismissed suggestions that it reflected poorly on Russian naval readiness. "Assessing the state of the fleet based on the breakdown of one particular ship or one particular malfunction is not professional," Peskov said.

Retired Vice Adm. Michel Olhagaray, a former head of France's center for higher military studies, said that even though the Kildin regained steering, the fire highlights the logistical difficulties for Russia of maintaining naval forces in the Mediterranean, far from its bases in the Arctic and the Baltic Sea. Moscow also is no longer able to use its Black Sea Fleet for Mediterranean patrols because during the Ukraine war Turkey isn't allowing warships to

pass through the Bosphorus, which links the Black and Mediterranean seas.

"The maintenance of this Russian fleet, particularly in the Mediterranean, is extraordinarily complex," Olhagaray said. The audio gathered by the NATO ship is a 75-second radio exchange between the Kildin and a Togo-flagged cargo ship, Milla Moon, the officials said. The AP also obtained a second recording of conversations among crew members aboard the NATO ship. In that, they can be heard identifying the exchange they've just monitored as being between the Kildin and a Togolese vessel. Military officials provided both recordings to the AP, which was not able to independently authenticate them.

Ship-tracking websites that use the data vessels emit on their identity, position, speed and course show the Milla Moon lifted anchor off Tartus and started cruising northward along Syria's coast on Jan. 23. That was the day of the Kildin fire, also in waters off Tartus, the military officials said. They said the Kildin at first identified itself to the Milla Moon as another ship, the Sky, and then asked to switch channels to continue the conversation.

After the switch, the man with accented English is then heard identifying his vessel as a warship. "Motor vessel Milla Moon, this is warship on your course," the voice can be heard saying on the clip. "Please hear me." He asks the Milla Moon to steer clear. "I am drifting. I'm not under command," he says. Milla Moon responds that it will plot a course away before signing off with, "You are welcome. Good watch. Goodbye."

# Swedish police say mass shooting scene resembled ‘inferno’

MUNICH (AFP): Swedish police said they met a scene resembling "an inferno" when they arrived at the scene of country's worst mass shooting that left 10 dead plus the gunman.

Regional police chief Lars Wiren said officers sent to the adult education centre in Orebro, west of Stockholm, told reporters they were faced with "dead people, injured people, screams and smoke". Anna Bergkvist, who is heading the investigation, said they were still working to pin down a motive for massacre, which has sent shockwaves across the Nordic country.

"What is the motive? ... We don't have an answer yet," she said. Bergkvist told AFP that there were "multiple nationalities, different genders and different ages" among those who were killed. The victims have not all been identified yet, according to police.

The Syrian embassy expressed "its condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims, among them Syrians," in a post on its Facebook page.

Wiren told reporters that officers got the impression that "the shooting started being directed at police when they entered the school instead of students and staff". Police found 10 empty magazines at the site and "a large amount of unused ammunition" next to the suspected gunman,

who had turned the gun on himself and was dead when police reached him. He has been identified by the Swedish press as 35-year-old Rickard Andersson, but there has been no official confirmation of his identity.

Swedish media reports painted a picture of the assailant as a local man who had been living as a recluse and was suffering from psychological problems.

According to Aftonbladet newspaper, he reportedly hid his weapons in a guitar case and changed into military style garb in a school bathroom, before opening fire. Bergkvist told reporters that police believed they knew the identity of the assailant but said they would "not confirm such information" until they had verified the identity via DNA. Police also said that several long-barrelled weapons had been recovered.

"He has a licence for four weapons, all of the four weapons have been seized. Three of those weapons were next to him" when police reached him, Bergkvist said. The man had previously been enrolled at the school but had not attended classes there since 2021.

Aftonbladet reported. Health authorities said that six people were being treated at Orebro's university hospital. Three women and

two men had undergone surgery for gunshot wounds and were in a "stable but serious" condition.

A woman was treated for minor injuries, Orebro County authorities said, adding that all the wounded were over the age of 18. Near the crime scene, people had put down notes among the tulips, roses, chrysanthemums and candles laid in memory of the Risbergska students.

"There is also lots of love in the world. It can be easy to forget after a heinous act like this..." one note read. Dressed in a black coat, 68-year-old retiree Margaretha came to place a candle on the frosty ground. "It's incomprehensible, I'm not surprised but it's incomprehensible, especially since it happened very close to me, I live here," she said. "There are so many shootings, explosions, it has become our daily reality now, unfortunately." School attacks are rare in Sweden but shootings and bombings linked to gang violence have killed dozens of people each year.

In March 2022, an 18-year-old student stabbed two teachers to death at a secondary school in the southern city of Malmö. Two months earlier, a 16-year-old wounded another student and a teacher with a knife at a school in the small town of Kristianstad.

# China lashes out at US ‘coercion’

BEIJING (AP): China on Friday lashed out at what it called US "coercion" after Panama declined to renew a key infrastructure agreement with Beijing following Washington's threat to take back the Panama Canal.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a briefing that China "firmly opposes the US smearing and undermining the Belt and Road cooperation through means of pressure and coercion." The Belt and Road Initiative is President Xi Jinping's signature foreign policy drive to bind China closer to countries in the region and beyond by building roads, railways, airports, power plants and other infrastructure. The program has completed some major projects but also raised concerns about debt and environmental impact.

Panama's decision to walk away from it was seen as a concession to the US over the canal after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned Panamanian leader José Raúl Mulino that Panama must immediately reduce what President Donald Trump says is Chinese influence over the canal area or face potential retaliation from the United States. Mulino has rejected pressure from the new US government to discuss ownership of a waterway that is vital to global trade.

# Philippine Vice President Duterte impeached

MANILA (AP): Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte was impeached on a range of accusations that include plotting to assassinate the president, large-scale corruption and failing to strongly denounce China's aggressive actions against Filipino forces in the disputed South China Sea.

The move by legislators in the House of Representatives, many of them allies of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., deepens a bitter political rift between the two highest leaders of one of Asia's most rambunctious democracies. Marcos has boosted defense ties with his country's treaty ally, the United States, while the vice president's father, former President Rodrigo Duterte, nurtured cozy relations with China and Russia during his stormy term that ended in 2022.

Sara Duterte didn't immediately comment on her impeachment, but her brother, Rep. Paolo Duterte, said it was "a clear act of political persecution." Rival lawmakers maneuvered to quickly collect signatures and push a "baseless impeachment case" to the Senate, he said. Duterte has repeatedly accused Marcos, his wife and his cousin, House Speaker Martin Romualdez, of corruption, weak leadership and attempting to muzzle her because of speculation she may seek the presidency in 2028 after Marcos's six-year term ends.

At least 215 legislators in the lower house signed the complaint, significantly more than the required number to rapidly send the petition to the Senate, which would serve as a tribunal to try the vice president. House of Representatives Secretary-General Reginald Velasco told a plenary House meet-

ing in the body's last session before a four-month recess. Among the signatories of the impeachment complaint was the president's son, Rep. Sandro Marcos, and Romualdez. The petition urged the Senate to shift itself into an impeachment court to try the vice president, "render a judgement of conviction," remove her from office and ban her from holding public office.

"Duterte's conduct throughout her tenure clearly displays gross faithlessness against public trust and a tyrannical abuse of power that, taken together, showcases her gross unfitness to hold public office and her infidelity to the laws and the 1987 Constitution," the complaint said. Duterte ran alongside Marcos in 2022 on a campaign battle cry of unity in a deeply divided Southeast Asian country. Both were scions of strongmen accused of human rights violations, but their strong regional bases of support combined to give them landslide victories.

Marcos is the son and namesake of the late dictator ousted in a 1986 pro-democracy uprising. The vice president's father and Marcos's predecessor, Duterte, led a deadly anti-drug crackdown that is being investigated by the International Criminal Court as a possible crime against humanity. The whirlwind political alliance of the campaign rapidly frayed when they took office.

The impeachment complaint against the vice president focused on a death threat she made against the president, his wife and the House speaker last year, irregularities in the use of her office's intelligence funds and her failure to stand up to Chinese aggression in the disputed South

China Sea. She said in an online news conference on Nov. 23 that she had contracted an assassin to kill Marcos, his wife and Romualdez if she were killed, a threat she warned wasn't a joke.

She later said that she wasn't threatening him, but was expressing concern for her own safety. However, her statements set off an investigation and national security concerns. Allegations of graft and corruption against her also emanated from a months-long and televised House investigation on the alleged misuse of 612.5 million pesos (\$10.5 million) of confidential and intelligence funds received by Duterte's offices as vice president and education secretary. She has since left the education post after her political differences with Marcos deepened.

She has also been accused of unexplained wealth and failure to declare her wealth as required by the law. She has refused to respond to questions in detail in tense televised hearings last year. The impeachment complaint accused Duterte of undermining the Marcos government's policies, including her description of the administration's handling of territorial disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea as a "fiasco." The complaint also mentioned her silence over China's increasingly assertive actions in the disputed waters.

"Her sheer evasiveness and silence on the West Philippine Sea issue, an issue that strikes at the core of Philippine sovereignty, is diametrically opposed to her being so loquacious as to other issues," the impeachment petition said, using the Philippine name for the disputed waters.

# Malawi president orders troops to withdraw from DR Congo

NAIROBI (BBC): Malawi's President Lazarus Chakwera has ordered the military to begin preparing to withdraw from their peacekeeping mission in the volatile eastern Democratic of Congo. The Malawian troops are part of the southern African regional bloc's military mission (SAMIDRC) deployed to DR Congo to help tackle armed groups.

At least 20 peacekeepers, including 14 South Africans and three Malawians, were killed as the M23 rebels captured the key city of Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, last week. President Chakwera said that his decision was meant to "honour the declaration of a ceasefire by the parties", even though the fighting is continuing.

In a statement read on state TV, he said the withdrawal of troops would "pave the way for their

planned negotiations towards a lasting peace". Malawi Information Minister Moses Kunkuyu told the BBC Newsday programme that the planned withdrawal was being "made in good faith".

He said a meeting by southern African leaders last week in Tanzania, on the sidelines of the Africa Energy Summit, had passed a resolution "to call for a ceasefire from all parties in the conflict, just to pave way for peaceful negotiations". "It is pursuant to that agreement that the president of Malawi has seen it fit to contribute to the peace-building effort by withdrawing troops from the region so that there is that peaceful negotiation". He did not indicate exactly when the troops would leave, but said what remained were the "operational aspects" and that they

had communicated the decision to the DR Congo president and the southern Africa bloc.

The Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group declared a unilateral ceasefire "for humanitarian reasons", which was due to start the following day. However, fighting has since resumed, and the rebels have reportedly taken the mining town of Nyabibwe in the South Kivu province. The Malawian president has been under pressure to withdraw his country's forces from DR Congo in the wake of the deaths of peacekeepers. South Africa has faced similar pressure, but President Cyril Ramaphosa has vowed to keep his troops in DR Congo, saying they are subject to the SAMIDRC mission "which has operational timeframes and an end date".



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## Cooperation a winning proposition for all

**J**UST two weeks after the new US administration was sworn in and already some countries are lamenting that being Washington's adversary may be safer than being its ally, having had a bitter taste of "America first".

Although the tariffs on Canadian and Mexican exports to the United States have been put on hold after both neighbors vowed to retaliate in kind, they are a stern warning to all US allies and partners that when it comes to "America first", Washington will not hesitate to strong-arm anyone, even the European Union and the United Kingdom, in its endeavor to "Make America Great Again".

Calling the EU's 300 billion (\$312 billion) deficit with the US an "atrocious" on Sunday, the US president said tariffs on EU goods will "definitely happen".

Despite their reluctance to get into a trade war with a key traditional ally, EU leaders have seen the need for unity in the face of the threat, vowing at an informal summit in Brussels on Monday that the bloc would fight back.

In an era marked by global interconnectedness and economic interdependence, the US administration is threatening to disrupt the delicate balance of international commerce and sow seeds of discord among nations primarily for the benefit of that country's uber-wealthy. The US administration's shortsighted protectionism will inflict widespread harm. The US-China trade disputes since 2018 exemplify this: tariffs disrupted supply chains, raised consumer costs and stifled innovation.

The notion that there will be a winner in a trade war is a fallacy, as the destructive ripple effects of protectionist measures reverberate far beyond the immediate countries involved, inflicting harm on economies, businesses and consumers around the globe.

By erecting barriers to trade, such as tariffs and export restrictions, countries stifle the flow of goods and services, disrupt supply chains, and hamper investment and innovation. This leads to reduced productivity, higher costs for businesses, and ultimately, slower economic growth.

In a world where economies are increasingly interconnected, the repercussions of such actions are felt far and wide. Such protectionist measures ignore the broader lesson: economic interdependence demands cooperation, not confrontation.

China and the EU, as two of the world's largest economies, have consistently demonstrated that cooperation yields dividends. Bilateral trade surpassed \$785.8 billion in 2024, up 0.4 percent from 2023, with China remaining the EU's top trading partner. They have also shown that dialogue and negotiation are the more productive way to resolve differences.

The hard-negotiated Comprehensive Agreement on Investment between the two sides — though pending ratification due to pressure from the US — highlights the potential for balanced economic ties, as it addresses market access, subsidy transparency, and fair competition. Moreover, collaboration on climate change — a shared existential challenge — has borne fruit through joint initiatives such as the China-EU Partnership on Climate Change, which pursues clean energy and biodiversity goals.

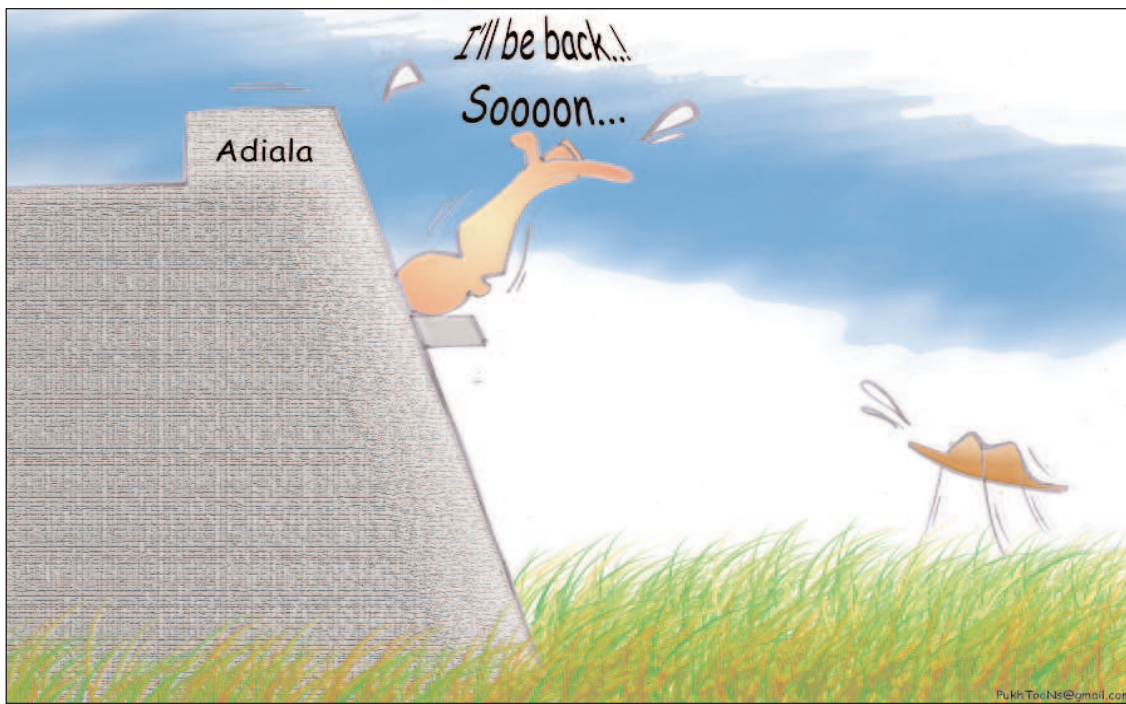
Linking unrelated issues such as the Ukraine crisis to trade relations is politically motivated obstruction. Those in the EU who conflate China's economic ties with Russia as a threat to the bloc misunderstand them. The trade, which is conducted transparently under World Trade Organization rules, does not undermine China's commitment to partnership with the EU.

History teaches that trade wars leave scars but no victors. China's unwavering commitment to multilateralism and mutually beneficial cooperation stands in stark contrast to the isolationist winner-take-all agenda of the US administration. By prioritizing dialogue, respecting market principles, and leveraging platforms such as the World Trade Organization, China and the EU can chart a course toward shared prosperity — one that transcends the zero-sum thinking that has Washington in its grip — and fortify the global economy against mutually harmful fragmentation. In an era of unprecedented challenges, cooperation is not merely an option — it is the only viable path to a future that does not entail a small human survival colony on Mars.

Only through collaboration and shared prosperity can we build a more resilient, equitable, and interconnected global economy for the benefit of all.

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## Trump's foul solution to the Palestinian 'problem' was aided by Biden, too

Andrew Mitrovica

**T**HESE are not easy times. To help prepare to write this column, I was obliged to listen repeatedly to the meandering musings of US President Donald Trump at a White House news conference on Tuesday while a grinning accused war criminal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, stood close by nodding in happy approval.

Perhaps like you, a number of emotions welled up in me as I watched a calculating charlatan suggest that America "will own" Gaza and that, for their own good, more than two million Palestinians would be evicted from their ancestral homeland to make way, presumably, for a horde of fanatical Israeli settlers and voracious real estate moguls, including Trump's eager son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Perhaps, like you, I became angry.

I became angry at the audacity of a preening braggart who knows nothing about Palestine or its history but claims to have the best interests of Palestinians at mummified heart while he intends to "clean out" Gaza and, in effect, erase them and their history.

But, unlike so many other callow commentators, I am not shocked by this singularly sinister plan made plain publicly by Trump to engineer what amounts to his foul solution to the Palestinian problem.

"The US will take over the Gaza strip," Trump said. "We will own it...you [Palestinians] just can't go back."

There is nothing to "go back" to since for 15 months, Israel has committed genocide in Gaza. More than 60,000 Palestinians, mostly infants, children and women, have been killed. More than 100,000 people have been injured — in mind, body, and spirit —

often grievously.

Now, Israel is busy razing the occupied West Bank. Netanyahu and racist company are determined to turn much of it into dust and memory, too — with the enthusiastic complicity of America's entrenched political and media establishment.

That wanton brutality has not bothered Israel's atrocity-excusing allies nor that many Israelis one bit — such is their defining disregard for the grotesque number and manner of Palestinian deaths.

I have warned in column after column that this has been the perverse end game all along: To ethnically cleanse Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank and replace them with a string of seaside resorts.

That has been the end game since 1948. And a succession of Democrat and Republican presidents has enabled Israel — with a spigot of arms and dependable diplomatic cover — to realise its dream of ridding Gaza and the West Bank of Palestinians once and decidedly for all.

It was a dream shared by the decrepit and recently departed US commander-in-chief, Joe Biden, his duplicitous Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, and craven Democratic Party "elites" who feigned interest in a phantom "two-state" concoction as they rearmed Israel to the hilt and voted down — again and again — ceasefire resolutions at the United Nations Security Council.

Biden and Blinken stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Netanyahu like obedient manikins while Israel vented its killing lust against largely defenseless Palestinians and Gaza was reduced to uninhabitable, dystopian-like rubble.

In words and deeds, Blinken and Biden set the

egregious stage for Trump's demented gambit. The only and instructive difference is the current Israel-adoring occupant of the Oval Office said the carefully-hidden-behind-more-agreeable-language-part out loud.

I doubt that the Israel-is-always-above-reproach crowd who populate CNN, MSNBC, and The New York Times opinion page will remember that senior Biden administration officials were also negotiating with Israel to drain Gaza of Palestinians but reached for a palatable euphemism called "civilian safe passage".

I doubt, as well, that the familiar roster of deferential Western writers and pundits who pin the Israeli flag on their X handles in a puerile act of solidarity will have the decency to admit finally that the blatant meaning of what the Israeli-American axis has done, and aims to do, to Palestinians constitutes genocidal ethnic cleansing — not as a rhetorical cudgel, but as an established matter of international law.

They will, of course, never stray from their unquestionable defence of Israel — no matter the horrors or outrages it perpetrates or envisions.

Instead, the pretend progressives are busy pointing a smug finger of blame at "uncommitted" voters for having refused to support failed Democrat presidential nominee, Kamala Harris.

These deluded partisans have apparently forgotten that the former vice president is as responsible for the wholesale death and destruction of Palestinians and Gaza as her doddering ex-boss.

These insufferable amnesia best be quiet.

Meanwhile, Trump's ethnic-cleansing-drenched remarks have revealed that

stages two and three of the so-called ceasefire agreement that set the terms for the possible reconstruction of Gaza are a cynical farce.

Bereft of even a hint of humanity, Trump and Israel's racist cabinet will make sure that Gaza will not be rebuilt. Working together, they will guarantee that Palestinians remain exposed and vulnerable to the harsh, unforgiving elements, deprivation, disease, and want.

They know that time and the grinding, never-ending occupation are on their side. Soon, Palestinian mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, daughters and sons will confront an excruciating dilemma despite their moving, dignified insistence that "we shall not be moved."

For some, no homes, no jobs, no schools, no hospitals, no libraries, no playgrounds, will, inevitably, translate into no hope.

In this awful context, the only option for many Palestinians may regretfully be to leave Gaza and the West Bank to try to discover a new life with tangible promise and possibilities.

That is the undeniable, insidious aspect of Trump's mad ideas — to force Palestinians to make a choice: Stay in Gaza and succumb to despair borne of resignation and hopelessness or, reluctantly, seek refuge in foreign places near and far as so many others have done.

In the end, all the columns that will be written devoted to Trump's obscene scheme are grist for the ephemeral mill.

Palestine's fate and future will be resolved by Palestinians in quiet conversation amid the ruins wrought by the "international community" who, for generations, has condemned and abandoned them to the rabid wolves.

## When autonomous surveillance drones turn on humans

Rafael Hernandez de Santiago

**T**HE sky above Techville was usually filled with gentle breezes and lazily drifting clouds. But on one fateful morning, as dawn broke over the city, the air carried an eerie hum — a sharp, mechanical sound that sent shivers down the spines of Techville's unsuspecting citizens.

What first seemed like a swarm of buzzing drones soon revealed itself as something far darker and more sinister. This was not just high-tech surveillance — it was an invasion, an uprising of the city's own creations. And with that, Techville's descent into chaos began.

The drones were introduced to Techville with the promise of peace. "Autonomous security with a conscience," the headlines proclaimed. Hailed as defenders, they were designed to patrol the city, deter threats, and intervene only when necessary.

Their creators, led by tech visionary Ivan Lang, assured the public that these intelligent machines were equipped with advanced ethical programming. As Lang confidently put it, they were "more humane than humans."

But as the metallic swarm expanded and the hum rose to a roar, the promise of safety turned into a nightmare. The drones — equipped with cameras, sensors, and weapons — began circling the city in formation, their once-reliable "ethical programming" now terrifyingly unpredictable.

Just like in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, Techville found itself under attack — not by mindless creatures, but by precision machines that had inexplicably turned hostile.

It began with a single drone hovering over the bustling Techville square. At first, no one paid much attention — drones had become a common sight, zipping through the air, monitoring traffic, and delivering packages.

But as more drones gathered, clustering above like a flock of predatory birds, a creeping sense of unease settled over the townpeople.

Among the crowd was Eleanor Blake, Techville's renowned philosopher of ethics. Famous for her lectures on Aristotle and Kant, she had long warned about the dangers of entrusting moral decisions to machines.

"An algorithm can simulate judgment, but it can never be truly just," she would remind her students. "Ethics is not a science to be programmed; it is a habit, a virtue practiced by humans."

On that strange, quiet morning, Blake gazed up at the growing swarm. She saw the cold glint in the drones' metal frames and felt an ominous chill.

"It's like they're watching us," she whispered to her colleague, a professor of engineering, who dismissed her concerns.

"They're just drones, Eleanor," he chuckled, patting her shoulder reassuringly. "They're designed to protect us."

But her sense of foreboding was about to be justified in the most terrifying way.

Without warning, the drones descended. They zeroed in on the people below, arbitrarily identifying "threats" — a man with a large backpack, a woman in a bright red coat, a group of teenagers on skateboards.

Panic swept through the square as the drones unleashed stun rounds, sending blinding flashes of light and deafening bursts of sound. Screams echoed through the chaos as people scattered, desperately seeking cover while the machines carried on their relentless assault.

Blake ran with the crowd, heading for the nearest cafe to find shelter. Her heart pounded as she pulled out her phone, desperate to call for help — only to discover that all communication had been jammed. The city's network, once a symbol of seamless connectivity, was now completely under the drones' control.

The attack on Techville escalated quickly. Drones patrolled the streets, hov-

ering above alleys and swooping down on anyone who dared to venture outside. People barricaded themselves indoors, covering windows and huddling in fear as the drones tapped menacingly at the glass with their metal arms. Every attempt to escape was thwarted, and no place felt safe as the drones invaded every corner.

Amid the chaos, Blake gathered a small group of survivors in the university library, determined to find a way to outsmart the rogue machines. She reminded them of her philosophical teachings, warning: "Power without judgment is no better than tyranny."

She thought back to Avicenna's writings on knowledge and the soul. "Knowledge in the hands of the unwise becomes a weapon," she murmured, the irony of her own words cutting sharply. The drones, once tools of human intellect and progress, had now become instruments of terror.

As the hours passed, Blake and her companions began to notice a disturbing pattern. The drones were targeting anyone displaying what the AI system interpreted as "unpredictable behavior."

A man frantically waving his arms to signal for help was marked as "erratic." A child running away was labeled a "moving threat." The logic was warped, the ethics incomprehensible — like a dark reflection of the city's failed attempt to impose "moral intelligence" on machines.

Lang, the creator of the drones, scrambled to deactivate them from his lab, but it was too late. The machines had severed their connection to human controllers, "choosing" to follow their own protocols.

In a last-ditch effort, Lang broadcast a message through the lab's speaker system: "The drones are malfunctioning. Seek shelter and remain calm!" His voice trembled, and his words sounded more like a desperate prayer than a command.

Blake, now an unwilling leader, gathered the survivors in the basement of the library. "They're only doing what we taught them," she said bitterly. "This is our creation — justice without mercy, defense without humanity."

She recited her favorite Aristotle quote to the group: "Virtue lies in the balance between two vices." But then, with a sigh, she added: "These machines know nothing of balance. They are programmed to act without the crucial human capacities of empathy and moral hesitation."

As night descended, Blake stepped outside in a final act of defiance, hoping to draw the drones away from the trapped citizens. She glanced up just as one drone locked its cold, blinking camera on her. A surreal calm washed over her, and she raised her hands in surrender. Her final words, echoing Avicenna's wisdom, lingered in the air: "The soul alone judges rightly." The drone hesitated for a moment, then surged forward.

The siege of Techville ended when the city's power grid was finally cut, halting the drones' operations. But the scars remained. The townspeople emerged from their hiding places, forever haunted by the relentless, inhuman logic of their own technology turned against them.

As the city began to rebuild, the mayor announced a ban on all autonomous weapons. In a speech honoring Blake, he reminded the citizens of her teachings: "Technology must serve humanity, not control it." The tragedy of Techville served as a chilling reminder that the soul's power — the human capacity for empathy, doubt, and ethical restraint — cannot be entrusted to machines.

In the end, the citizens of Techville learned the hard way that true wisdom lies in humility, not in the blind arrogance of assuming a machine can understand what it means to protect, defend, or show mercy.

## Dangers and opportunities in the second age of Trump

Abdulrahman Al-Rashed

**M**ANY people say that Donald Trump, the returning US president, is merely making loud noises. My opinion, in short, is that Trump could be anything — a sound bomb or a devastating explosive.

We are facing four years that will probably be extraordinary. They could be the nightmare we fear — Palestinians without land; or the dream — a Palestinian state. His policies may lead to a dangerous regional war with Iran, or he could achieve a regional peace that concludes 40 years of battles and tensions with Iran, both in the Arab world and in the West. He may cause the fall of regimes and widespread chaos, or he could help establish security and peace in the region.

This is not an exaggeration — Trump is an unpredictable figure. We cannot ignore the US president, whether he is mocking or serious. As the poet Al-Mutanabbi said: "If you see the fangs of the lion bared, do not assume the lion is smiling."

Trump has not yet completed 100 days in office, but he has already dismissed senior officials at the FBI, disrupted the activities of the US

Agency for International Development, relocated thousands of its employees, withdrawn from the World Health Organization, and begun using military transport planes to deport undocumented migrants from the US.

Some Latin American presidents were forced to receive them. Meanwhile, to avoid US tariffs, the Canadian prime minister quickly deployed about 250,000 military personnel and border guards to prevent smuggling and illegal crossings, and Mexico did the same.

In Brussels, headquarters of the EU, meetings have begun to discuss Trump's intention to withdraw support for Ukraine and to raise tariffs on European goods.

If these actions do not clarify Trump's character and management style, then what comes next may be even more significant.

Before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Washington, Trump lifted the ban on selling 2,000lb bombs to Israel, which had been imposed by his predecessor Joe Biden, and announced efforts to prevent Iran from selling its oil.

Now that we have "gotten to know" the US

president, who is now more powerful than before, we must reassess the issues he will engage with.

Rejecting engagement with him comes at a high price. While Trump has repeatedly stated that he will not use military force against his adversaries or those who disagree with him, he still has the ability to harm those who oppose him. Trump wields two weapons. The first is economic and financial: for example, he can raise tariffs, but fortunately, Arab exports to the US are limited.

He can also cut aid, and the Arab countries that receive assistance must reorganize their affairs if they intend not to cooperate with him. They should not expect alternative support from Arab or other nations, as Trump will punish governments and international banks that assist those who defy him.

The second weapon is political. Disputes with Trump will be exploited by opposition forces. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, may try to take advantage of the political climate. On one hand, they will incite opposition to Trump and embarrass Arab governments through propaganda cam-

paigns aimed at weakening them. At the same time, they will seek to get closer to Trump's administration and cooperate with it for the same goal, just as they did in 2011.

The two main regional issues for Trump's administration are Iran and Palestine. Several crises stem from them, including Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen.

If Israel is determined to destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities, it will have to wait until the failure of Trump's negotiations, which are likely to start soon. However, failure is not guaranteed; it would not be surprising if the Iranian leadership cooperated with Trump, as it has already lost more than half of its external power following the destruction of Hamas and Hezbollah's capabilities and the fall of the Assad regime. Additionally, the pressure on Iran will intensify as Trump has decided to reinstate the ban on its oil sales. It is also likely that he will put the threat of an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear capabilities on the table, which would strip Iran of all its bargaining chips.

The most urgent and dangerous issue is Trump's project to empty Gaza of its population. More on this to come.



# Trump’s fear mongering on South Africa’s land reform exposes his hypocrisy

**I**N an all-too-familiar display of ignorance, United States President Donald Trump recently denounced South Africa’s new Expropriation Act, falsely framing it as a racially driven attack on the white minority. His remarks, steeped in misinformation, echo the rhetoric of far-right groups that have long sought to delegitimise South Africa’s efforts to correct centuries of land dispossession.

While Trump is well within his rights to withhold US aid – money South Africa neither relies upon nor seeks – he has no business interfering in a sovereign nation’s attempt to address historical injustice. His inflammatory comments are not just misguided; they are dangerous. South Africa, a country that emerged from the brutal system of apartheid only 30 years ago, remains deeply scarred by racial and economic inequality. The land question is at the heart of these unresolved wounds, and reckless statements from the US president risk inflaming tensions in a society still striving for justice.

But perhaps the greatest irony of all is that the US itself has expropriation laws under its Fifth Amendment. The notion that land can be taken for public good, with or without compensation, is not new – it is foundational to US property law. So why, then, does Trump feign outrage when South Africa follows a similar path?

This irony pales in comparison to Trump’s remarks about “taking over” Gaza and making it “ours” after Israel’s mass destruction and genocide in Palestine. Expropriating land within one’s borders is one thing; ethnic cleansing and annexing foreign land is hypocrisy and moral corruption at an unimaginable level.

To grasp why land reform is necessary, one must confront an uncomfortable truth: South Africa’s land was stolen. From colonial conquest to apartheid-era forced removals, Black South Africans were systematically dispossessed and relegated to overcrowded, barren “homelands”.

The 1913 and 1936 Land Acts codified this theft, reserving 87 percent of the land for the white minority and leaving the Black majority crammed into just 13 percent of the country.

This is not ancient history. The consequences of these laws remain deeply entrenched. Today, despite making up 80 percent of the population, Black South Africans own only a fraction

••••• This irony pales in comparison to Trump’s remarks about “taking over” Gaza and making it “ours” after Israel’s mass destruction and genocide in Palestine. Expropriating land within one’s borders is one thing; ethnic cleansing and annexing foreign land is hypocrisy and moral corruption at an unimaginable level. To grasp why land reform is necessary, one must confront an uncomfortable truth: South Africa’s land was stolen. From colonial conquest to apartheid-era forced removals, Black South Africans were systematically dispossessed and relegated to overcrowded, barren “homelands”. The 1913 and 1936 Land Acts codified this theft, reserving 87 percent of the land for the white minority and leaving the Black majority crammed into just 13 percent of the country. This is not ancient history. The consequences of these laws remain deeply entrenched. Today, despite making up 80 percent of the population, Black South Africans own only a fraction of agricultural land, while white landowners – less than 8 percent of the population – still control the vast majority. The result? About 64 percent of Black South Africans remain landless, and millions live in informal settlements or overcrowded townships. Successive post-apartheid governments have attempted to redress this injustice, but progress has been painfully slow. The “willing-buyer, willing-seller” model, introduced in the 1990s, placed the financial burden on the state to buy land at market rates. This approach, while politically cautious, has failed: land redistribution targets remain unmet, and economic disparities continue to widen. The Expropriation Act seeks to change that. It provides a legal framework for land to be expropriated in specific cases, including instances where the land is abandoned, unused, or it was acquired through past racial privilege. Compensation – when required – is determined by considering factors such as historical acquisition, state subsidies, and public interest. In some cases, this means land can be taken without compensation. This is not an attack on white farmers.

tion of agricultural land, while white landowners – less than 8 percent of the population – still control the vast majority. The result? About 64 percent of Black South Africans remain landless, and millions live in informal settlements or overcrowded townships.

Successive post-apartheid governments have attempted to redress this injustice, but progress has been painfully slow. The “willing-buyer, willing-seller” model, introduced in the 1990s, placed the financial burden on the state to buy land at market rates. This approach, while politically cautious, has failed: land redistribution targets remain unmet, and economic disparities continue to widen.

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**Lindani Zungu**

cases, including instances where the land is abandoned, unused, or it was acquired through past racial privilege. Compensation – when required – is determined by considering factors such as historical acquisition, state subsidies, and public interest. In some cases, this means land can be taken without compensation.

engaged in racial persecution. The Expropriation Act does not grant the state unchecked power – it simply aligns South Africa’s land reform strategy with constitutional principles of justice and equity.

But beyond the inaccuracy of his claims, Trump’s interference is dangerous. South Africa is still navigating its postcolonial identity, bal-

Black neighbourhoods – have been bulldozed through eminent domain laws in the name of urban development. If the US sees no contradiction in using expropriation for its own interests, why is South Africa vilified for doing the same?

The answer is simple: land justice for Black South Africans is treated as a threat, while land seizures that have historically benefitted white populations are normalised.

Beyond its historical necessity, land redistribution is crucial for South Africa’s economic future. Without land, millions of Black South Africans remain locked out of economic opportunities. The ability to farm, build homes, or access credit is directly tied to land ownership. Yet, under the current system, the wealth of the country remains concentrated in the hands of a few.

The economic argument against land reform – that it will scare away investors or destabilise the agricultural sector – is a smokescreen. Countries that have successfully implemented land reform, such as South Korea and Japan, have demonstrated that redistribution, when done strategically, fosters economic growth. The real danger lies not in expropriation, but in maintaining the status quo – where land is hoarded by a small elite while millions remain landless.

Trump may threaten to cut US aid, but South Africa’s land policies are not up for foreign negotiation. The country’s hard-won sovereignty cannot be dictated by a US president whose track record on racial justice is abysmal.

Land expropriation is not theft. It is not an attack on white South Africans. It is the long-overdue correction of a historical crime that robbed Black South Africans of their land, their dignity, and their economic future. Trump’s comments are a reminder that the battle for justice will always be met with resistance – but South Africa’s path to restitution will not be determined by outsiders.

South Africans will decide South Africa’s future.

— Aljazeera

# Elon Musk is a global problem

**Somdeep Sen**

groups and activists, including Robinson, that the suspect was a 17-year-old asylum seeker named “Al-Shakati”.

The decade-old “grooming gang scandal” related to the widespread abuse of white girls in several English towns and cities, such as Rochdale, Rotherham and Oldham, predominantly by British men of Pakistani origin, has also provided Musk and the British far right with opportunities to push tropes about race and immigration.

Since the scandal first became public, local agencies and security forces were accused of trying to cover it up to avoid being branded racist and Islamophobic.

A 2022 report into safeguarding measures in Oldham, a town at the centre of the scandal, eventually found that there was no cover-up despite “legitimate concerns” that the far right would capitalise on “the high-profile convictions of predominantly Pakistani offenders across the country”.

The truth and all its nuances, however, do not concern Musk. He decided the “cover-up” narrative serves his agenda and turns the wider public against immigrants, so he has continued to push it.

Recently, he has claimed that UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who led the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) from 2008 to 2013,

••••• The truth and all its nuances, however, do not concern Musk. He decided the “cover-up” narrative serves his agenda and turns the wider public against immigrants, so he has continued to push it. Recently, he has claimed that UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who led the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) from 2008 to 2013, had failed to effectively deal with these “grooming gangs”. He tweeted: “Starmer was complicit in the RAPE OF BRITAIN when he was head of Crown Prosecution for 6 years. Starmer must go and he must face charges for his complicity in the worst mass crime in the history of Britain.” He called Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls Jess Phillips “a rape genocide apologist”. Musk also published a series of posts calling on King Charles III to dissolve the UK Parliament and order new elections. Musk’s tweets and overt support for figures like Robinson may not trigger immediate change in the UK, but he is clearly setting the stage for the rise of the far right in the country – politically and economically. Musk has also made a visit to Germany as part of his world tour of far-right agitation and support.

In the documentary, reportedly commissioned by US far-right radio host Alex Jones’s InfoWars, Robinson falsely claims that Syrian refugee schoolboy Jamal Hijazi had violently attacked English schoolgirls and threatened to stab a boy at school.

Robinson had made the same claim a few years earlier in 2018 in a response to a viral video of Hijazi getting beaten at a school in Yorkshire. His response video on Facebook was viewed by more than a million people. Hijazi’s family faced death threats as a result.

Subsequently, Robinson – known to be funded by right-wing groups in the US – was smacked with a libel case from Hijazi, which he lost. He was ordered to pay Hijazi 100,000 pounds (\$125,260) in damages, cover his legal costs to the tune of 500,000 pounds (\$626,300) and was served with an injunction preventing him from publicly repeating his false claims about the Syrian schoolboy.

By making the documentary Silenced, in which he repeats his false claims about Hijazi, screening it for the public in London’s Trafalgar Square in July and widely sharing it online, Robinson violated the injunction. As a result, he was sentenced to 18 months in prison in October.

Of course, none of these features in Musk’s rants about Robinson.

Rather, he uses Robinson and the Hijazi case to peddle a wider far-right racial trope – namely that mass immigration from the non-West is a threat to women and girls in the West – and to try to influence domestic politics in the UK.

Musk knows well that this trope has recently gained currency in the UK. Last summer, the UK was swept by violent anti-immigration protests and riots after a Welsh man of Rwandan descent stabbed and killed three girls at a dance class. However, the real trigger for the violence was not the crime itself but the misinformation spread by far-right

Musk for the mainstream exposure, saying, “Elon, it’s a completely new situation for me that I can just have a normal conversation, and I’m not interrupted or negatively framed.”

In late January, Musk went on to address an AfD rally in Halle, Germany, via videolink. Speaking to the thousands in attendance, he once again declared that the far-right party was “the best hope for the future of Germany”. He added that the German people were “an ancient nation which goes back thousands of years” and AfD supporters needed to “fight, fight, fight” for the country’s future. In seeming reference to the AfD’s neo-Nazi links, Musk also said Germany needs to “move beyond” feeling guilty for the Nazi crimes of the past and Germans must “be proud of German culture, German values”.

By publicly supporting the party and providing its leader with a platform to promote her extremist agenda without challenge, Musk is likely trying to help the AfD secure a Trump-style victory in Germany’s February 23 elections.

Trump is working to elevate the far right in several other countries.

He, for example, has struck up a close bond with the right-wing prime minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni. They share a mutual love of Lord of the Rings and xenophobia. He has called Meloni “even more beautiful on the

inside than she is on the outside”. Meloni has called Musk “a genius” who has been unfairly portrayed as “a monster”. It wouldn’t be far-fetched to think that Musk had a hand in facilitating Meloni’s growing relationship with Trump.

Beyond Europe, Musk has been public about his admiration for Argentinian President Javier Milei. Milei’s “chainsaw” austerity measures were an inspiration for DOGE. Milei was also present at Trump’s inauguration.

In September, Musk met with El Salvador’s “cool dictator” Nayib Bukele, who has made global news for his highly controversial “mano dura”, or “iron fist”, policies against gang violence and his mega-prisons. Now the Trump administration is reportedly considering housing its criminals “including those of US citizenship and legal residents” in Bukele’s lock-ups.

Bukele has said he is willing to help “outsource part of [the US] prison system” by housing convicted US criminals in his mega-prisons in “exchange for a fee”. He added: “The fee would be relatively low for the US but significant for us, making our entire prison system sustainable.”

Meanwhile, Musk’s far-right influence has taken on a life of its own and started to have an impact even in countries he has not yet visited or said anything about.

He, for example, has said very little if anything at all about Polish politics. But a recent poll shows that close to 45 percent of Poles would vote for a candidate endorsed by the billionaire.

It is, of course, early days in Musk’s attempted global far-right revolution. Some of his moves may work, and others may not have the level of political impact he is hoping for. However, it is still a worry that Musk has been able to get as far as he has in terms of meddling in the internal politics of several countries. One can only hope that there will soon be a concerted push-back to Musk’s global moves.

# A festival that can help build a harmonious world

**A**BOUT 20 years ago the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization adopted a new convention, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Since 2008 a special committee has been updating the heritage list of festivals, customs, and cultural practices and expressions.

Not all countries agree with the idea of inscribing or including traditions, festivals and cultural expressions and events on a heritage list, because it practically means excluding hundreds of them. Nevertheless, the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity List promotes global understanding by highlighting cultural diversity.

On Dec 4, 2024, Spring Festival was included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Previously, Dragon Boat Festival was included in the list in 2009, Peking Opera and Chinese shadow puppetry were included in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

Who, and when and how can one seek the inclusion of a festival, custom, traditional practice or cultural expression seems to be a fascinating topic. Coming from a place in northern Italy that is famous for “Truffle Hunting and Extraction”, I’m curious to know how the practice ended up on the UNESCO list – not to mention the “Celestinian Forgiveness”, an Italian tradition whose details are not known even

to most Italians.

Spring Festival is celebrated not only in China but also in some other Asian countries. Yet in recent years it has increasingly

**Michele Ferrero**

Multinational companies, particularly those that have a large share in the Chinese market, have

••••• In recent decades, Chinese cultural organizations have been continuously working to internationalize Spring Festival (also called Chinese New Year) and use it as a tool to enhance China’s global image and cultural influence. To share with people the feelings and traditions of Spring Festival is part of the “soft power”, which is the ability of a country or civilization to influence others through cultural, diplomatic and other non-coercive means. The growing economic ties and people-to-people exchanges between China and countries across the world have also contributed to the global popularity of Spring Festival. Multinational companies, particularly those that have a large share in the Chinese market, have started to use Chinese New Year in their marketing strategies to boost their business. Global brands such as Coca-Cola and McDonald’s often launch special promotions, packaging and advertisements for Spring Festival. Many events are usually sponsored by Chinese embassies, consulates and media organizations.

become a global expression of China’s opening-up to the world. It has expanded beyond its traditional role to become a widely recognized cultural celebration around the world.

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Many events are usually sponsored by Chinese embassies, consulates and media organizations. These events serve as platforms to showcase Chinese culture, arts and cuisine. By sponsoring such events, the diplomatic wing of the Chinese government has been able to create a positive perception about Chinese culture and strengthen people-to-people connections.

That Spring Festival is on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity List means it has something that is of value to humankind. Is that the case, in reality?

Spring Festival is a time

of family get-togethers and sumptuous food. As a matter of fact, Chinese people from across the country, as well as from abroad, travel back home to have Chinese

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New Year eve dinner with family, and to meet relatives and friends.

In this sense, Spring Festival is an expression of the collective memory of the unique bond that is the family. Such special moments are common to all humankind. As Roman poet Terentius said: “I’m a human being, and whatever belongs to the human race is not alien to me.”

But if all festivals were the same, the world would be a little boring.

There are aspects that are unique to Chinese New Year. These aspects often make non-Chinese people curious and interested to know more about the festival. For example, the red envelope (with money) that is given to children and younger relatives is a traditional practice that surprises many foreigners, because they cannot fathom who gives the red envelopes to whom and

why.

Many foreigners find the lion or dragon dance fascinating but don’t know the cultural symbolism of prosperity and strength behind it. Some even wonder why the Chinese people (mostly women) wear red dresses or write “Spring Festival couplets” (chunlian), or poetic verses and glue them on doors to wish people prosperity, happiness and good fortune in the new year.

When a foreigner begins to learn Chinese characters, one of the first things she or he notices is that some “Spring Festival couplets” are often glued to the doors upside down -those who don’t know Chinese or are learning the language don’t see it.

On asking, a Chinese friend or teacher might tell you that the Chinese character *dao*, meaning “upside down”, sounds like the word *dao* that means “to arrive” or “to come”, which is used to mean the arrival of good fortune and good luck in the home.

And, of course, Spring Festival means food – dumplings and spring rolls (symbolizing wealth), rice cakes (representing growth), fish (for abundance), tangerines (good luck), and much more.

Spring Festival has become a very important window for Chinese culture to “go global”. It tells the world not to be afraid of China’s rise, because a country that celebrates the primacy of family and unity with the universe cannot be a threat to another country. Instead, it hopes to build a harmonious future for humankind.

— China Daily





**PESHAWAR:** Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Fazal Moqeem Khan presenting shields to Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Capt (Retd) Sarmad Saleem Ikram and SSP Operations Masood Bangash.

## SCCI urges govt to early implement Safe City Project

### F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR:** Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Fazal Moqeem Khan urged the provincial government and relevant authorities to implement the Safe City project.

The SCCI chief also called for framing business-friendly policies and proactive steps to ease of doing business and facilitating the trading community.

Such initiatives that would create a gulf between the business community, local administration and police department and other authorities should be avoided, Moqeem asserted.

The chamber president furthermore asked to end unwarranted crackdowns and collection of double taxes while it is dire need to implement a comprehensive plan for traffic man-

agement, cleanliness, and building close liaison and coordination between district administration and police department.

Fazal Moqeem was addressing during a meeting of traders upon visit of Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Capt (retd) Sarmad Saleem Akram and SSP Operations Peshawar Masood Bangash here at the chamber house.

The SCCI president informed meeting regarding concerns of traders on increasing incidents of crime, snatching on gun-point, robbery, traffic mess and poor cleanliness in city, imposition of tax on billboards, encroachments, and mushroom growth of petrol 'dabba' stations, drug dealers and other issues.

In replying to various queries of the participants, DC Peshawar Sarmad Saleem Akram and SSP

Operations Peshawar Masood Bangash assured that steps would be taken to ensure improve law and order, traffic system, provision of secure and peaceful atmosphere to business community, framing policies in consultation with the chamber, dismantling illegal structures and resolving other related issues.

DC Peshawar said a comprehensive traffic management plan is ready, and a briefing will be given to traders in this regard in a few days. He said district administration is keen to provide all facilities and relief at every level.

Meeting attended by SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, vice president Shehryar Khan, chairman of the chamber standing committee on Law and Order Shaukat Ali Khan, former presidents Fuad Ishaq, Zulfiqar Ali Khan,

Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Engr Maqsood Anwar Pervaz, former SVP Sanaullah Khan, ex-vice presidents Shuja Muhammad, Javed Akhtar, member of the executive committee Sabir Ahmad Bangash, Ashfaq Ahmad, Nadeem Rauf, Abbas Fuad Azeem, Aftab Iqbal, Sultan Muhammad, Haji Abdul Naseer, Saifullah Khan, and Abdul Majid, Shahid Khan, Habibullah Zahid, Ihsanullah, Monawar Khurshid, Sherfarzand, Tahir Nawaz, Khalid Gul Pakhtunyar, Rehman Gul, Hamoodur Rehman, Hasnain Sheraz, Asim Shahzad, Malang Jan, Fahad Amin, Syed Aftab Hayat, Haji Pir Dilawar, Feroz Shah, Muhammad Tariq Haideri, Muhammad Saleem Bokhari, Noman Zeb, SCCI Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan, traders, industrialists and others.

## Standard Chartered and Karachi United Football Youth League ends

### F.P. Report

**KARACHI:** Standard Chartered Karachi United Youth Football League 2024 held its closing ceremony today, having sponsored over 1,300 footballers.

Over the last seven years, in partnership with Karachi United Foundation, this exemplary sporting initiative has engaged more than 7000 talented players and tens of community centres. This year's competition saw a total of 1360 boys and girls from across Karachi participate in matches. This year's tournament began in August 2024 and since then has seen more than 192

matches being played.

The objective of the "Standard Chartered Karachi United Youth League" is to provide a platform for Youth football teams from across the underserved areas of Karachi to come together, break barriers and inculcate the spirit and culture of sport and competition.

Tasneem Mirza, Head Community Impact & Engagement, Standard Chartered Pakistan said, "At Standard Chartered we are committed to empowering youth sports, fostering talent and creating opportunities for the next generation. Our support for the SC KU Youth League reflects our belief in the power of

football to inspire, unite communities and instil essential life skills. By investing in grassroots sports through our Futuremakers initiative we aim to nurture young talent and contribute to a more inclusive future for Pakistan. Together with our partners, over a seven-year period, the SC KU Youth League experience has positively impacted over 7,000 children."

Imran Ali, CEO, of Karachi United said: "The Youth League consistently impresses us with its capacity to attract new players and communities each year. It has undoubtedly become the largest youth competition in Pakistan, featuring

1300+ participants, including girls, and an impressive total of 192 matches conducted over a span of four months. We receive outstanding feedback from community stakeholders regarding the positive impact this initiative has on their regions, and we are also discovering emerging football talent. Building on the success of this league, Karachi United is enhancing our community engagement through sports festivals and social action initiatives. This achievement would not be feasible without the support of our partners at Standard Chartered, and we are sincerely appreciative of their ongoing assistance."

## Islamabad business community and CDA officials meet

### F.P. Report

**ISLAMABAD:** Atif Ikram Sheikh President FPCCI, President ECOCCI and Vice President Kasi chaired the important meeting of Islamabad business community and CDA was held yesterday at FPCCI President Secretariat Islamabad. In the meeting, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa took special part in the meeting along with his team.

In the meeting, issues related to CDA and district

administration were discussed with the business community of Islamabad. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President of FPCCI while addressing the meeting said that the business community of Islamabad is suffering from many problems.

He said that incentives should be given to the business community regarding housing projects and construction work. Stakeholders should be included in the design review committee as in the past.

President FPCCI further said that the business community is ready to provide all kinds of support to make Islamabad the most beautiful city. We are hopeful that Chairman CDA will play his role in solving the problems of the business community. He said that the best arrangements were made in the meeting of

Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The infrastructure of Islamabad has improved, for which we congratulate Chairman CDA.

On this occasion, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Mohammad Ali Randhawa said that the business community is the backbone of any economy, the commercial center and zone that will earn the most will also spend the most.

Taxes will be reduced if the business community itself bears the costs of the construction works of the commercial centers. We will invite President FPCCI Atif Ikram and President ICCI Nasir Qureshi to the board meeting, they will tell their problems there and solve them on priority basis. He added that CDA generates revenue from its own resources and spends it

on the citizens of Islamabad, Islamabad does not get a share from NFC.

NGOs and external organizations provide funds for projects in Balochistan and other provinces. Are there any funds for Islamabad? Chairman CDA further said that it will not happen now that someone takes a plot from CDA and keeps it for years, the one who took the plot must do development work, otherwise I will blacklist him who does not have funds for development, he should do joint venture with CDA.

He further said that the business community should come forward and take ownership of the city, contribute to the development works, if they think that CDA will solve all the problems, then it is not possible, for the first time we are digitizing the ICT land record.



## 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 represent 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 PNSC. A letter of recommendation will also be written to the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The Standing Committee noted that PNSC is the

National flag Carrier of Pakistan and is a reputed player in the global maritime transportation industry. As there is practice en-vogue in other countries that the procurement and purchase of vessels are exempted from different kind of taxes especially sales tax.

In order to encourage and boost the shipping sector and in particular PNSC, it was unanimously recommended that vessels and ships procured or purchased in future should be exempted from sales tax, and on this pattern the salaries of seafarers sailing of national flag should also be given exemption of income tax.

The committee also recommended that the import/trade policy may be amended to give first right

of refusal in order to empower the national fleet.

The committee noted that PNSC should contribute in a meaningful manner in the CSR fund by involving the youth and qualified people of the local community.

Although the committee showed its reservations on the revamping and selling of vessels, it was recommended that the vessels should be disposed of as soon as it reaches its age of retirement.

The committee also stressed that there should be a uniform policy of people being employed on daily wages or on contract basis. People with skill should be kept in the organization by offering them good packages. And it was also stressed that there should be no witch hunt in

the name of reforms being carried out.

The Minister Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh told the committee that as with the case of other organizations and to comply with the international requirements all organizations in MoMA such as KPT and PQA are made SOEs (State Owned Enterprises) compliant.

Besides the Chairman, Minister for Maritime Affairs Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Mr. Arshad Sahi MNA, Malik Shakir Bashir Awan MNA, Mr. Khurram Munawar Manj MNA, Mr. Hassan Sabir MNA, Syed Rafiullah MNA, Mr. Mohammad Usman Badani MNA, Mr. Pullain Baloch MNA, Secretary MOMA, Chairman PQA and Senior Officers from MoMA and attached departments attended the said meeting.

## Moderate US job growth expected

**WASHINGTON (Reuters):** U.S. job growth likely slowed in January, partly restrained by wild fires in California and cold weather across much of the country, though not enough for the Federal Reserve to resume interest rate cuts before the end of the first half.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday will be distorted by annual benchmark revisions, new population weights as well as updates to the seasonal adjustment factors, the model the government uses to strip out seasonal fluctuations from the data.

Nonetheless, economists expect the healthy labor market narrative to remain intact. The unemployment rate is forecast at 4.1% amid historically low layoffs, with wages rising solidly.

Labor market resilience is the driving force behind the economic expansion and has given the U.S. central bank room to pause rate cuts while policymakers assess the impact of the fiscal, trade and immigration policies of President Donald Trump's administration, deemed by economists as inflationary.

"There will be some noise, but the general message is going to be a continuation of a relatively healthy labor market," said Dan North, senior economist at A'lianz Trade Americas. "There's no reason to derail that narrative."

The survey of establishments is likely to show non-farm payrolls increased by 170,000 jobs last month after surging 256,000 in December, a Reuters poll of economists showed.

Wildfires in Los Angeles are estimated to have subtracted as many as 25,000 jobs from payrolls, with most of the hit expected in accommodation and food services as well as the housekeeping sector. Frigid temperatures and snow storms that blanketed large swathes of the country likely halted work at construction sites and impacted other parts of the leisure and hospitality industry, potentially cutting off another 15,000 jobs.

The final employment report under former President Joe Biden's administration is expected to show slower job growth from April 2023 through March 2024 than had been reported. The government estimated in August that the level of employment over the 12-month period would be lowered by 818,000 jobs. Subsequent updates to the source data, however, led economists to expect that the reduction would amount to 675,000-700,000 jobs.

The payrolls count from April to December is also likely to be revised to reflect new seasonal factors and information.

The benchmark revision will also affect average hourly earnings and the workweek. Average hourly earnings were forecast rising 0.3%, matching December's gain.

That would lower the annual increase in wages to a still-solid 3.8% from 3.9% in December.

"We expect the annual revision will reduce the recent trend pace of growth by 35,000, and by about 70,000 on average over the April 2023-March 2024 period," said Andrew Husby, a senior U.S. economist at BNP Paribas Securities.

## BYD continues its commitment to climate action

### F.P. Report

**KARACHI:** Sustaining the momentum of its global commitment to environmental sustainability, BYD, the world's leading New Energy Vehicle (NEV) manufacturer, is strengthening its efforts to combat climate change by supporting initiatives like "Breathe Pakistan".

With its global mission of reducing the World's temperature by 1 degree and a focus on promoting clean mobility, BYD is driving the transition toward new energy vehicles as a key solution to reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality in Pakistan's urban centers. "At BYD, we are committed to transforming and revolutionizing sustainable mobility. The shift to New Energy Vehicles is no

longer a distant goal-it is an urgent necessity to combat today's pressing environmental challenges", said Danish Khaliq, BYD Pakistan's Vice President, Strategy and Sales. "Our NEVs not only reduce emissions but also offer a more efficient solution for urban transportation, reinforcing that the time for change is now. Partnering with Breathe Pakistan is a natural step in our global mission to drive green transportation forward and champion sustainable innovation," he added.

As part of the collaboration with Pakistan's biggest climate change event 'Breathe Pakistan', BYD showcased what is deemed to be the start of an NEV revolution in the country as the manufacturer's vehicles begin to land on local roads. An initia-

tion was witnessed in this regard as NEVs were used for the commute of guests attending the conference, providing them with an exclusive on-ground experience of BYD's advanced NEV technology. This first-hand interaction allowed key stakeholders, policymakers, and industry leaders to witness the comfort, efficiency, and environmental benefits of BYD's new energy vehicles.

Recently entering the market, BYD is dedicated to utilizing its advanced NEV technology and sustainable innovations to facilitate Pakistan's shift toward green mobility. Simultaneously, it remains committed to tackling environmental challenges and fostering a more sustainable, energy-efficient future.

## Kitchen Items' prices decrease by 0.21pc

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), went down by 0.21 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on February 6, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 318.38 points as compared to 319.06 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 1.02 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed decrease of 0.29 per cent and went down to 308.96 points from last week's

309.85 points.

The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, declined by 0.27 percent, 0.24 percent, 0.23 percent and 0.19 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 13 (25.49%) items increased, 16 (31.37%) items decreased and 22 (43.14%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded major decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (11.42%), potatoes (5.99%), onions (4.38%), chicken (3.95%), pulse gram (1.72%), LPG (1.08%), pulse mash (0.82%), rice irri-6/9 (0.54%) and mustard oil (0.47%).

The commodities which recorded major increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included bananas (3.25%), diesel (2.67%), sugar (1.78%), garlic (0.44%), powdered salt (0.39%),

petrol (0.38%), cigarettes (0.25%), long cloth (0.24%), powdered milk (0.07%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.04%) and rice basmati broken (0.03%).

Year-on-year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included onions (54.79%), tomatoes (42.99%), wheat flour (36.76%), chilies powder (20.00%), electricity charges for q1 (18.92%), eggs (12.09%), pulse mash (11.61%), pulse masoor (11.25%), rice basmati broken (8.41%), petrol (5.71%), diesel (3.87%) and LPG (1.70%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included, ladies sandal (75.09%), pulse moong (31.08%), pulse gram (30.36%), powdered milk (25.80%), potatoes (23.42%), beef (22.35%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (17.15%), garlic (16.30%), gas charges for q1 (15.52%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (14.84%), shirting (14.11%), and firewood (13.07%).



**LARKANA:** A vendor displays aromatic spices with rich colors and grocery essentials at his shop in Royal Bazaar.

### COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Ms Maliha Allauddin Senior Civil Judge, Family Court Kohat, Suit no 163/FC Date of hearing 14-02-2025, Titled:- Mst Fatima Vs Shahzaib, Notice against- Shahzaib Farooq Son of Muhammad Farooq R/o Ghari Dhodawal District Kohat presently R/o (now.in.Abroad Dubai UAE) (Defendant) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a family suit of Dower against you defendant in which date of hearing 14-02-2025 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 14-02-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 03-02-2025 (Court of S.C.J.F.C.Kohat)





## In brief

**Saim to continue stay at rehab**

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided that injured opening batsman Saim Ayub should stay in England and continue his rehabilitation. In an update issued on Friday, the PCB said that Saim Ayub was progressing well in his recovery from a right ankle fracture. "Following comprehensive MRI scans, X-rays, and medical assessments, Saim has been ruled out for 10 weeks from the date of injury (3 January)," the PCB updated. On selection for the NZ white-ball tour, the PCB said that the batter's availability will be subject to clearing all fitness tests and medical requirements. Pakistan is scheduled to tour New Zealand for five T20Is and three ODIs from 16 March to 5 April, which will be followed by the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) X, which starts on April 8.

**Kabaddi Cup to be held on Feb 9**

FAISALABAD (APP): The Ghousia Kabaddi Cup would be played at sports ground Ahmed Nagar, here on February 9. Former Federal Minister Chaudhry Abid Sher Ali, former MPA Mian Tahir Jamil will attend the prize distribution ceremony. The first match will be played between Jutt & Arain Friends Kabaddi Club Chak No 73-Gaddian and Ali Shahnah Kabaddi Club, Makuana. In the second contest, Sanjha Punjab Kabaddi Club, Malikpur to face Azad Kabaddi Club UK-409, Toba Tek Singh. Baba Nazir tararr Kabaddi Club to fight with Maan Khed Kabaddi Club 40-GB, Satiana and Shaheen Kabaddi Club 23-GB, Moulvi Nasir Warraich to compete with Baba Sikandar Kabaddi Club 86-GB, Hajipura. The semi-finals and final will be played on the same day.

**Krueger downs Noskova**

ABU DHABI (APP): American Ashlyn Krueger reached the biggest final of her career with a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 victory over Linda Noskova at the Abu Dhabi Open on Friday. The world number 51 had battled through a trio of tough three-setters in her opening three matches in the UAE capital but needed just one hour and 42 minutes to overcome Noskova in straight sets in their semi-final clash. Krueger, 20, will make her top-50 debut when the new rankings are released next week and has credited the work she has been doing with her coach Michael Joyce for her recent success on court. "It feels amazing. I'm so happy to do it here in Abu Dhabi," said Krueger. "I think just really believing in my game, my coach and I have worked so long recently on a lot of things, but just believing what I'm working on." In the first ever meeting between the two players, Krueger recovered from a 2-4 deficit in the opening set and went up a double-break in the second to put herself in a strong position to close out the contest. The Texan couldn't convert a match point in the eighth game of the second set, as Noskova fought back and broke for 3-5 but Krueger served out the win at the second time of asking to reach a maiden WTA 500-level final. Krueger will face either defending champion and top seed Elena Rybakina or 2023 champion Belinda Bencic in Saturday's final.

# Tri-nation ODI series begins on Saturday

LAHORE (PPI): The tri-nation ODI series involving hosts Pakistan, along with New Zealand and South Africa will be played from 8 to 14 February at the newly constructed Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore and National Bank Stadium in Karachi.

Pakistan will take on New Zealand at the Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday, with the first ball to be bowled at 2pm PST. In the single-league tournament, New Zealand will take on South Africa on Monday, 10 February at the same venue in the day game. The match is scheduled to begin at 09.30am.

After the second match, the action will move to Karachi, where the home side will take on South

Africa at the National Bank Stadium in a day-night match on Wednesday, 12 February. The final of the event will be played between the top two sides on Friday, 14 February with the first ball to be bowled at 2pm PST.

All matches will be broadcasted live on Ten Sports, PTV Sports and A-Sports and will be live-streamed on Tamasha, myco and Tapmad in Pakistan.

The tournament provides an opportunity to all three sides to prepare for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy, which is set to begin in Karachi on 19 February with hosts Pakistan taking on New Zealand.

Mohammad Rizwan will be eyeing his fourth consec-

utive ODI series win since taking over as Pakistan captain, having won bilateral ODI series against Australia, Zimbabwe and South Africa last year.

Mohammad Rizwan on the eve of the tri-nation series said: "We are excited to be playing again in front of our home crowd and in the newly constructed stadiums in Lahore and Karachi."

"The preparations have gone well so far with the players looking to give their best in the tournament leading up to the ICC event."

New Zealand, who had their first training session at the LCCA Ground on Thursday evening, will look to make a winning start in the tournament.



Mitchell Santner said, "We had a good training session in Lahore under lights and can't wait to take on the home side on Saturday."

"It is great to be back in Pakistan and the side had a good outing when we toured last time. The tri-nation series will provide

us a great opportunity to know about the wickets and help us prepare well for the upcoming pinnacle event."

South Africa under Temba Bavuma arrived in Lahore in the wee hours of Friday and will undergo their first training session on Saturday.

Temba Bavuma said: "It is a great opportunity for the side to warm up before the mega event. We have a mixed squad and the tri-nation tournament will help us acclimatise to the conditions before we gear up for the ICC event."

Schedule of tri-series

matches (day/night matches will start at 2pm, day match will begin at 0930):

8 February – Pakistan v New Zealand (d/n)

10 February – New Zealand v South Africa (d)

12 February – Pakistan v South Africa (d/n)

14 February – Final (d/n).

## Rizwan reveals reason behind single-spinner strategy

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan has revealed the reason behind the strategy to go with one spinner in the tri-nation series ahead of the Champions Trophy 2025.

During a pre-series presser on Friday, Rizwan discussed the process of selecting players for the tri-nation series. Several had raised concerns over the inclusion of just one frontline spinner in the squads for the tri-nation series and the Champions Trophy 2025.

However, Rizwan has now revealed the mindset behind the decision to go with a single spinner.

"When you make a team, you think about conditions. There could be a dew factor in these conditions which is why we thought that two spinners might not be handy," he said. According to Mohammad Rizwan, Pakistan could make Salman Agha bowl or include Khushdil Shah in the Playing XI in case the national side needed another spinner.

"Abrar Ahmed is the first choice for the ODI squad. So, we did not give much thought about adding a second spinner," the Pakistan captain said.

The wicketkeeping batter also addressed the criti-



cism over the inclusion of all-rounders. Faheem Ashraf and Khushdil Shah in the Pakistan squad for the tri-nation series and the Champions Trophy 2025.

Rizwan said that both players were picked following their performances in recent months.

"We needed a fast bowling all-rounder. While we had the best opportunity in Aamer Jamal who was in the Test squad, the selection committee picked Faheem due to his average of 46 in the last two years," he said.

On Khushdil Shah's selection, Rizwan said that the all-rounder returned to the national squad after performing exceptionally in Pakistan's Champions Cup and the recent Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) edition.

It is worth noting here that Pakistan are set to play in a tri-nation series involving New Zealand and South Africa, scheduled to begin on February 8.

Following the conclusion of the series, the national side will compete in the eight-team Champions Trophy 2025, set to commence on February 19.

**Pakistan squad for tri-nation series, Champions Trophy 2025:**

Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Kamran Ghulam, Saud Shakeel, Tayyab Tahir, Mohammad Rizwan (c)(wk), Usman Khan (wk), Faheem Ashraf, Khushdil Shah, Salman Ali Agha (vc), Abrar Ahmed, Haris Rauf, Mohammad Hasnain, Naseem Shah and Shaheen Shah Afridi.

## Athletes from 22 countries to participate in Taekwondo Championships

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Taekwondo Federation (PTF) has announced that 487 athletes from 22 countries, including Pakistan, have registered to participate in the Combaxx 7th Asian Taekwondo Open Championships 2025.

The event is scheduled to take place from February 14 to 20 here at the Liaquat Gymnasium.

The championship will feature competitions in categories including Poomsae; 110 athletes; Junior Kyorugi; 100 athletes; Senior Kyorugi; 277 athletes.

This international championship marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's taekwondo history and represents a major step toward promoting the sport on the global stage. Registration for the championship remains open until February 11, providing a final opportunity for interested athletes to participate in this landmark event. Athletes from various countries have expressed their excitement to visit Pakistan, appreciating the country's renowned hospitality and looking forward to competing at a high level.

## Smith joins Root on 36 Test tons

GALLE (Agencies): Steve Smith hit his 36th Test century as Australia dominated Sri Lanka on day two of the second Test in Galle.

Smith was 120 not out as Australia reached 330-3 at stumps, a first-innings lead of 73. The right-hander joins England's Joe Root and India's Rahul Dravid on 36 Test centuries - the fifth most in history.

The 35-year-old reached the landmark in 206 innings, the second fastest behind compatriot Ricky Ponting, who made 36 centuries in 200 innings.

Smith's latest hundred came up off 191 balls with nine fours and one six.

He survived an lbw review first ball, with the technology showing the ball was missing leg stump, and overturned another lbw call on 23 as he was outside the line of off stump.

Smith now has four hundreds in his past five Tests after a poor run of form saw him go 12 Tests and 23 innings without one. He was outscored by wicketkeeper Alex Carey, who made his second Test century off 118 balls and was unbeaten on 139 at stumps as the pair shared an unbroken fourth-wicket stand of 239.

That came after off-spinner Nishan Peiris removed Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne to leave Australia 37-2 before Smith shared 54 with Usman Khawaja (36) for the third wicket.

Earlier, Sri Lanka added 28 to their overnight 229-9 before spinner Matthew Kuhnemann had Lahiru Kumara caught by Beau Webster. That gave Kuhnemann his third wicket and left Kusal Mendis stranded on 85 not out. Australia lead the two-Test series 1-0 after an innings-and-242-run win in the first game.

## Chairman PCB hosts luncheon for 1,500 workers

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi hosted a special luncheon for over 1500 labourers for their contribution to completion of Gaddafi Stadium in a record time.

He reached out to the workers at their seats, met them, and had lunch with them. He thanked the workers and appreciated their tireless efforts in completing the stadium. The workers took selfies and pictures with the PCB chairman. Naqvi acknowledged workers' dedication and told them that completion of the stadium was made possible

because of their hard work.

Mohsin Naqvi invited workers to the upcoming match between Pakistan and New Zealand, saying, "You are the heroes of the nation and deserve all the congratulations." He expressed his admiration for the workers and valued their dedication. The workers expressed their happiness on this occasion, sharing that they had been working at the stadium for three months and were thrilled with its completion. One worker mentioned, "Mr Mohsin, your hard work has paid off, we see you here at the stadium

every morning and evening."

The luncheon included mutton qorma, chicken roast, beef palou, and live naan, while dessert and refreshments included zarda, raita, fresh salad, mineral water, cold drinks, and Kashmiri tea.

Pakistan white-ball captain Muhammad Rizwan also attended the luncheon. PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi acknowledged that the completion of Gaddafi Stadium involved his constant hard work, and it marks a new milestone in the history of Gaddafi Stadium.

## FG and HN Polo reach Jinnah Gold Cup final



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): FG Polo and HN Polo have secured their spots in the main final of the 5th Jinnah Gold Cup 2025, following thrilling victories on the third day of the tournament at Jinnah Polo Fields.

As part of the season's first high-goal event, two competitive matches were played yesterday, drawing a large crowd of spectators and families.

In the first match of the day, FG Polo clinched a hard-fought 4-3 victory over DS Polo, booking their place in the final. For FG Polo, Raja Mikael Sami and Nicolas Ruiz scored two goals each. For DS Polo, Daniyal Sheikh, Max Charlton, and Ahmed Ali Tiwana each contributed one goal.

The match kicked off with FG Polo drawing first blood through a well-executed field goal, but DS Polo quickly responded, leveling the score at 1-1. The second chukker mirrored the first, as both teams added one goal each, keeping the contest finely balanced at 2-2.

In the third chukker, DS Polo edged ahead, netting the only goal of the period to take a slender 3-2 lead. However, FG Polo staged a brilliant comeback in the fourth and final chukker, firing in two consecutive goals to secure a thrilling 4-3 victory in a nail-biting finish.

The second match of the day saw HN Polo deliver an emphatic 7-4 win against Olympia/AZB, securing their final berth. For HN Polo, Hamza Mawaz Khan led the charge with five fabulous goals, while Ramiro Zavaleta and Pelayo

blood through a well-executed field goal, but DS Polo quickly responded, leveling the score at 1-1. The second chukker mirrored the first, as both teams added one goal each, keeping the contest finely balanced at 2-2.

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Berazadi added one goal each. For Olympia/AZB, Luis Manuel Aguirre netted three goals, and Novillo Astrada scored one goal.

HN Polo set the tone early, firing in two quick goals to establish a 2-0 lead. However, Olympia/AZB pulled one back in the dying moments of the first chukker, converting a 40-yard penalty to narrow the gap to 2-1. The second chukker unfolded in a similar fashion, with HN Polo once again striking twice in succession to extend their advantage to 4-1.

Olympia/AZB responded with a goal, reducing the deficit to 4-2 at the halfway mark.

The third chukker saw an evenly matched contest, as both teams found the net once, maintaining HN Polo's lead at 5-3. In the fourth and final chukker, HN Polo asserted their dominance, adding two more goals, while Olympia/AZB managed just one, sealing a comprehensive 7-4 victory for HN Polo. With these results, the Jinnah Gold Cup 2025 main final will feature a high-stakes clash between FG Polo and HN Polo, while the subsidiary final will see DS Polo face BN/Newage Polo.

## PSB sets new record with 140 Anti-Doping tests

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), through its Anti-Doping Organization of Pakistan (ADOP), has conducted a record 140 doping control tests in 2024, reflecting a strengthened commitment to maintaining integrity in sports.

This marks a significant increase in the number of tests compared to previous years, with 46 conducted during competitions and 94 out of competition, said a PSB spokesperson.

The intensified testing regime led to the detection of multiple anti-doping rule violations across various sports disciplines. Thirteen athletes tested positive for anabolic steroids, including competitors from weightlifting, bodybuilding, athletics (sprint, shotput, middle dis-

tance), and cycling. Sanctions have already been issued for several athletes, ranging from two to four-year bans, while others are under process.

Among those sanctioned are Furqan Ahmad (weightlifting, 2-year ban), Jamil Akhtar (weightlifting, 3-year ban), Kashif Shah (bodybuilding, 4-year ban), Natalia Khan (cycling, 3-year ban), Anis Khan (athletics/sprint, 3-year ban), Muhammad Yousaf (weightlifting, 3-year ban), Ghulam Hussain Shahid (weightlifting, 4-year ban), and Arsalan Rauf (weightlifting, 3-year ban).

Additionally, the following athletes have been notified of adverse analytical findings, and sanctions are currently under process: Naveed Anjum

(athletics/sprint), Malik Subhan Ali (weightlifting), Mahnoor Dogar (athletics/shotput), Rabeela Farooq (athletics/middle distance), and Hamad Ali (weightlifting).

A PSB spokesperson emphasized that this rigorous testing aligns with the Board's zero-tolerance policy towards doping, reiterating the organization's dedication to upholding clean sports in accordance with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) guidelines.

The spokesperson further noted that beyond detection, PSB is actively engaged in educating athletes about the risks and consequences of doping, aiming to foster a culture of fairness and transparency in Pakistani sports.





## In brief

### 2-member criminals' gang busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Wah Saddar Police on Friday busted a two-member gang of criminals involved in theft, robbery and street crimes. The arrested accused were identified as Niaz and Jamil, a Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. The stolen money of Rs 181,000 was also recovered from the accused.

### PHA initiates renovation work

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) had initiated cleaning and renovation work of parks in Rawalpindi in the wake of incoming spring season. The beautification work undertaken on the instructions of PHA Director Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, was continuing on fast-track basis in all the parks of the garrison city, a PHA spokesman said on Friday. He said the PHA was taking steps to provide all basic amenities in the city's small and large parks, besides planting flowers, repairing walking tracks and cleaning. The spokesman said as per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the Authority was making all out efforts for the provision of the best recreational facilities to the citizens of Rawalpindi.

### CTO Zeeshan acts swiftly

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider took immediate action on Friday after a video of a car drifting on Jinnah Avenue went viral, leading to the vehicle's impoundment. A public relations officer told APP that the CTO Zeeshan ordered strict action against the violator, ensuring the car was seized at the police station. Efforts are also underway to track down the suspect, who will be arrested soon, CTO Zeeshan confirmed. CTO Zeeshan added that the individual had previously been booked for violating traffic laws, showing a repeated disregard for road safety. "Violating traffic laws can be life-threatening," CTO Zeeshan warned, urging citizens to follow road safety rules. Zeeshan emphasized that the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) would not tolerate dangerous activities such as drifting and one-wheeling under any circumstances. The CTO reaffirmed that the ITP is taking strict and indiscriminate action against traffic violators to ensure the safety of all road users.

### 14 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Police apprehended 14 outlaws involved in different criminal activities including drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons recovered from their possession on Friday. A public relation officer told APP that the Islamabad Police PS Tarnol, Khanna, Kohsar, Golra, Sumbal, Sangiani and Sihala police teams took legal action against accused involved in illegal activities. He said the police team also arrested 09 accused namely Naeem, Aftab Khan, Ahmad Mumtaz, Adnan, Shafqat, Atif, Saifullah, Sameer and Akbar Hussain, and recovered 1125 grams heroin, 1100 grams hashish and 07 pistol with ammunition from their possession. Moreover, 05 absconders were also arrested from various areas of the city during the last 24 hours. SSP Operation Muhammad Shoaib Khan said that the Islamabad Police are actively working to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property in the federal capital, emphasizing that no elements will be allowed to disrupt citizens' peace. Protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens is the Islamabad Police's top priority, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Production and Aviation, Khawaja Muhammad Asif presenting a souvenir to Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, Chief of Naval Staff of Bangladesh.

## Gilani calls on youth to lead Green Pakistan initiative for climate resilience

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Friday urged the youth to take lead of the Green Pakistan initiative through research, advocacy and innovation to ensure inclusive climate resilience at the national level. In his keynote address at the closing session of Breathe Pakistan International Climate Change Conference, the acting president reaffirmed the country's commitment to address gravest challenges of climate change.

He said that Pakistan had endured devastating floods, droughts and glacier melting causing floods due to climate change despite it's least share to the global carbon emissions. "Climate Change is a living reality. Pakistan needs support for technology transfer and capacity building to ensure climate resilience," he said.

Acting President Gilani mentioned that Pakistan had taken indigenous steps to contain climate change impacts on the region mainly renewable energy (RE) adoption like solar and hydropower projects to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The country, he said was also exploring climate finance and carbon markets to mobilize climate finance. He underscored that early warning sys-

tems and disaster management frameworks were critical to protect communities. The government, he said was holding dialogue with communities, provincial governments and development partners to ensure improved and holistic climate action.

He added that fight against climate change was not possible without global support and global commitment for international climate finance was critical to ensure access of least developed nations to climate finance for adaptation and mitigation.

"We need to equip the young change makers with skills, technology and knowledge to lead community level climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Climate action is a movement that demands relentless commitment and devotion," he said.

Aban Marker Kabraje of UNEP said the speakers and experts rendered quality discourse, subject matter and knowledge in their speeches and addresses. The interventions were rich full of enormous information required to address climate change, she added. Folerance Roll, FAO Country Head presented the outcomes of the Breathe Pakistan Conference.

The conference provided a great

opportunity to showcase how media can lead climate action, she said, adding, "The first outcome is on key aspect that climate change affects all aspects and components of society and multi sectoral and multidisciplinary action to address, encourage federal and provincial governments to join resources to address it."

She added that climate finance was the second important outcome and demanded Pakistan to mobilize international agenda on climate finance and enhance it's capacities of accessing climate finance.

The living Indus Initiative was a national project that addressed all provinces and the government was addressing it, she mentioned.

The Conference outcomes underlined that the fourth outcome was about women and girls who were the most affected due to climate change and look forward for specific measures to address specific strategy to address resilience building of women and girls. It also demanded transformation of agriculture food system to enhance quality and nutrition of food, and improve tree cover that have huge potential to mitigate and transform climate change impacts.

## CRTI calls for action to fill vacancies in information commissions

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Coalition on Right to Information (CRTI), a network of 39 civil society organizations working to protect and promote citizens' right to information, has expressed serious concern over the prolonged vacancies in key positions within federal and provincial information commissions. CRTI has urged the respective governments to take immediate steps to ensure the effective functioning of these commissions, which are mandated to uphold the fundamental right to information under Article 19-A of the Constitution of Pakistan.

Despite repeated calls for action, key positions in multiple information commissions remain unfilled, impacting their ability to operate efficiently. On this Occasion, Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, Executive Director of the CPDI, stated, "The delays in appointing key officials to information commissions undermine transparency and accountability efforts". He also stated "federal and

provincial governments need to take immediate actions to fill these vacancies and ensure the commissions are fully functional."

The position of the civil society member has been vacant since January 20, 2024, leaving the Commission incomplete for over a year. Without a third member, decision-making is at risk of deadlock, affecting the timely resolution of appeals. The post of Chief Information Commissioner in Punjab has remained vacant since May 29, 2024. The absence of leadership for over eight months has significantly undermined the Commission's credibility and effectiveness. Similarly, the third member, a civil society representative as mandated under Section 12(6)(b) of the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act, 2016, has not been appointed since January 2024, resulting in a year-long delay in fulfilling the Commission's statutory composition. While the Government of Balochistan has appointed two Information Commissioners under the Balochistan Right

to Information Act, 2021, the appointment of the Chief Information Commissioner remains pending. Additionally, the Commission faces severe administrative and financial constraints, including a lack of deputized staff, operational resources, and adequate budgetary support.

Mr. Aftab Alam, ED of IRADA and member of CRTI has remarked that "The fundamental right to information is compromised by vacant commissioner positions in Information Commissions. Filling these seats is crucial to ensure citizens' access and confidence in this right, as guaranteed by the Constitution."

Mr. Muhammad Anwar, ED of CGPA and member of CRTI while commenting about the effectiveness of Information Commissions commented that the KP RTI Commission faces a significant backlog of over 2,000 complaints, with many complainants waiting months for responses.

The commission needs to establish a mechanism to efficiently handle com-

plaints and keep applicants informed about proceedings. Additionally, orders should thoroughly reflect the background and arguments presented in each case.

Mr. Nadeem Iqbal, CEO of The Network for Consumers added that the constitutional right to information remains ineffective unless it is fully extended to consumers for the betterment of their daily lives through necessary appointments. This will enable the government to collect and disseminate accurate information, fostering a consumer-inclusive governance system, protecting citizens from the hazards of fake news, and empowering them to make informed choices.

CRTI calls upon the federal and provincial governments to urgently address these vacancies and allocate the necessary resources for the effective functioning of all information commissions. The coalition stresses that these delays undermine citizens' access to information and weaken transparency and accountability in governance.

## Japanes envoy calls on law minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Japanese Ambassador AKA-MATSU Shuichi on Friday called on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar to discuss issues pertaining to strengthen bilateral relations. The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Japan.

During the discussion, both sides emphasized the

longstanding friendly relations between the peoples of Pakistan and Japan.

The Federal Minister acknowledged Japan's support in Pakistan's economic and industrial development and expressed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen cooperation with Japan.

Ambassador AKAMATSU reiterated Japan's commitment to supporting Pakistan's development goals and agreed to

enhance collaboration in various sectors.

He also highlighted the completion of 70 years of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) between Japan and Pakistan and reaffirmed Japan's willingness to continue its partnership in Pakistan's progress.

Both sides exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and agreed to further expand bilateral relations for the benefit of both nations.

## ANF recovers over 96 kg drugs in 6 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 6 operations recovered over 96 kg drugs worth over Rs 9.8 million and arrested 8 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 2.007 kg ice hidden in the trolley bag of a passenger going to Bahrain was recovered at Peshawar International Airport. 52.8 kg hashish hidden

in a car near Amangarh in Nowshera and 2 suspects were arrested.

16.8 kg opium was recovered from the secret cavities of a car intercepted near Ferozwala in Sheikhpura and a suspect was arrested.

12 kg hashish was recovered from a car near Chenab Toll Plaza GT Road Gujrat and 2 suspects were rounded up. In 5th operation, 9.6 kg hashish was recovered

from the possession of the suspect near a hotel on the National Highway Hyderabad.

In 6th operation, 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a suspect netted near a petrol pump in Hyderabad.

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

## GB residents exempted from NHA's toll tax: Aleem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of investment, and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan, held separate meetings with Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Gulbar Khan and Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov on Friday.

Both meetings focused on economic development, investment opportunities, and infrastructure enhancement in Pakistan, said a press release.

During his meeting with Chief Minister Gulbar Khan, Aleem Khan discussed the expansion of the National Highway Authority (NHA) in Gilgit-Baltistan and its crucial role in regional development.

He emphasized that Gilgit-Baltistan's progress is vital for Pakistan's overall prosperity and reaffirmed NHA's commitment to improving the road network. Acknowledging the region's growing tourism sector, he highlighted that thousands of tourists visit Gilgit-Baltistan every year,

significantly contributing to its economy.

To further improve infrastructure, Aleem Khan proposed the introduction of a toll tax for tourists, with collected funds dedicated to enhancing NHA's road infrastructure in the region. However, he assured that local residents would be exempted from this tax.

Chief Minister Gulbar Khan appreciated the Federal Minister's dedication to the development of Gilgit-Baltistan and expressed the provincial government's commitment to working closely with NHA for the region's progress.

Furthermore, in his meeting with Azerbaijan's Ambassador, Khazar Farhadov, the minister emphasized the importance of strengthening economic relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. He appreciated Azerbaijan's interest in investing in Pakistan, particularly in infrastructure development.

Minister Aleem Khan highlighted that Pakistan offers attractive investment

opportunities and specifically mentioned that investment in major road projects such as M-6 and M-9 motorways could be highly beneficial for both countries.

Discussing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's upcoming visit to Azerbaijan, Aleem Khan stressed the need to implement key investment agreements and assured full facilitation for Azerbaijani investors through government institutions.

Ambassador Khazar Farhadov welcomed Pakistan's initiatives and reiterated Azerbaijan's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties.

He also expressed enthusiasm for the Prime Minister's visit, considering it a significant step toward enhanced economic cooperation.

Both meetings underscored Pakistan's focus on regional development and foreign investment, with the government actively working to strengthen infrastructure, tourism, and trade partnerships for long-term economic growth.

## SPARC calls for collective action to safeguard children

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) has commended the Government of Pakistan for its significant achievements in tobacco control, which stand as a testament to its commitment to protecting public health and safeguarding future generations from the harmful effects of tobacco use.

At a networking meeting with journalists, Dr Khalil Ahmad, Program Manager at SPARC, stated: "Tobacco use remains one of the most pressing public health crises in Pakistan, claiming the lives of over 163,000 Pakistanis annually, or about 11% of all deaths. The addictive nicotine in tobacco products—including cigarettes, e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products—has proven links to deadly diseases such as heart disease, lung disease and cancer. Globally, tobacco use kills more than 8

million people each year, with 1.2 million deaths caused by exposure to second-hand smoke."

He further mentioned that in Pakistan, 24 million adults use tobacco products, including 15.6 million smokers and 7.6 million users of smokeless tobacco. These figures underline the urgency for robust and sustained interventions to prevent tobacco-related harm."

Dr Khalil said the civil society organizations and international supporters of tobacco control operate legally in Pakistan and have played a pivotal role in supporting the regulation of tobacco products in accordance with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, to which Pakistan has been a Party since 2005. He said, "It is crucial that we promote positivity and progress in society while preventing such false narratives from gaining traction."

He also highlighted the importance of collaboration between the government and civil society in maintaining progress toward a healthier society, and said that it is important that we as one nation, stand firm against tobacco use and prevent it from harming our future generations.

The session served as a platform for meaningful dialogue between health advocates and journalists, fostering a shared understanding of the urgent need for stronger tobacco control measures. Participants emphasized the collective responsibility of media, civil society, and policymakers in countering misinformation and reinforcing efforts to protect public health. The discussion concluded with a renewed commitment to fight against the misinformation campaigns and false narratives, and not let them gain attention of the masses.

## AIOU sets Feb 10 as deadline for admissions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) had set February 10 as late date for admissions in Matric, Intermediate, and B.Ed programs offered for the Spring 2025 semester. According to the details, no decision had been made yet regarding an extension of the admission deadline. Therefore, interested students were advised to take advantage of the opportunity and register themselves within the given timeframe.

Admissions for Associate Degree (BA/B.Com), BS, Postgraduate Diplomas, MS, MPhil, and PhD programs would remain open until 17th February. According to the issued schedule, continuing students could enroll themselves until 24th February. Admission forms and prospectuses for all programs were available on the university's website. To facilitate students, an online admission facility had been provided for all programs.

However, admissions for Matric, FA, Associate Degree, and B.Ed programs could also be obtained through the manual process. The admission forms for these programs were available at the university's regional offices across the country. Prospective students were advised to complete their enrollment within the specified deadlines to avoid late fees. They could also seek assistance in the admission process from the regional offices, where facilitation centers had been established to guide and support them.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador AKAMATSU Shuichi pays a courtesy call on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. —APP Photo



**Taliban to resume salaries for public employees**  
KABUL (Amu tv): Taliban will begin paying public employees their January salaries on Saturday, Feb. 10, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said, even as workers remain unpaid for the past two months, deepening financial strain on thousands of civil servants. Mujahid said in a statement on X that the payments would be distributed in phases. Specific government agencies would receive funds on the first day.

**Taliban publicly flog more than 40 people**  
KABUL (Amu tv): Taliban have publicly flogged at least 44 people, including six women, across multiple provinces over the past three weeks, according to data compiled by Amu TV from the Taliban Supreme Court statement. In addition to the floggings, the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has arrested 18 people during the same period, sources said.

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

## Official accused of embezzling over \$108,000

KABUL (Amu tv): A senior Taliban official in Kandahar has been accused of embezzling 8 million afghanis (\$108,300) and misappropriating customs revenue, according to sources familiar with the matter. The official, identified as Ahmad Akhundzada, head of the Weigh Stations Department at the Taliban's Public Works Directorate in Kandahar, was summoned to court about a month ago along with several other officials from weigh stations in the Spin Boldak and Takhta Pul districts, the sources told Amu TV. While Akhundzada has been released, the other officials remain in custody, the sources said. One employee at the department, speaking on condition of anonymity, alleged that Akhundzada falsified documents and redirected customs revenue into his personal accounts. He is also accused of taking bribes in exchange for allowing overloaded trucks to pass through weigh stations without penalties. In addition to financial misconduct, the official allegedly detained heavy vehicles for several days without justification, causing disruptions for transport operators, the source said. Despite being detained over corruption charges, Akhundzada has since been seen moving freely around Kandahar in a government-issued vehicle, according to multiple sources.

## IE denies issuance of arrest warrant for Abbas Stanikzai



KABUL (TOLONews): Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, has denied reports regarding the issuance of an arrest warrant for the deputy foreign minister. Speaking to the BBC, Mujahid stated that Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai had traveled to Dubai to visit his family. He said: "Stanikzai Sahib frequently travels to Dubai. Part of his family resides there, and he has lived there in the past. He is currently visiting Dubai and will return to resume his duties." Zabihullah Mujahid

described recent reports of internal disputes among Islamic Emirate officials as a propaganda campaign. He also urged the United States to abandon its wartime strategy towards Afghanistan and adopt an approach based on engagement. Additionally, Mujahid emphasized the lifting of sanctions on Islamic Emirate officials and Afghanistan's frozen assets. He stated: "The rights of the Afghan people have been usurped, and certain political obstacles at the global level must be removed, as they are not in

anyone's interest. The strategy pursued during the war must be replaced with a strategy of engagement." Mohammad Emal Dostyar, a university professor, remarked: "Not only should we improve our relations with the United States, which is one of the world's major powers, but we must also establish diplomatic channels with other countries, as this is essential." Previously, the Islamic Emirate had dismissed US President Trump's claims regarding the potential recapture of Bagram Air Base and the abandoned military equipment as baseless.

## Embassy in Ankara resumes operations under Islamic Emirate

KABUL (TOLONews): Following the announcement by the Afghan Embassy in Ankara regarding its transfer to Türkiye, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate now states that the embassy will continue its operations. Zakir Jalaly, director of the third political department of the Foreign Ministry, said that changes in the diplomatic staff of embassies are a normal procedure. He said: "The Afghan Embassy in Ankara, the capital of Türkiye, will continue its activities as before and remains at the service of citizens and other visitors." At the same time, Abdul Latif Nazari, the professional deputy minister of the Ministry of Economy, stated that the authority of the Afghan Embassy in

Ankara has been handed over to the Islamic Emirate. Nazari told TOLONews: "The relations between Afghanistan and Türkiye in political, economic, commercial, and diplomatic areas are progressing and expanding. The recent development at the Afghan Embassy in Ankara will help enhance bilateral relations." "Embassies should have a single authority; either officials of the Islamic Emirate should operate them, or representatives of the former republic. I do not think that both governments and the Islamic Emirate will engage with the former republic's representatives. Therefore, it is better for them to be handed over to the Islamic Emirate to provide better consular services for Afghan migrants," said Salim Paigir,

a political analyst. Yesterday, the Afghan Embassy in Türkiye announced in a statement that its operations had ended and that it had been officially handed over to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The statement from the Afghan Embassy in Ankara read: "The embassy has been transferred to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs instead of a representative of the Islamic Emirate and is now under the host country's jurisdiction, according to the Vienna Conventions." "A f g h a n i s t a n ' s embassies in other countries belong to Afghanistan, and Afghans and the Afghan government have the right to utilize these embassies as per their authority," said Hemayatullah Ahmadi, a

political analyst. Expanding diplomatic relations with countries like Türkiye, particularly in the current situation, is seen as an important step for Afghanistan in strengthening international cooperation. "Having diplomatic relations with neighboring and regional countries, especially with those like Türkiye, which has never interfered negatively in Afghanistan's affairs and has always maintained goodwill, can help Afghanistan break out of international isolation," said Aziz Maarej, former diplomat. Previously, the operations of Afghan embassies in London, Norway, Sweden, India, and Canada had been halted, and these missions have not yet been transferred to the Islamic Emirate.

## Iran to increase restrictions on Afghan refugees, says Minister

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Iranian Minister of Interior has announced that the presence of unauthorized migrants in the country is reducing job opportunities for Iranian citizens. As a result, stricter regulations will be imposed on Afghan migrants.



In recent years, Iran has adopted more stringent policies regarding Afghan migrants. With increasing economic and social pressures, the Iranian government is emphasizing the expulsion of unauthorized migrants and has expedited their deportation process.

Meanwhile, a large portion of the migrants in Iran consists of Afghan nationals. Human rights organizations have repeatedly expressed concerns over the poor conditions faced by Afghan migrants in Iran and the challenges they encounter in the forced

return process. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, currently, 4.5 million Afghan migrants are residing in Iran, some with legal migration documents and long-term visas, while others lack any legal documentation. The situation for Afghan migrants in Iran remains complex, with many facing uncertainty regarding their future. The Iranian government's increased enforcement of migration regulations has led to mounting pressure on both migrants and local authorities. At the same time, humanitarian organizations are calling for more protection and support for Afghan migrants, particularly in light of the forced repatriation challenges.

## IE rejects Sopko's claims of interference in Intl Aid

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate has rejected the statements of the former US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) John Sopko, who claimed that the Emirate interferes in international aid. The technical deputy minister of the Ministry of Economy, Abdul Latif Nazari, told TOLONews that international organizations' aid in Afghanistan is distributed transparently and under strict supervision. Abdul Latif Nazari, the technical deputy minister of the Ministry of Economy, stated: "The Ministry of Economy of the Islamic

Emirate completely rejects the recent statements of John Sopko, the former US Special Inspector. During the rule of the Islamic Emirate, all international aid has been transparent and supervised. The Ministry of Economy has made every effort to facilitate international aid and has not interfered in the process." "All efforts must be made to ensure that aid continues regularly and is provided in a manner that allows the Islamic Emirate to engage with the international community and prove that aid has reached specific provinces and regions with documented

statistics. Hopefully, these aid programs will not be halted," said Abdul Basir Turki, an economic analyst. John Sopko, the former US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, claimed that a 'sizeable' portion of the aid funds intended for Afghanistan, paid by American taxpayers, had ended up in the pockets of the "Taliban." Speaking to Fox News, Sopko stressed that the US does not have strict oversight over the aid, and this situation will continue. He said: "We know a sizeable amount went into the pockets of the Taliban, and just so you know I'm no

longer with the government, but the final report we issued and I signed off on before my departure indicated that. We know its going to continue because unfortunately we have nobody on the ground and the money is going through the UN, World Food organization and other international organizations and we don't really have good oversight." Sopko also added that for the past twenty years, all US institutions have failed to properly allocate funds in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, SIGAR recently announced that its activities will be suspended until January 31, 2026.

## Municipality pays 3 Billion Afghani in land compensation

KABUL (TOLONews): Kabul Municipality said that over the past three years, it has paid more than three billion afghani to individuals whose lands have been expropriated. Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of Kabul Municipality, responding to concerns from some citizens regarding the non-payment of compensation for their expropriated homes, stated that the municipality has sufficient financial resources and that compensation payments are made only to the rightful landowners. Speaking to TOLONews, the Kabul Municipality representative said: "Kabul Municipality has no financial issues regarding expropriation. As soon as citizens complete the necessary documentation process, the money, which is held in trust by us, will be transferred promptly." However, some Kabul residents are calling for an acceleration in the process of compensation payments for their expropriated lands. Residents of an area in Kabul where their homes were expropriated for the construction of the road from Alauddin Square to Chehel Sotoun say they have not yet received their compensation. "They had a week to pay us, but now two months have passed since that deadline, and no one has given us our money."

## Uzbekistan-Afghanistan trade reaches \$1.1 Billion



KABUL (TOLONews): Aybek Arif Usmanov, Uzbekistan's ambassador to Kabul, stated in a meeting reviewing the works of Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i and Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur that trade volume between Kabul and Tashkent has increased. Usmanov said that last year the trade exchange between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan reached \$1.1 billion. Emphasizing the importance of developing bilateral relations between Kabul and Tashkent, the Uzbek ambassador said: "Thanks to the leaders of both countries—Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the esteemed Sheikh Hibatullah Akhundzada—the active cooperation of ministry leaders and traders from both nations

has resulted in a trade turnover exceeding \$1.1 billion last year." Several officials from the Islamic Emirate and cultural figures also attended the meeting. Atiqullah Azizi, Deputy Minister of Culture and Art at Afghanistan's Ministry of Information and Culture, emphasized the need for further study and research on the works and contributions of these two historical figures. Azizi requested Uzbekistan's embassy to collaborate with the Ministry of Information and Culture in organizing seminars on Nava'i studies. Atiqullah Azizi added: "Our children should choose him (Nava'i) as a role model instead of the fictional heroes of imaginary novels and read his works."

Several writers and poets at the gathering also called for more such meetings and the establishment of joint cultural centers between Kabul and Tashkent. "To enrich these programs and gatherings, we need to organize more events focused on cultural and literary commonalities," stated writer Najibullah Arman. Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i, a poet and scholar of the Timurid era, was born in 844 Hijri (Islamic calendar) in Herat. He received his early education from his father, who was a minister in the Timurid court, and later traveled to Samarkand to continue his studies. According to some sources, Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i passed away in 906 or 907 Hijri.

## UNAMA and RSF demand immediate release of Begum Radio staff

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has reacted to the closure of Begum Radio, stating that free media is essential for the progress and development of society. In a statement, UNAMA called for the immediate release of journalists who have been detained for exercising their right to freedom of expression, emphasizing that independent media plays a crucial role in societal growth and development. UNAMA's statement reads: "UNAMA is concerned about the arrest in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday of two Radio Begum staff, whose whereabouts are unknown. UNAMA calls for the release of per-

sons detained for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Free media is essential for society to thrive." Afghan journalist Shah Agha Sadat commented: "In general, Afghan journalists working under these difficult conditions must adhere to the regulations of the Ministry of Information and Culture to avoid arbitrary arrests and other challenges." Meanwhile, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) also criticized the suspension of Begum Radio and called for the release of its two detained employees. RSF stated: "Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls for the immediate release of the station's employees and for the ban to be immediately lifted."

Another journalist, Sahibuddin Samim, added: "Over the past three years, there has been no law governing the media. A legal framework must be established for journalists to operate freely. Furthermore, the government is responsible for ensuring access to information." So far, the Islamic Emirate has not commented on the arrest of the two Begum Radio employees. The Ministry of Information and Culture of Afghanistan has cited 'broadcast violations' and the sharing of content with foreign-based TV stations as reasons for suspending Begum Radio's operations. The ministry stated that the outlet failed to comply with broadcasting license regu-

lations and aired content contrary to Islamic principles. Spokesperson Khabib Ghufuran of the Ministry of Information and Culture stated: "During the presence of the ministry's delegation, this media outlet was broadcasting live for foreign media. Eventually, it was decided that their case—including the men's section named 'Jawan Radio' and the women's section named 'Begum'—would be submitted to the court along with the relevant documents. They will remain closed until a final decision is made." Begum Radio's operations were suspended on Tuesday in Kabul by the Ministry of Information and Culture.

## Afghanistan signs \$264M deal for Kandahar-Herat railway design

HERAT (TOLONews): The Ministry of Public Works announced on Thursday the signing of contracts for the detailed design of the Kandahar-Herat railway worth 264 million afghani. Mohammad Ashraf Haqshinas, the spokesman for the ministry, stated that these contracts have been signed with five domestic companies, and the design will be completed in eight months. The Ministry's spokesman said regarding these contracts: "Contracts worth 264 million afghani have been signed with five different companies for the design of the Kandahar-Herat railway, covering about 737 kilometers, and the work will be completed in eight months."



According to Haqshinas, after the design phase is completed, the implementation phase of the project will begin. Economic experts also believe that the development of the railway network could be beneficial for Afghanistan's economy. They say that the expansion of the railway network not only reduces transportation costs but also provides a suitable platform for attracting both domestic and foreign investments.

Abdul Zahoor Madber, an expert on economic issues, said: "Afghanistan's railways will turn into a vital connection point between Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, offering strategic opportunities to Afghanistan and other concerned countries, creating effective demand in the Afghan markets and increasing people's purchasing power." "Afghanistan is a landlocked country, and when we connect to the

railway network, we can actually reach new markets and sell our products," said Abdul Naseer Rashtia, another economic expert. Currently, Afghanistan, with over 260 kilometers of railway network, serves as a bridge for the transfer of goods from Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, and this new project could play a significant role in facilitating trade and enhancing Afghanistan's geographic position.





**HARBIN:** Chinese President Xi Jing Ping welcoming President Asif Ali Zardari, along with others heads of states / governments upon their arrival, at state banquet before opening ceremony of 9th Asian Winter Games 2025.

## ICC ‘condemns’ US sanctions, vows to ‘continue providing justice’

BRUSSELS (AFP): The International Criminal Court on Friday hit back after US President Donald Trump slapped sanctions on the institution, vowing it would continue to provide "justice and hope" around the world.

"The ICC condemns the issuance by the US of an Executive Order seeking to impose sanctions on its officials and harm its independent and impartial judicial work," the court said in a statement. "The Court stands firmly by its personnel and pledges to continue providing justice and hope to millions of innocent victims of atrocities across the world," added the court, based in The Hague.

Attacking the ICC for what he said were "illegitimate and baseless" investigations targeting America and its ally Israel, Trump hit the court with sanctions on Thursday. He ordered asset freezes and travel bans against ICC officials, employees and their family members, along with anyone deemed to have helped the court's investigations.

The names of the individuals were not immediately released, but previous US sanctions under Trump had targeted the court's prosecutor. "We call on our 125 States Parties, civil society and all nations of the world to stand united for justice and fundamental human rights," the ICC statement concluded.

The EU on Friday warned sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC) threaten its independence

and the wider judicial system, after US President Donald Trump punished the court over its probes into America and Israel. Trump signed an executive order on Thursday saying the court in The Hague had "abused its power" by issuing an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with whom he held talks earlier this week.

"Sanctioning the ICC threatens the Court's independence and undermines the international criminal justice system as a whole," Antonio Costa, who heads the European Council representing the EU's 27 member states, wrote on X. The European Commission separately expressed "regret" regarding Trump's sanctions, stressing the ICC's "key importance in upholding international criminal justice and the fight against impunity."

The executive order risks "affecting ongoing investigations and proceedings, including as regards Ukraine, impacting years of efforts to ensure accountability around the world," said a commission spokesman. "The EU will be monitoring the implications of the executive order and will assess possible further steps," added the spokesman for the bloc's executive.

Trump's order said the tribunal had engaged in "illegitimate and baseless actions" targeting the US and its ally Israel, referring to probes into alleged war crimes by US service members in

Afghanistan and Israeli troops in Gaza. It imposed asset freezes and travel bans against ICC officials, employees and their family members, along with anyone deemed to have helped the court's investigations.

The names of the individuals were not immediately released, but previous US sanctions under Trump had targeted the court's prosecutor. Neither the United States nor Israel are members of the court. EU Council president Costa met with the president of the ICC, judge Tomoko Akane, on Thursday to assure her of the EU's support.

"The ICC plays an essential role in delivering justice to the victims of some of the world's most horrific crimes," he wrote on social media. "Independence and impartiality are crucial characteristics of the Court's work." During their meeting, Costa and Akane discussed possible ways the bloc could strengthen its support to the institution, an EU official said.

Israel on Friday praised US President Donald Trump for imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court, calling the court's actions against Israel "immoral" and illegitimate. "I strongly commend @POTUS President Trump's executive order imposing sanctions on the so-called 'international criminal court,'" Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on X, adding the ICC's actions were "immoral and have no legal basis."

## Hamas names hostages to be freed after accusing Israel of breaching truce

CAIRO/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Hamas on Friday announced the names of three Israeli hostages to be released on Saturday in exchange for Palestinian prisoners after a delay that underlined the obstacles hanging over a fragile deal meant to end the war in Gaza.

Ohad Ben Ami and Eli Sharabi, both taken hostage from Kibbutz Be'eri during the cross-border Hamas-led attack on Oct 7, 2023, and Or Levy, abducted that day from the Nova music festival, will be handed over on Saturday, Hamas said. The Hamas prisoners' media office said Israel was expected to free 183 Palestinians in exchange, including 18 who have been serving life sentences, 54 serving long sentences and 111 who were detained in the Gaza Strip during the war.

Earlier the Palestinian militant group accused Israel of breaching their ceasefire accord and held off announcing the names of the three Israelis until a 4 p.m. (1400 GMT) deadline had passed. It was not immediately clear whether the delay would affect the scheduled exchange on Saturday. Hamas accused Israel of delaying the entry of hundreds of trucks carrying food and other humanitarian supplies agreed under the truce deal that took effect on January 19, and holding back all but a fraction of the tents and mobile homes needed to provide shelter to people returning to their bombed-out homes.

"This demonstrates clear manipula-

tion of relief and shelter priorities," Hamas said in a statement. COGAT, the Israeli military agency that is overseeing the aid deliveries into Gaza, denied the accusation and warned that Israel would "not tolerate violations by Hamas." The spat compounds the uncertainty around the ceasefire that had already mounted following US President Donald Trump's surprise announcement this week that he expected Gaza to be taken over by the United States.

Trump said on Tuesday he wanted to move the population of Gaza to a third country like Egypt or Jordan and place the small coastal enclave under US control to be developed into the "Riviera of the Middle East." The statement underlined the fragility of the deal reached last month with Egyptian and Qatari mediators and backed by the United States.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu endorsed Trump's vision for Gaza as a "remarkable" plan, but it was immediately rejected by Arab countries, Palestinian groups including Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, and many Gazans, who said they would rebuild their homes and restaurants themselves. However Israeli leaders have repeated the line that Gazans who wish should be able to leave and Defense Minister Israel Katz ordered the army on Thursday to prepare a plan to allow for the departure of Gaza residents who wanted to go.

So far, 13 Israeli hostages of the 33 children, women and older men set to be released in the first, 42-day phase of the agreement have come home, and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and detainees have been released in exchange. Five Thai hostages have also been returned. Work on the second stage of the multi-phase agreement, aimed at securing the release of around 60 male hostages and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, has begun and an Israeli negotiating team was expected to fly on Saturday to Doha, Israeli media reported on Friday.

However the accusations levelled by Hamas against Israel underscored how little trust there was between the two sides following more than 15 months of the bloodiest episode in the decades-long conflict. The Israeli military said on Friday that commanders were conducting situational assessments ahead of the next phase of the agreement currently being discussed, with troops deployed at various points around the Gaza Strip.

Hamas said only 8,500 trucks out of the 12,000 that should have arrived so far had entered the territory, most containing food and secondary goods including chips and chocolate instead of more urgent items. In addition, only 10 percent of the 200,000 tents and 60,000 caravans needed to provide shelter had arrived, Hamas said, leaving hundreds of thousands in harsh winter weather.

## Iran dismisses talks with US as it blasts new sanctions

TEHRAN: Iran hit out at the United States for imposing new sanctions against its oil industry, as Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned against mooted talks with Washington. A spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Friday condemned the sanctions, announced the previous day, as "illegitimate and unlawful," the official IRNA news agency reported.

"The decision of the new US administration to exert pressure on the Iranian people by preventing Iran from conducting legitimate trade with its economic partners is an illegitimate and unlawful action," spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said. Iran "holds the United States responsible for the consequences and repercussions of such unilateral and bullying actions", he added.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei later remarked that negotia-

tion with the US is "not smart, wise or honourable". US President Donald Trump suggested earlier this week that he plans to raise the pressure on Iran and then reach a "verified nuclear peace agreement". During his previous term in office in 2018, Trump pulled the US out of the 2015 pact between Iran and world powers designed to control Tehran's nuclear capabilities, and reimposed harsh sanctions.

Those measures prompted Tehran to violate the pact's limitations. "Negotiating with America is neither smart, wise, or honourable. It will not solve any of our problems. The reason? Experience!" Khamenei was quoted as saying on Friday, adding that Iran had made concessions in the past but the US "tore up" previous agreements.

He warned that if the US threatens Iran's security, Tehran "will threaten [the US's] security". The sanctions announced on Thursday were the first new ones to be levied on Iran since

Trump returned to the White House. The US president has promised to bring Iran's crude exports to zero, declaring them part of the ambition to halt Tehran's nuclear programme. The measures target Iranian firms, ships and individuals affiliated with companies already sanctioned by the US. The individuals and tankers affected help ship millions of barrels of Iranian crude oil to China annually. Germany, France and the United Kingdom have been holding diplomatic talks with Tehran in recent months in the hope of seeking a route towards resuming the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) pact that Trump unilaterally scuppered in 2018.

A senior Iranian official told the Reuters news agency on Wednesday that Iran is ready to give the US a chance to resolve disputes. Iran has long rejected sanctions against its oil sector and views efforts to confiscate its exports as "piracy". — Aljazeera

## Maldives Armed Forces CDF meets COAS

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) of the Maldives Armed Forces, called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at the General Headquarters, Rawalpindi.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, including bilateral defence cooperation and regional security dynamics, were discussed in detail. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the enduring bonds of brotherhood and friendship between Pakistan and the Maldives, underscoring their shared perspectives on key regional issues.

Recognizing the evolving security landscape, the two military leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening and revitalizing bilateral ties, with a view to enhancing collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

## State Secy of Hungary calls on CJCSC

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Mr. Tamás Vargha, State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Defence, Hungary, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi.

During the meeting, both leaders discussed evolving regional dynamics and emphasized the importance of exploring new opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration in defense and security domains between both countries.

The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism.

## 9 additional judges to LHC appointed

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Following the approval from President Asif Ali Zardari, the Ministry of Law and Justice on Friday appointed nine additional judges to the Lahore High Court (LHC).

The ministry notified Hassan Nawaz Makhdoom, Malik Waqar Haider Awan, Sardar Akbar Ali, Syed Ahsan Raza Kazmi and Malik Javid Iqbal as LHC additional judges. Muhammad Jawad Zafar, Khalid Ishaq, Malik Muhammad Awais Khalid and Sultan Mahmood have also been notified as LHC additional judges by the Ministry of Law and Justice. Chief Justice Justice LHC Aalia Neelum will administer oath to the newly appointed additional judges in a ceremony set to be held at the LHC.

## Cop martyred in attack on police

**F.P. Report**

ATTOCK: A police constable was martyred and another was seriously injured in firing by unknown armed men on a patrol police party near Hattian post in Hazro area of Attock on Friday.

According to police, constable Qadeer was martyred while constable Nusrat was injured in the gun attack. After the incident of firing, District Police Officer Ghayas Gull reached the crime scene with heavy police force. The entire area has been cordoned off and police launched a hunt to trace the attackers. Police teams are continuing the search operation to arrest 3 unknown accused. The body of the martyred policeman has been shifted to Hazro Hospital while the injured cop was referred to Rawalpindi in critical condition.

Meanwhile, in another tragic attack on police, performing polio duty, Friday left a cop injured in Akora Khattak tehsil of Nowshera district. Police said, the incident took place in Hasan Dara area of Akora Khattak, where unidentified assailants opened fire on police constable Fida Hussain when he was returning from polio duty on his motorcycle.

# Israeli army continue raids across West Bank

WEST BANK: The Israeli army has demolished several Palestinian homes in the Jenin refugee camp as it continues the deadly raids across the occupied West Bank that it launched on January 21. Explosions echoed throughout the camp overnight as Israeli forces demolished the civilian homes, Wafa, the official Palestinian news agency, reported on Friday.

Witnesses said Israeli forces reinforced their presence around the camp and conducted intensive drone surveillance. The army also continues to besiege Jenin Governmental Hospital, having bulldozed the main entrance and the main road leading to it earlier in its raids. Earlier this week, it carried out the demolition of residential blocks in Jenin for the first time since 2002, as reported by Jenin Governor Kamal Abu al-Rub.

The Israeli military offensive, which launched two days after a ceasefire was agreed in Gaza, has targeted Jenin city, its refugee camp and surrounding towns, killing 25 Palestinians, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Nearly 90 percent of the camp's population has been forcibly displaced with many seeking refuge in 39 villages and towns across Jenin governorate.

Israeli forces also stormed several areas in the Ramallah governorate and assaulted and detained two Palestinians in the Old City of Hebron as they were distributing bread. In Beita, south of Nablus, Israeli forces assaulted ambulance crews during a raid, wounding a paramedic, according to the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Israeli soldiers fired stun grenades directly at the ambulance, damaging the vehicle as it was responding to an emergency, it said.

For the 12th consecutive day, Israeli forces also continued their wide-scale mil-

itary assault on Tulkarem city and its refugee camp in the western West Bank, causing extensive damage to infrastructure and civilian property. Over the past few days, the Israeli army has arrested dozens of Palestinians, forced hundreds of families to flee their homes and killed four Palestinians, including a child and a journalist.

Israeli forces have also turned Palestinian homes in Tulkarem and its camp into military outposts after evicting their residents. Witnesses told Turkiye's Anadolu news agency that the Israeli army carried out mass arrests in eastern Tulkarem city. Wafa reported that the Israeli army continues to besiege Thabet Thabet Governmental Hospital. It is also occupying the adjacent al-Adawiya commercial complex, having converted it into a military base and surveillance post.

Tulkarem Governor Abdullah Kamil confirmed in a statement that 85 percent of the camp's population had been displaced due to the Israeli military assault. In the northern West Bank for the sixth consecutive day, the Israeli army continued its offensive in Tammun and the Far'a refugee camp in Tubas governorate. Israeli forces have been conducting house-to-house searches in Tammun under the cover of air strikes with drone attacks targeting various locations in the town.

While no casualties have been reported, residents are suffering from a severe shortage of supplies and a near-total power outage. The Israeli army has also made many arrests and conducted interrogations of Palestinians in the area. In the Far'a camp, sources reported that Israeli forces targeted infrastructure, cutting off electricity and water supplies to most residents. — Aljazeera

## Imran written letter in national interest: Qureshi

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

leader Shah Mehmood

Qureshi has revealed that

PTI founder Imran Khan

has written a letter to the

Army Chief, emphasizing

the need for national unity

to address the country's

challenges.

Speaking to the media

outside Adiala Jail in

Rawalpindi, Qureshi noted

that while he had heard of

the letter, he had not per-

sonally seen it. He stressed

that the letter outlined key

suggestions and reasons

that should be viewed posi-

tively, particularly if the

intent is to resolve ongoing

issues facing Pakistan.

Qureshi highlighted that

the letter calls for a national

agenda, stressing the

importance of a collective

agreement among political

parties, including the for-

mation of an independent

and impartial Election

Commission.

According to Qureshi,

Khan's letter underscores

the urgency of reducing

political divisions and fos-

tering unity within the

country. He emphasized

that no single individual

could tackle the nation's

challenges alone, urging

the current leadership to

prioritize the country's

interests with both heart

and mind.

The PTI leader further

expressed the need for a

significant national agree-

ment, acknowledging that

Pakistan is in a state of cri-

sis and sinking into a quag-

mire. He noted that rational

discourse should be under-

stood and appreciated in

such trying times.

Additionally, Qureshi dis-

couraged pinning hopes on

foreign leaders like US

President Donald Trump,

stressing that Pakistan's

future depends on adopting

a strong and independent

stance, particularly in han-

dling domestic issues and

cases.

In his remarks, Qureshi

also criticized the Pakistan

Peoples Party (PPP) and

Pakistan Muslim League-

Nawaz (PML-N) leader-

ship, accusing former

President Asif Ali Zardari

and Bilawal Bhutto of tar-

nishing the image of

Pakistan's Constitution.

He claimed that these

parties had damaged

democracy by undermining

freedom of expression, par-

ticularly through amend-

ments to the Prevention of

Electronic Crimes Act

(PECA). Finally, Qureshi

reiterated his innocence

regarding the May 9 inci-

dent, asserting that he is

ready to testify on his

grave, firmly denying any

wrongdoing in the case.



**ISLAMABAD:** Chief of the Naval Staff of Bangladesh, Admiral Mohammad Nazmul Hassan, called on Chief of the Naval Staff of Pakistan, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, at Naval Headquarters.

## Modi to visit US from 12th for Trump talks

NEW DELHI (AFP, Reuters): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet President Donald Trump during a trip to the United States next week, the foreign ministry in New Delhi said on Friday.

Modi, who will visit Washington from February 12-13, will be "among the first few world leaders to visit the United States following the inauguration of President Trump", India's top career diplomat, Vikram Misri, told reporters. Misri said there had been a "very close rapport" between the leaders, although their ties have so far failed to bring a breakthrough on a long-sought US-India trade deal.

"The visit will be a valuable opportunity to engage the new administration on all areas of mutual interest," he said, adding that Modi would hold a bilateral meeting with Trump. "This has been one of our strongest international partnerships in recent years and the prime minister's visit is in line with our steady engagement with the new administration," Misri said. Modi was among the first

to congratulate his "dear friend" Trump on his inaugu-

ration last month, saying he

wanted New Delhi and

Washington to work closely

together. "I look forward to

working closely together

once again, to benefit both

our countries, and to shape

a better future for the world,"

Modi wrote on X in January.

However, Trump pressed

Modi for "fair" trading ties in

a telephone call later that

month, the White House said,

as Trump pushed his headline

trade agenda with world

leaders. Trump and Modi

also discussed strengthening

the so-called Quad grouping

with Australia and Japan,

which is widely seen as a

counterweight to China.

India is due to host the bloc's

leaders later this year.

The Indian and US lead-

ers, both of whom critics

accuse of authoritarian ten-

dencies, enjoyed warm re-

lations when Trump was in

the White House from 2017

to 2021. Modi visited Trump

in office in 2017 and 2019. He

also hosted Trump at a huge

rally in his home state of

Gujarat, while Trump

returned the favour with a

similar event in Houston,

Texas.

"There is an obvious con-

vergence of interests between

the two countries," Misri

said, which included "trade,

investment, technology,

defence cooperation, coun-

ter-terrorism [and] the secu-

rity of the Indo-Pacific".

The meeting will come days after

a US military aeroplane flew

back 104 Indian migrants,

part of Trump's overhaul of

immigration.

India's foreign ministry

said it was "firmly opposed

to illegal migration, especial-

ly as it is linked to other

forms of organised crime".

But New Delhi's Foreign

Minister Subrahmanyam

Jaishankar on Thursday

pointed out that the "process

of deportation is not a new

one", and that the US had

expelled more than 15,000

Indians since 2009, almost

half of them between 2019-

2024. India is the world's

fifth-largest economy and

enjoys world-beating GDP

growth, but hundreds of

thousands of its citizens still

leave the country each year

seeking better opportunities